TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR ENSURING DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Radka NACHEVA[1*]

[1]*University of Economics, Faculty of Informatics, Varna, Bulgaria, r.nacheva@ue-varna.bg*

Abstract: Digital accessibility in the workplace is essential for creating an inclusive environment where all employees can fully participate. Trends include AI-powered accessibility solutions, voice user interfaces (VUI), mobile accessibility, inclusive design practices, and adhering to global accessibility standards like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Inclusive design goes beyond accessibility compliance, considering diverse user needs from the start of the design process. Global accessibility standards are increasingly adopted to ensure a consistent and globally inclusive digital workplace. Best practices for promoting digital accessibility include accessibility training for all employees, active involvement of people with disabilities in user testing, creating accessible documents, choosing collaboration and communication tools, conducting regular accessibility audits, designing and maintaining internal websites and intranet platforms, establishing clear accessibility policies and guidelines, implementing employee feedback mechanisms, and ensuring leadership commitment to fostering a culture of accessibility. Organizations can create a digital workplace that is not only accessible but also promotes a more inclusive and diverse work environment. In this regard, the paper aims to explore the global trends and good practices related to digital accessibility by deriving recommendations for ensuring digital accessibility in the workplace.

Keywords: Digital accessibility, inclusive design practices, workplace accessibility

1. Introduction

In the contemporary workplace, digital accessibility is a critical component of inclusive and equitable employment practices. Ensuring that digital tools and platforms are usable by all employees, including those with disabilities, is not just a moral and legal need (Jha, 2022) but also a competitive advantage as businesses depend more and more on them for everyday operations (Antonova & Ivanova, 2023; Stefanova-Yaneva, & Koleva, 2021). In this sense, it is important for companies today to consider digital accessibility which is maintaining legal compliance, improving productivity (Bhat et al., 2024), and creating an inclusive workplace.

Given that over 1.3 billion individuals, or 16% of the global population, live with a disability, the significance of digital accessibility is highlighted by the increasing awareness of the varied demands of the workforce (World Health Organization, 2023).

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[*] Corresponding author

Businesses may access a larger pool of talent by including accessibility features in their digital infrastructure. This talent pool includes people with disabilities who can provide special views and problem-solving abilities (Baker et. al., 2019). This variety of perspectives might result in more original solutions and a competitive advantage in the market. In this regard, digital accessibility has societal repercussions outside of the workplace (Raymond et. al., 2024). In line with international initiatives like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which support inclusive and equitable quality education and opportunities for lifelong learning for all, ensuring that digital technologies are accessible fosters social inclusion and equal opportunities for all people (United Nations, 2024).

In addition to meeting formal obligations, digital accessibility practices in the workplace promote an inclusive atmosphere that boosts creativity and productivity. As some authors state (Krok, 2024), one of the most important best practices in guaranteeing digital accessibility is the adoption of thorough accessibility standards and rules, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Following these recommendations enables businesses to comply with legal obligations such as the European Union's Accessibility Act and the United States Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as U.S. Department of Justice. (2022) and Whaley et. al. (2024) points out.

Major players in the technology industry, such as Apple (2025), Google (2025), Microsoft (2025), and Zoom Communications (2025) are setting the standard by including accessibility capabilities in their operating systems and software programs. Digital tools like speech recognition software (Leini & Xiaolei, 2021), screen readers (TiPï, 2023), and configurable user interfaces (Gaspar et al., 2024) enable employees with disabilities to communicate effectively, providing them with the necessary resources to perform their jobs efficiently.

As remote work and digital collaboration tools become more prevalent, companies are focusing on ensuring all workers can access these tools, necessitating a review and enhancement of their digital infrastructure. Employee awareness and training programs are essential for promoting an accessible culture (Peicheva, 2022a; Peicheva, 2022b). These programs frequently include workshops, online courses, and other materials that educate staff members about the difficulties faced by coworkers with disabilities and how to resolve them. AI-driven solutions can tailor user experiences, offer real-time support (Pandurska, 2022), and automate accessibility audits.

In this regard, the paper aims to explore the global trends and good practices related to digital accessibility by deriving recommendations for ensuring digital accessibility in the workplace.

