



Accessibility Act: gamechanger for accessible books

Elisa Molinari

Project manager @ Fondazione LIA

Richard Orme

CEO @ DAISY Consortium

Meet your accessibility forecasters



Meet Elisa Molinari of Fondazione LIA

- Italian, CSUN rookie, Lakers super fan
- Project manager at **Fondazione LIA**, an Italian non-profit organization aimed at fostering the adoption of accessibility in the publishing industry. LIA offers consultancy, training and Quality Assurance services for e-books and websites to publishers and all the actors in the book value chain.
- Member of the Federation European Publishers Accessibility Task force.



Meet Richard from DAISY Consortium



- British, CSUN veteran, chicken super fan
- CEO at **DAISY Consortium**, international membership organization dedicated to digitally accessible information.
- Founding member of the UK's Publishing Accessible Action Group, Accessible Books Consortium, RNIB volunteer, Vice Chair of Warwickshire Vision, dyslexia speaker

Who are you?



The clock is ticking

- European Accessibility Act will apply to new products and services on the market, including ebooks and their ecosystem, starting from **June 28, 2025**.
- All businesses, **including American** e-reader manufacturers, publishers and e-book service providers, wishing to sell their products and services in the European market need to comply with the Directive's accessibility requirements.



EU Directive on the accessibility requirements for products and services



June 2019	Approved by the EU Commission
June 2022	EU Member States adopt and publish national laws, regulations and administrative provisions to comply with the Act. They shall immediately communicate the text of those provisions to the Commission.
June 2025	Will enter in force in all EU Member States
June 2030	Member State should submit the first report by the European Commission on the application of the Act. This reporting must be done every five years thereafter

Want to know more about the EAA?



In 2019 Fondazione LIA published a whitepaper that identifies **the role each actor may play** in the accessible digital publishing ecosystem, describes the **critical elements to be considered** and provides the **relevant references** to the international standard accessibility specifications or guidelines to be followed:

- The new legislative framework
- An accessible digital publishing ecosystem
- Metadata standards for accessibility
- Technical annexes and LIA case study

