

Trajectories in Digital Accessibility (From Past to Present, and Looking to the Future)
by Dr. Chris M. Law, May 16, 2019—Summary Table

	Accessibility Testing	Legal Issues	Organizational Responses
The Past (-10 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on AT Testing with Screen Readers and magnifiers ('the last days of vinyl') • Code Testing in early stages • Automation in infancy • Accessibility ≠ Usability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In digital accessibility, few complaints; few suits. • In 508, no complaints allowed (seen by many in government as 'success') 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of evidence of what not to do (e.g., bold but odd statements) • Almost non-existent practice • Some studies (e.g., Chris Law's PhD), and guidance (e.g., Jeff Kline's book on 'Strategic IT Accessibility')
Now (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many, many players, with very different approaches to sell ('cereal aisle'). • Difficult for consumers to determine best approach • Piecemeal adoption in industry; very low in small businesses. • A Strengthening testing community • Usability and Accessibility beginning to merge ('vinyl revival!') 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawsuits are being brought because they can be (and because they are likely to win or reach settlement) • Explosive growth in the number of lawsuits • Information on suits shared mainly in the press (but first Summit in 2019**) • Lots of service providers offering help (but same 'cereal-aisle' problems)* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased focus and more sources of advice • Piecemeal implementation • Song-and-dance advertising of 'achievements' (half-hearted inclusion programs) • Not integrated into mainstream conferences on organizational aspects (e.g., HR, Procurement, IT Services)
Possible Future (+5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best testing methods integrated into mainstream QA/QC testing suites. • Fewer players; better tools; More automation • Standardized reporting of accessibility levels (like nutrition labels*) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companies established in 'safe harbors' (and laws to that effect if reporting sufficiently standardized?) • Solid guidance and practice being utilized by legal and accessibility professionals • Less lawsuits; more inclusive proactive practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many companies adopting inclusion as a matter of course (understated, run-of-the-mill) • HR conferences include accessibility; other mainstream organizational conferences too
Trajectories	Currently at a fork in the road: One way leads to the Wild West, the other leads to integration with mainstream QA testing.	Where the real money is and will continue to be made (by lawyers). But... could be a catalyst for better testing standards and organizational change.	Where the most impactful change will happen. Progress is being made towards integration, and it will begin to speed up.
Accessibility Track initiatives (Chris Law)	The 4th Annual ICT Accessibility Testing Symposium, Fall, DC. <i>(* Standardized Reporting Meeting, open but RSVP needed, June 20, DC.)</i>	The 2nd Annual Digital Accessibility Legal Summit, 2020 <i>(** Planned forthcoming publication on the outcomes of the 2019 Summit)</i>	The Accessibility Switchboard Information Portal from the NFB