Hello! My name is Kathryn and I am UConn’s IT Accessibility Coordinator. Thank you for watching this introduction to accessible PDFs.

“Accessible” means that a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability--in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, within the same time frames, and with substantially equivalent ease of use. Practically, this means that regardless of disability, every person has an equal opportunity to participate in the University.

Accessible content allows the widest range of users possible to engage with information. It is part of sound pedagogy, removing barriers to our students' learning. It is also part of building positive community relationships, whether that community is composed of UConn members or public affiliates. Without keeping accessibility in mind, we may inadvertently create a graphic that an individual who is blind cannot view. We might design a website through which someone who uses a keyboard for navigation cannot move. By intentionally and thoughtfully considering accessibility in the initial phases of content design, we can develop content that is available to everyone.

Accessibility is our communal responsibility. This responsibility is upheld by UConn's policies and by state and federal laws. Because our digital content reaches far beyond our campuses, it is vital for us to understand and implement accessibility principles in every aspect of digital communication.

So, who is impacted by inaccessibility? Inaccessibility impacts a wide variety of users, including users who are blind, have low vision, or have color blindness because they cannot perceive some or all visual information on a page. It also affects users who are deaf or hard of hearing and cannot perceive some or all auditory information on a page. Users who access digital information solely through keyboard controls can only interact with page if all elements can receive keyboard focus. If content is flashing or moving rapidly, it can trigger seizures in users who experience seizures. Complex, dense text and images can be difficult for users with cognitive disabilities.

Users without disabilities can also benefit from accessibility features. For example, users who are English Language Learners benefit from content that is compatible with screen readers, because screen readers can improve their experience. Users who are elderly may experience lower vision or limited physical movement, which means content that is keyboard accessible and high contrast is helpful. Also, users in busy or noisy spaces often make use of captions or transcripts, and mobile users can perceive content more easily when it is resizable and high contrast.

There are a few things you should know about PDF accessibility before we get into the nuts and bolts of how it happens. First, there is no due date for making your PDFs accessible. We are looking for a thoughtful, good faith effort focused on progress, not perfection. Second, it is unnecessary to purchase Adobe Acrobat for everyone in your department. We recommend purchasing one license for your department and putting it on a central computer. Alternatively, the library has Adobe Acrobat on its computers.

It can seem overwhelming to consider the number of PDFs on your website. Start by doing some housekeeping: Take down outdated an unnecessary PDFs. Prioritize public-facing, highly trafficked PDFs and new PDFs for remediation.

You can learn more about making PDFs accessible by attending a PDF accessibility workshop, scheduling a one-on-one training, or visiting the IT accessibility website. You will find the links and contact information for these trainings in this email.

If you don’t have time to make PDFs accessible yourself, there are other options. You can utilize the PDF accessibility service that ITS provides. This service is $15 per hour, and your PDFs will be returned to you made fully accessible. You can also hire and train a student worker to make your documents accessible.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss how to make PDFs accessible.