The paper's objectives are related to:
- to analyze global trends in digital accessibility, focusing on innovations, policies, and strategies implemented by organizations to create more inclusive digital environments in the workplace;
- to offer actionable recommendations for organizations to ensure compliance, inclusivity, and a seamless user experience for all employees, including those with disabilities.

2. Literature Review

This paper explores digital accessibility trends and best practices in the workplace, including regulatory compliance, remote work, universal design, and AI-driven solutions. It uses qualitative methodology to gather insights from accessibility professionals and discusses the effectiveness of current best practices. The study emphasizes the importance of digital accessibility for workforce.

2.1. Trends in Digital Accessibility

Over time, trends in digital accessibility have changed, and the uptake of accessible digital resources has been fueled by legal compliance. To increase industry-wide compliance, the regulatory environment about digital accessibility is changing. Laws like Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act in the US and the European Union's Web Accessibility Directive have increased awareness and implementation of accessibility standards (Kjellstrand – Funka et al., 2022; Ferri & Favalli, 2018). Adhering to these guidelines mitigates legal risks and provides a competitive advantage by fostering an inclusive workforce (Tessema et al., 2023; Garrick et al., 2024). Globally, countries like Canada, Australia, and the UK have introduced or strengthened accessibility legislation, requiring businesses to prioritize digital inclusion (Kulkarni, 2018). Other papers show that proactively incorporating accessibility measures improves compliance rates, employee satisfaction, and innovation (Maher and Bevis, 2024; Khan et al., 2021). Legal penalties and reputational risks have encouraged companies to invest in accessibility initiatives early in the digital design process.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning have significantly improved digital accessibility (Todorov, 2024), enabling individuals with visual and auditory impairments to navigate digital environments more effectively (Isazade, 2023). Organizations investing in AI-powered assistive tools report increased employee engagement and productivity among disabled workers (Kruse et al., 2024). AI has also enhanced real-time speech-to-text transcription services, facial recognition software, and adaptive user interfaces (Cui & Yasseri, 2024; ZainEldin et al., 2024). AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants provide voice-activated navigation and instant accessibility support (Chetana, 2024). As these technologies continue to evolve, organizations are expected to experience greater inclusivity and improved workplace efficiency.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated remote work, highlighting the need for digital accessibility. Employers are developing digital-first strategies to accommodate hybrid workforces. Many remote collaboration tools lack accessibility features, limiting participation for disabled employees (Melo et al., 2024). Businesses are implementing accessible video conferencing platforms (Moreno et al., 2024), real-time captioning (Romero-Fresco & Fresno, 2023), sign language interpretation (Dogra et al., 2018), and voice-controlled interfaces (Rakotomalala et al., 2021). Cloud-based assistive technologies, like remote screen readers, have enabled disabled employees to work from various locations (Restianty et al., 2024). Prioritizing accessibility in remote work policies improves workforce retention and satisfaction.

2.2. Best Practices for Ensuring Digital Accessibility

The best practices for digital accessibility, include early integration of accessibility in development (Teixeira et al., 2024), training programs, and continuous testing and feedback loops (Campoverde-Molina et al., 2021). Early integration of accessibility in development, starting with WCAG standards and including accessibility testing throughout the design process, can lead to cost savings and improved user experiences. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are a widely accepted framework for digital accessibility, ensuring a more inclusive digital experience by addressing text alternatives, keyboard navigability, and color contrast (Dobbala & Lingolu, 2024). Businesses that integrate these guidelines into their platforms report higher compliance rates and user satisfaction (Casaca & Miguel, 2024). Expanding on WCAG requires implementing accessible design elements like resizable text, adaptable content structures, and high-contrast color schemes (Shah, 2024). Embedding accessibility principles in software development life cycles reduces compliance issues and modification costs, and user testing with individuals with disabilities ensures functional and practical accessibility features (Bi et al., 2021).

Regular digital accessibility audits are a proactive approach to ensure digital platforms comply with accessibility regulations (Multilingual, 2024; Interaction Design Foundation – IxDF, 2024). These audits use both automated tools and manual testing to identify and rectify accessibility barriers (Sarita et al., 2021). An effective audit strategy includes automated scanning tools, manual expert evaluations, and user testing with disabled individuals (Abascal et al., 2019). Integrating employee feedback in the auditing process can detect usability concerns that automated tools may overlook (Nguyen, 2024). An ongoing monitoring framework helps track accessibility improvements and adapt to evolving standards.

