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#### Are Ebooks for Everyone? Evaluating the Accessibility of Academic Ebook Platforms

Ann Agee San Jose State University, ann.agee@sjsu.edu

Christina Mune San Jose State University, christina.mune@sjsu.edu

Jeanine Gonzalez San Jose State University

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# **Are Ebooks for Everyone? Evaluating the Accessibility of Academic Ebook Platforms American Library Association, June 27, 2015**

## INTRODUCTION

#### **EAP: Ebook Accessibility Project**

- Funded by a grant from the California State University system
- Part of "Affordable Learning Solutions" a campaign to save students money on textbooks
- High use of library ebooks as part of that project (100-200 titles per term, up to 400% increase in title usage once adopted as a textbook)
- Librarians and faculty concerned about spending funds on (perceived) hard-to-use, inaccessible ebooks

## **METHODOLOGY**

Sixteen ebook vendor platforms were selected based on SJSU collection size and common adoption in academic libraries.

- ABC-CLIO
- ACLS Humanities
- Cambridge Books
- CRCnetBASE
- EBL
- ebrary
- EBSCO
- Emerald

- Gale Virtual Reference
- IGI-Global
- Oxford Reference Online
- Palgrave Connect
- Safari Tech
- Sage
- Springer
- Wiley Online

### **THESE STANDARDS WERE USED TO DETERMINE CRITERIA**

- Section 508 of the US Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Voluntary Product Accessibility Template VPAT
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.0
- Various user studies regarding usability and preferred ebook features (Chelin, et al (2009); McNaught & Alexander (2014); Shelburne (2009))

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Annotation	Highlighting 🕅 Bookmarks 🕅 Text Notes 🕅 Au
Text-to-Speech	eBook content is readable by JAWS/VoiceOver 🕅 Text- Adobe ReadAloud (Only for PDF documents) can re Speed Adjustment 🕅 Voice Adjustmen
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Media Support	Alternative Text for Images (Can read caption and altern Alternative Text for Tables (Can read caption; recognize and headings; navigate in natural reading order to read
Printing/Exporting	Platform-specific account or Adobe Digital Editions account University sign-in Section/Chapter/Percent of book that can be printed

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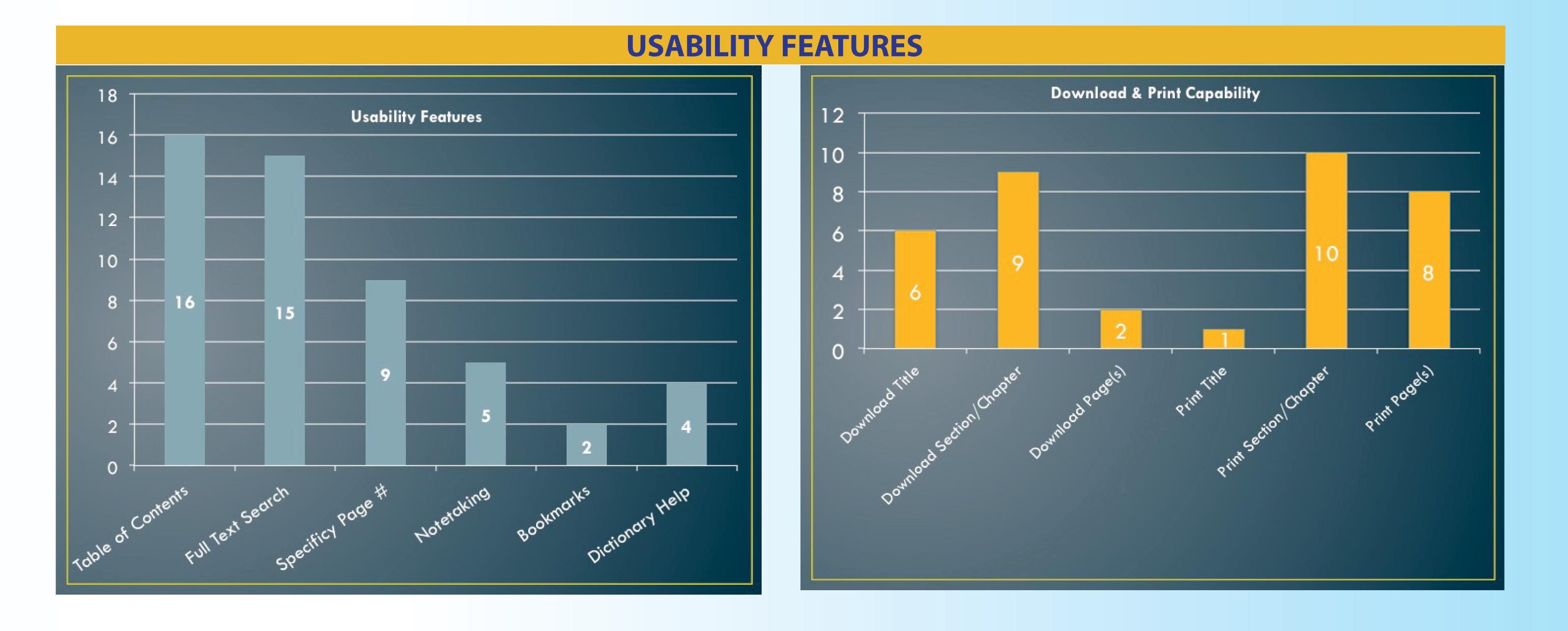
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Ann Agee, Librarian, San José State University **Christina Mune, Digital Initiatives Librarian, San José State University** Jeannine Gonzalez, iSchool Student, San José State University



