

Accessibility certification programme for eBook publishers

UNITED STATES/BENETECH – GCA PUBLISHER CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME

Benetech is a US-based non-profit organization that is a leading provider of free and accessible software and is well-known for its online accessible library called Bookshare. Benetech launched the Global Certified Accessible™ (GCA) certification in 2017, which provides accessibility certification for eBooks and certifies the entire workflow of publishers. In 2021, 17 leading publishers and eBook producers such as Jones & Bartlett, Guilford Press, and Macmillan have received certification.

Problem targeted

Reviewing the accessibility of eBooks traditionally looks at certifying individual publications rather than the entire production process.

Solution, innovation, and impact

Benetech's GCA™ certification programme supports publishers to ensure all eBooks are accessible from the start by reviewing the entire workflow process, therefore avoiding the need for reviews of individual titles. The certification process is a detailed analysis of over 100 accessibility features that follows the EPUB (electronic publication) guidelines and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0.

"I look forward to the day when all publishers make their books accessible as a first decision."

Kari Tapie, Los Angeles Unified School District

After the analysis has been completed, GCA™ recommends measures to improve accessibility where necessary. Work flows are given an overall score and a pass/fail notification, along with a narrative summary and an 'at-a-glance' snapshot of how each feature met certification criteria. Once accredited, a publisher is granted an annual subscription licence to auto-certify titles produced by that workflow. The publisher can then use Benetech's CGA™ certification seal on all promotional materials and to specify that its eBook title is certified. In 2021 over 40 more companies were in the process of certification.

Outlook, transferability, and funding

The one time-cost for the publisher covering



Using Global Certified Accessible ebooks.

accreditation of the workflow process varies between \$2,000 and \$8,000, and the annual subscription costs between \$1,500 and \$6,000. The programme is supported by a cooperative agreement with the US Department of Education and private funding and fee-based services. Benetech utilizes automated EPUB checking technology, which reviews around 25 per cent of the basic accessibility features, with the company conducting manual checks on the remainder. The use of Artificial Intelligence and machine learning being explored to speed up the process and bring down the costs. Benetech is aiming for at least 100 publishers over the next three to five years.

FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2017

- In 2021, 600+ eBooks were available after certification.
- 17 publishers/eBook producers have received GCA™ certification as of 2021.
- GCA™ covers more than 100 accessibility features.
- *A practice from the Business Sector.*



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