Inclusive design thinking is a strategy that incorporates accessibility into product and service development, enhancing usability for all employees, not just those with disabilities (Persson et al., 2014). By involving individuals with disabilities in the design process, companies create more user-friendly digital tools (Yokum, 2025). Co-design approaches, where people with disabilities actively contribute, also improve accessibility and innovation outcomes. Inclusive design promotes flexible user interfaces, allowing employees to customize their digital workspaces (Nitschke et al., 2020). A strong commitment to inclusivity fosters a culture of accessibility, making digital work environments more efficient and accommodating for diverse employees.

Employee training programs are essential for promoting accessibility in organizations. Regular training helps designers, developers, and HR personnel create and maintain accessible digital content (Martins, 2022; Mishra & Painoli, 2024). These programs also increase awareness and encourage proactive accessibility practices. Integrating assistive technologies, such as speech recognition software, text-to-speech tools, and braille displays, enhances digital accessibility and provides better support for employees with disabilities (Oyedokun, 2024; Brotosaputro et al., 2024). This ensures greater independence and efficiency for businesses.

3. Method

This research provides a comprehensive method that can be described as a staged approach to processing and analyzing text data from research databases. The process integrates retrieval, preprocessing, text analysis, and visualization to effectively manage, interpret, and present data on specific research topics. Figure 1 shows the stages of the applied research method.
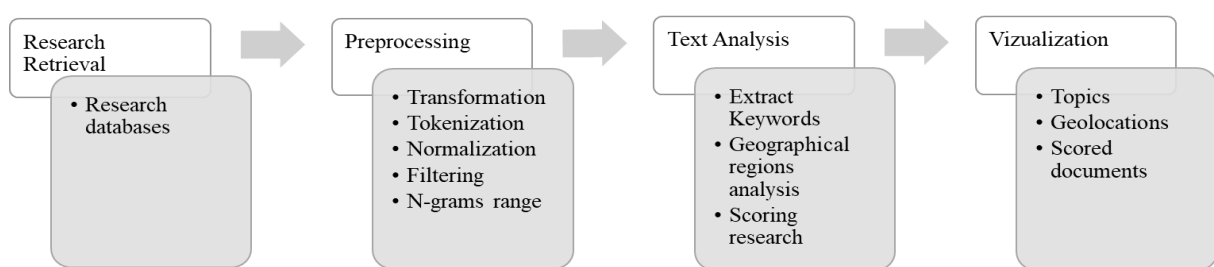

Figure 1. Research Method
Source: Author

The **research retrieval stage** involves identifying and retrieving relevant documents from research databases like JSTOR, PubMed, Scopus, or specialized ones. This involves keyword searches, retrieving documents meeting specific criteria, and exporting them in formats like CSV, JSON, or XML for further preprocessing.

The **preprocessing stage** involves converting data from its original format into plain text for effective analysis. Techniques for text analysis include transformation, tokenization, normalization, filtering, and N-grams range. Transformation converts data into plain text, tokenization splits text into units, normalization standardizes text, filtering removes irrelevant

content, and N-grams range captures individual words, pairs, or triples for context and keyword extraction.

The **text analysis stage** aims to extract meaningful insights from processed text through keyword extraction, regional focus, and document scoring. TF-IDF and advanced NLP algorithms are used to prioritize significant terms, identify geographical regions, and evaluate document relevance using a scoring method based on keyword frequency.

The **visualization stage** aims to present insights and analysis results through visual representations, making information more accessible and interpretable. The process involves creating an ontology to visualize relationships among keywords, topics, and concepts, mapping geographical references for global reach, and displaying document scores to show relevance using metrics like word count, presence, or similarity.

This research method enables researchers to handle large text datasets effectively. By systematically retrieving, preprocessing, analyzing, and visualizing data, the approach provides a structured framework for identifying, scoring, and understanding large volumes of research documents.

4. Results and Discussion

In accordance with the research method, we performed an experiment with Orange Data Mining (Figure 2). At the research retrieval stage, we extracted the titles and abstracts of 10,000 publications from the PubMed database. In the next phase of the method - preprocessing, we did the processing of the extracted texts. The transformation was done - accents were removed, all letters were made lowercase, URLs were removed. Tokenization was done based on whitespace. WordNet lemmatizer was used to extract key phrases consisting of 3 words. Numbers were removed and stopwords in English were applied.