<b>ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES</b>							
Vendor	VPAT	Accessibility Statement	None				
ABC-CLIO	х						
ACLS Humanities		x					
Cambridge Books		x					
CRCnetBASE	х						
EBL		х					
ebrary	х						
EBSCO		х					
Emerald		x					
Gale Virtual Reference	x						
IGI-Global			x				
Oxford Reference Online	х						
Palgrave Connect		x					
Safari Tech		х					
Sage	x						
Springer	х						
Wiley Online		x					

Text-to-Speech Results								
Platform	JAWS Compatible	VoiceOver Compatible	Adobe ReadAloud Compatible	In-Platform Text-to-Speech				
ABC-CLIO	Yes	Yes	No PDF Available	No				
ACLS Humanities	Yes (TXT, HTML)	Yes (TXT, HTML)	No	No				
Cambridge Books	No	Yes	No	No				
CRCnetBASE	Yes (TXT, HTML)	Yes	Yes	No				
EBL	No	No	No	Yes				
ebrary	No	No	No	No				
EBSCO	Yes (TXT, HTML)	No	No PDF Available	No				
Emerald	Yes (HTML)	Yes (HTML)	Yes	No				
Gale Virtual Reference	Yes (TXT)	Yes (TXT)	Yes	Yes				
IGI-Global	Yes	No	No	No				
Oxford Reference Online	Yes	Yes	No PDF Available	No				
Palgrave Connect	Yes	Yes	Yes	No				
Safari Tech	Yes (EPUB 3, HTML)	Yes (EPUB 3, HTML)	No PDF Available	No				
Sage	Yes	No	Yes	No				
Springer	Yes	Yes	Yes	No				
Wiley Online	Yes (varies by title)	Yes (varies by title)	Yes (varies by title)	No				

### CONCLUSIONS

- Content most commonly displayed in PDF format (11) or HTML (9). EPUB sparingly used, although it is considered the most accessible file format (4).
- Within aggregator platforms (EBSCO, EBL, Safari) individual publishers or titles may have less accessible formats than others due to watermarks, file type, etc. Screen reader performance can also be affected by PDF formatting, user's operating system, browser type, and browser version.
- Single publisher platforms (Gale, Palgrave, Springer) offer more features and more flexibility compared to aggregators.
- Publishers provide extra features, especially printing and download functionality, for users willing to create personal accounts.
- All the platforms tested allow at least limited printing of ebook content. However, only Springer allowed printing of entire title after download.
- All but three platforms allowed for at least limited download, although few allowed complete download of a title.

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#### **Authors:**

Ann.Agee@sjsu.edu I @halcyon15 Christina.Mune@sjsu.edu l @bibliopathic Jeannine.Gonzalez@sjsu.edu l @bibliotecarix