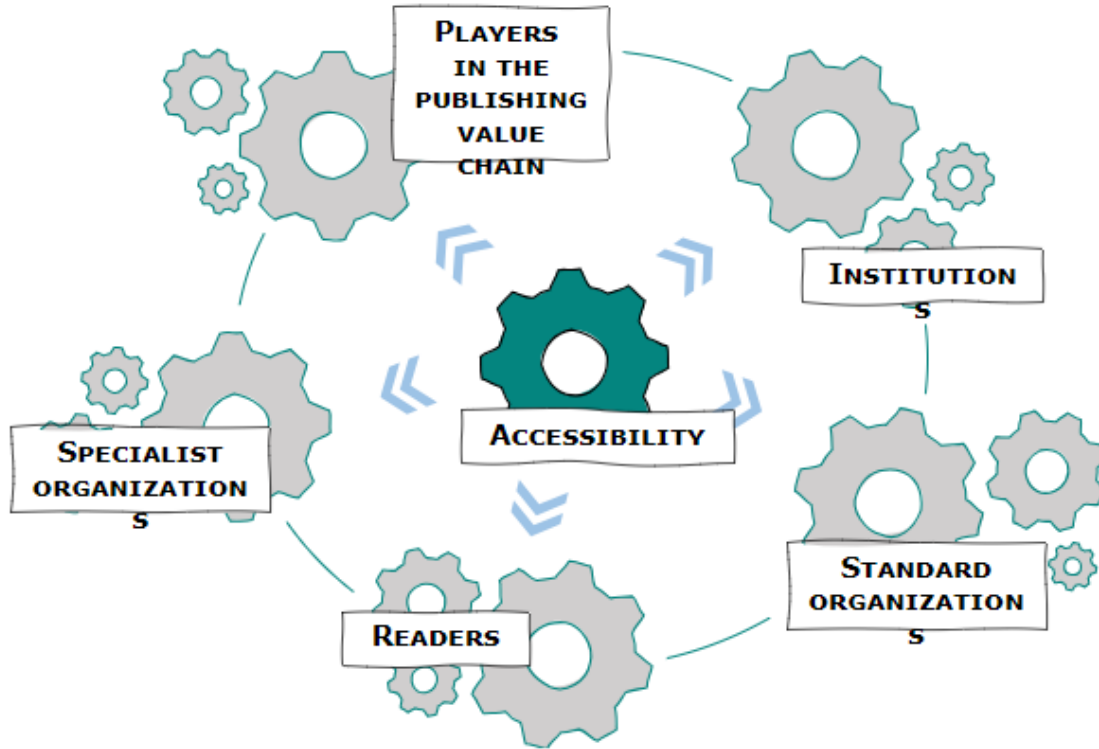


Mapping and standards

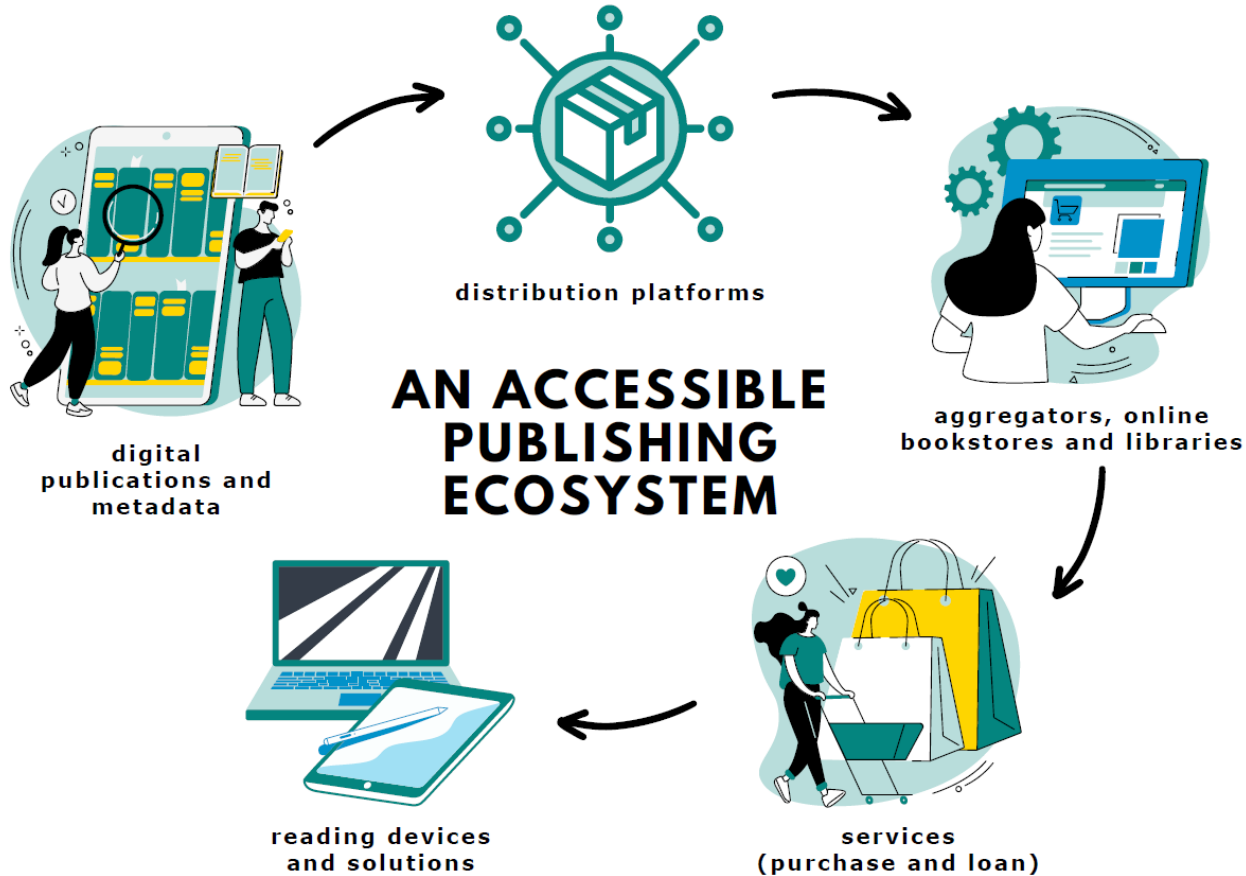


- Fondazione LIA has prepared a detailed document on the compliance of the already existing publishing standards (**EPUB, ONIX, Schema.org**) with the EAA requirements: [EUROPEAN ACCESSIBILITY ACT: REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE ART OF PUBLISHING STANDARDS](#)
 - Based on this document, the Federation of European Publishers (FEP) published an open position paper to foster the adoption by the EU Commission of these industry standards as technical specifications fulfilling the requirements of the EAA
-