In the text analysis stage, the Extract Keywords module is applied with the scoring method TD-IDF and aggregation by the max number. The Document Map module was also used to analyze the distribution of authors by geographic region.
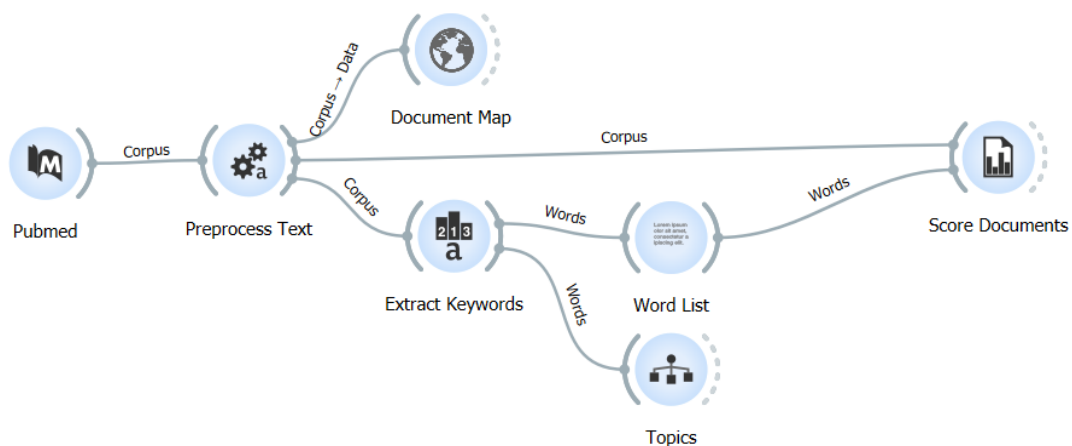

Figure 2. Orange Data Mining Experiment Setup
Source: Author

In the last visualization stage, we created insights about the extracted key phrases, geo locations, and document scoring. Figure 3 shows the top 30 key phrases extracted from the PubMed documents.

development future technology
learning management system
current diagnostic approach
use systematic approach
use technology model
mobile technology analysis
analysis scientific impact
online medical support
advance health service
advance treatment review.
virtual future medical
access health data
advance imaging access
online health care
model learning application

application data public
cognitive application digital
technology education application
mental health service
access digital information
artificial health scope
information challenge virtual
health digital disease
digital trend analysis.
future digital artificial
technology artificial review
artificial digital data
old people digital
digital divide internet
digital improve access

Figure 3. Extracted Research Papers Topics
Source: Author

They indicate a strong focus on emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and future advancements. There is a significant emphasis on technology modelling, trend analysis, and systematic approaches to innovation. These themes suggest an interest in understanding how technology evolves and its potential applications across various sectors. The role of AI in shaping the future is a recurring topic within this category.

Healthcare and medical technology appear as dominant areas of interest, with keyphrases related to digital health services, and AI-driven diagnostics. The focus extends to accessing health data, improving medical treatments, and enhancing imaging technologies through digital advancements. Online medical support and virtual healthcare indicate a growing reliance on technology for remote patient care. This suggests an ongoing shift towards more accessible, AI-integrated healthcare solutions. Educational and cognitive applications are also notable in the extracted keyphrases. The role of technology in improving education, particularly through digital applications, is a key theme. Cognitive and AI-based applications further indicate a focus on data-driven learning and adaptive educational tools. This reflects a broader trend of integrating AI into both formal education and skill development.

Another important theme is digital accessibility and societal impact, especially concerning older populations and internet access disparities. Keyphrases highlight the digital divide, emphasizing challenges in ensuring equal access to technology and information. The impact of mobile technology, public data applications, and digital services on different demographics is also a focus. This suggests an interest in bridging digital gaps and making technology more inclusive for all.

