

Examples for Personas from a Web Accessibility Project

The following personas represent two groups of visually impaired users for a Web project. They are so-called “contrasting personas” because they have very different abilities, impairments, needs and goals when using the Web. The Web Site has to be designed in a way that it is accessible for both of them as they represent the whole range of prospective users.

Persona for the target group “young people with visual impairments”

Tracy Young is a 28-year-old and was born blind. In school and at college she did well as she could rely on audio tapes and books and the support of tutors. So she never bothered really to learn Braille. She holds a college degree in English literature and is very fond of writing poems and short stories. Her dream is to become a audio book author. As she is still working on her break-through, she makes a living on writing software documentation for a high-tech company which provided her with a home office equipment consisting of a personal computer with high-speed Internet access and the software *JAWS* which reads out aloud the content of the computer screen (or code respectively) in an artificial voice (screen reader). *JAWS* runs only on the browser *Internet Explorer* which is used as standard browser in the company Tracy works for.

As Tracy has much experience in listening to audio tapes and the screen reader, she is able to follow audio output at high speed which would not be comprehensible for other people. Moreover, she has developed great skills at remembering audio output and recognising foreign words or abbreviations which cause problems for the screen reader. Due to her job experience as technical writer, she is quite familiar with software applications, especially with features which are difficult to handle or do not work as intended. So she has developed some patience with applications that are not easy to use. She also has a lot of Internet experience, as she uses it on a daily basis for downloading music, audio books and do online shopping which is much more convenient then using her guide dog and public transportation to go to a shopping mall where she needs assistance by the employees to locate the things she is looking for. In addition she uses the Internet to communicate with people in chat rooms. This is a very convenient way to be in touch with friends without leaving her home and meet people who are not aware of her disability.

Name	Tracy Young
Gender and age	female, 28
Disabilities and restrictions	blind
Education	college degree in English literature (MA)
Profession	works as a technical writer and author for software documentation
Hobbies	listening to audio books and music, creating audio novels, communicate with people in chat rooms, online shopping
Location of use	at home, home office and personal use
Computer literacy	high, several years of professional use
Special needs when using a computer	screen reader
Computer equipment and user agents	browser Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0 combined with screen reader JAWS 6.20
Internet literacy	a heavy user on daily basis
User agent literacy	high, she is familiar with almost all the features

Persona for the target group “elderly people with disabilities”

Gerald Oldman is 68 years old, married and has three grown up children who live in the neighbourhood. Before he retired three years ago, he worked as an investment banker for an international bank. Although retired, he is still interested in business, economics, and banking. So he spends several hours a week on the Internet to do research and manage his personal investments and pension funds. In addition he frequents the public library to read a variety of business newspapers and to consult online databases for business and stock information. For all his lifetime he has keen on all kinds of sports, especially football and hockey which he had practiced in younger years.

As Gerald used to work with office software and online databases on the job for several decades, he is a very computer literate user but has never been interested in becoming a power user or even an administrator. He is definitely not interested in how software works, he just wants to use it. Regarding the Internet, he has only little experience which he acquired mostly by learning by doing. He is not surfing around much but usually restricts himself to Internet sources recommended by business newspapers. In addition, he is very careful to install new software and Internet plug-ins as he depends on the functioning of his computer for managing his financial assets and does not want to take a risk by changing a running system.

Gerald has some impairments which are quite common with senior citizens. He has reduced vision due to age-related degeneration. After reading some time, the letters of the text start to blur, so he needs a 100 watt overhead light and a magnifying glass. Moreover his hands tend to be shaky so that he has difficulties at times to do very exact movements. In daily life this tremor does not bother him except for when he is using a computer mouse. Therefore he prefers keyboard controls and is quite good in remembering them as in the old times they were quite common. Apart from these restrictions, Gerald is in good health and enjoys walking several miles with his wife two or three times a week and hiking at weekends with friends and former colleagues.

On his personal computer at home, Gerald uses *Firefox 1.0* as browser. His son Peter provided him with the screen magnifying software *MagicView 5.2* which enlarges the screen by factor 12. This software requires no special training as it is operated by mouse movements and clicks. Although it is helpful, Gerald can not use it always because of his tremor which cause him difficulties in handling the mouse. In this case he relies on the browser’s built-in enlargement function which he operates by pressing Ctrl and +. This is one of the reasons he likes *Firefox*. At the computers of the public library he has to cope with the *Internet Explorer 6.0* which has no keyboard control for the enlargement function but needs to be mouse-operated. In general, Gerald appreciates high contrast on web sites as this makes it easier for him to read text.

Name	Gerald Oldman
Gender and age	male, 68
Disabilities and restrictions	reduced vision due to age-related degeneration, his hands tend to be shaky which causes him difficulties in using the mouse
Education	College degree in economics (BA)
Profession	retired for 3 years now, used to work as an investment banker
Hobbies	economics and business, all kinds of sports, especially football and hockey, walking and hiking
Location of use	at home and in the public library
Computer literacy	high, several years of professional practice as a user (no power user)
Special needs when using a computer	enlarged text, high contrast
Computer equipment and user agents	at home: browser <i>Firefox 1.0</i> and screen magnifier <i>MagicView 5.2</i> which enlarges the screen by factor 12 in the public library: browser <i>Internet Explorer 6.0</i>
Internet literacy	low, mostly self-taught and learning by doing, careful to install new software and Internet plug-ins
User agent literacy	none required as <i>MagixView</i> is easy to operate by mouse movements and clicks