

TEXTBOOKS/ALTERNATE FORMAT INFORMATION

At the college level the use of print-based instructional materials, mostly textbooks, is still primarily how instructors deliver curricular content and materials. This system may work fine for the majority of students, but for those who struggle to read because of physical, sensory, cognitive, or learning differences, such materials may not be as effective.

Students are welcomed and encouraged to explore the rapidly-growing options for more accessible, specialized formats in order to have more open access to information. All students can access materials directly from publishers or through other commercial options. Commercial avenues are still somewhat limited, but this is changing all the time. Some publishers are beginning to offer CD-based textbooks consisting of digital text and audio recordings of each page. As an example, Pearson Publishing – a broad textbook resource – offers fully accessible HTML-based textbooks for sale and use by anyone. Another option is to obtain content from other fee-based providers, including online resources such as Audible.com.

Text-to-Speech technology is another option all students can consider. Also called screen readers, this option involved utilizing a scanner and computer with special software. Students scan textbooks and other reading material while the computer reads it back aloud. This option is available on the main campus in the Teaching/Learning Center on a first-come, first-serve basis. Instruction can be arranged as needed through Disability Services in D102.

Students can also purchase a scanner and screen reader software to use on their own computers. This option offers students the satisfaction of independently meeting their own needs using the latest assistive technology. The following websites are just some of the software programs available on line:

Textaloud: www.nextup.com

Read Please: www.readplease.com

E-Text Reader: www.readingmadeez.com

Read & Write Gold: www.texthelp.com

Assistive Technology as a Disability Service – Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM)

This term refers to specialized formats of textbooks and other curriculum materials that can be used by students with documented disabilities who are struggling readers, or are otherwise unable to access printed text. In its highest forms, all text is digital and can be read with text-to-speech software, modified with regard to font size, navigated by unit, chapter, section, page number, and can be converted to Braille.

If a student is unable effectively use printed text, he or she may benefit from instructional materials in specialized formats. Some methods may be available from the Office of Disability Services as a formal, no-cost accommodation. Every student has a different learning style, and AIM afford the flexibility to meet individual needs to among a broad range of students. From a formal standpoint, not all students will be eligible for, or benefit from, accessible instructional materials. Roughly speaking, two to three percent of the student population will be eligible under the law and other participation guidelines. As already noted earlier, however, all students may independently seek their own solutions or enhance their own learning styles through different routes, including commercial options and their own expense.

To receive AIM from an accessible media producer (e.g. Recordings for the Blind & Dyslexic, Bookshare.org, American Printing House, etc.), as a no-cost accommodation, students must be eligible for services from Disability Services. Eligibility is based on sufficient documentation of the print medium barrier, along with a clear history of utilizing alternative formats and materials as academic tools.

Please contact the Office of Disability Services for more information on available and recommended resources.