Figure 4 shows a geographic map of the world, showing the distribution of publications by location. Dark red shows the "hot" regions, or the countries of origin of most publications. White shows countries and regions from which no papers were extracted.
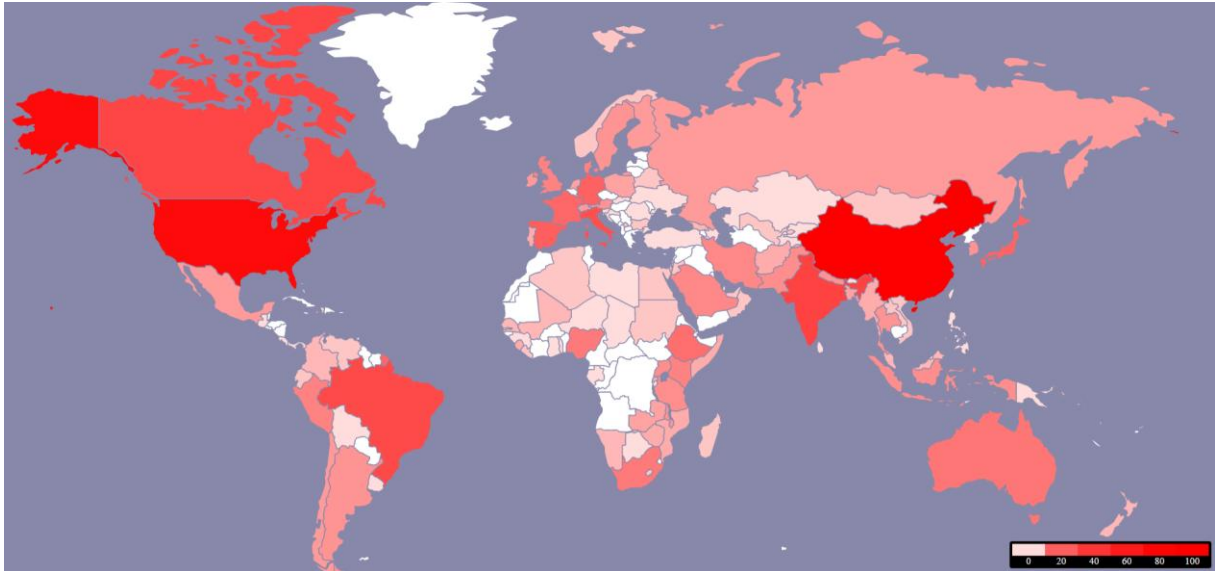
Figure 4. Geolocations Map
Source: Author

Based on the 10,000 papers retrieved, it is seen that the most active authors are from North America, specifically the USA and Canada, followed by China, India, Brazil, Germany, Italy and Spain. Of course, the analysis is based only on publications in PubMed, not taking into account publication activity from other databases or interest in digital accessibility topics in general.

Finally, we also evaluated the top 10 documents that most closely match the extracted key phrases from Figure 3. The result is shown in Figure 5.

	Document	Similarity
2334	Intervening conditions of the implementation of an Advanced Access Model: an implementation research.	0.491
8870	Bridging healthcare access: strategies beyond the COVID-19 public health emergency.	0.407
142	Virtual Primary Care-Improving Access, Efficiency, and Patient Experience.	0.390
4057	Navigating the future: Ensuring quality research with open access.	0.383
3124	Patterns of digital health access and use among US adults: A latent class analysis.	0.379
2769	Research on healthcare data sharing in the context of digital platforms considering the risks of data breaches.	0.378
5549	To read or not to read – A cross-sectional study of Swedish primary care patients' adoption of patient accessible electronic health records.	0.378
3748	Application of privacy protection technology to healthcare big data.	0.364
6161	Minimally Invasive Access Cavity Designs: A Review.	0.361
5081	Exploring the determinants of online health service usage intentions under the threat of air pollution.	0.360

Figure 5. Top 10 Scored Documents by Similarity
Source: Author

The evaluation is based on the principle of similarity, with the results summarized based on the arithmetic average number of occurrences of key phrases in a document

5. Conclusion

Digital accessibility in the workplace is crucial for a safe and inclusive environment. Legal compliance, technological advancements, and proactive best practices are essential. Trends like AI-driven assistive tools and remote work adaptations influence accessibility. Adherence to WCAG standards, accessibility audits, inclusive design, training programs, and assistive technologies are key strategies. Further research and investment in digital accessibility are necessary for equal opportunities.

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