A paradigm shift for all the players



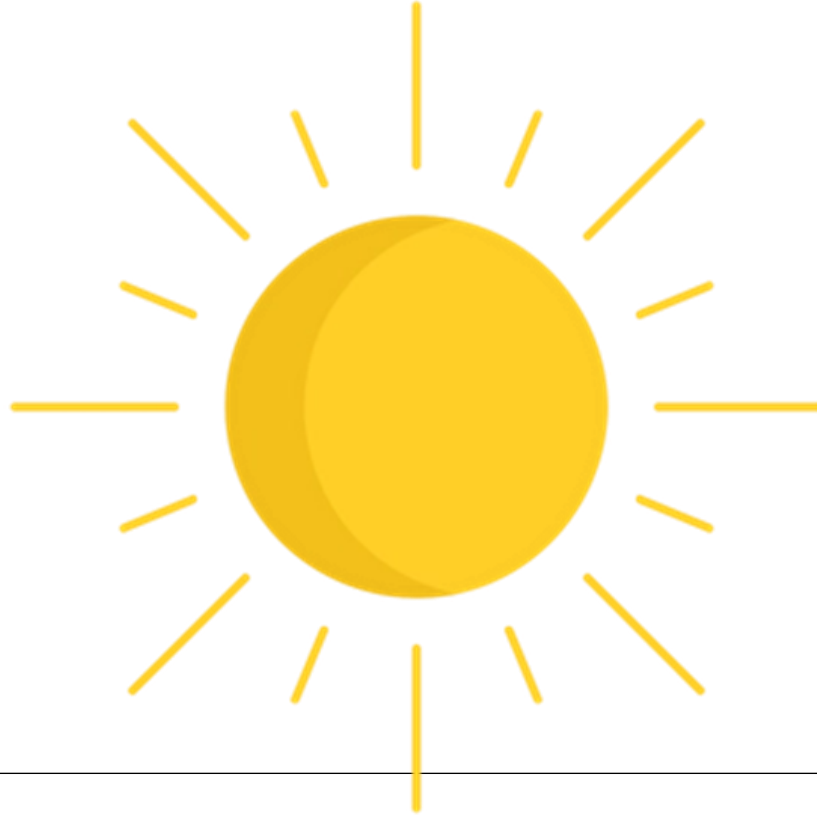
Towards an accessible digital ecosystem



The new accessibility barometer



Sunny for end-users, educators and e-books



End users & educators



- According to the **European Disability Forum**, in 2019 there were over **100 million people with disabilities** in the European Union
 - According to the **World Health Organization**, it is estimated that in Europe there are:
 - **2,550,000 blind people**
 - **23,800,000 low vision people**
 - **26,350,000** visually impaired individuals in total
 - The number of European citizens with **dyslexia** and specific **learning disorders** ranges **between 9% and 12%** of the population
-

The European ebook market



According to the ABELab project:

- More than half million new titles every year
- In early 2023, the backlist of ebooks available in the EU market exceeded 3.5 million.



Italy: a catalogue of born accessible ebooks



Fondazione LIA works side by side with **76 Italian publishing imprints** to create and maintain a [catalogue of born accessible ebooks](#) updated every day

+ 35.000
Born and mainstream accessible **fiction and non-fiction ebooks**

Quality control title by title guarantees publishers, retailers and users

Mainstream Distribution channels
Online store, libraries, Aggregators, Books in Print Catalogue
+ information to Authorized Entities

The screenshot shows the website for Fondazione LIA (Libri Italiani Accessibili). The header includes the logo and navigation links for 'HOME' and 'CATALOGO'. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- GENERI** (Genres): A list of categories including NARRATIVA, SAGGISTICA, MANUALISTICA, RAGAZZI, and ALTRO.
- IL CATALOGO LIA** (The LIA Catalogue): A section with links for 'FONDAZIONE LIA, CHI SIAMO', 'EDITORI IN CATALOGO', and 'DOVE TROVARE GLI E-BOOK LIA'.
- COME LEGGERE** (How to Read): A section with links for 'GUIDA ALLA LETTURA DIGITALE' and 'GUIDA AGLI E-BOOK'.
- PROVA EBOOK ACCESSIBILE** (Try Accessible Ebook): A section with the link 'PROVA UN EBOOK ACCESSIBILE GRATIS'.
- AIUTO E FAQ** (Help and FAQ): A section with the link 'FAQ'.

On the right side, there is a 'NOVITÀ' (New Arrivals) section featuring two book covers:

- Ultima notte a Manhattan** by Don Winslow, published by Einaudi, priced at €9,99.
- Una terra promessa** by Barack Obama, published by Garzanti, priced at €14,99.

New projects of collaboration



APACE - Accelerating Publishing Accessibility through Collaboration in Europe

It's a network set to enhance social inclusion creating a dialogue between publishers and specialist organizations producing accessible publications. It aims to fill the current gap of competences and creating a new generation of professional experts



Activities

- Capacity building through training courses and an Accessibility Summer School
- Networking opportunities: Meet-Ups and "Ask the Experts"
- Awareness events to promote accessibility best practices
- Pilot projects experimenting new methods for producing and distributing accessible ebooks

European publishers



Challenges



Accessible ebook production



- Standards and best practices - well developed and mature
 - Automated and assisted checker tools in place
 - Big publishers and vendors have adapted their systems
 - Widely used InDesign has been slow but now moving
 - Free ebook production tools are there for small producers
-

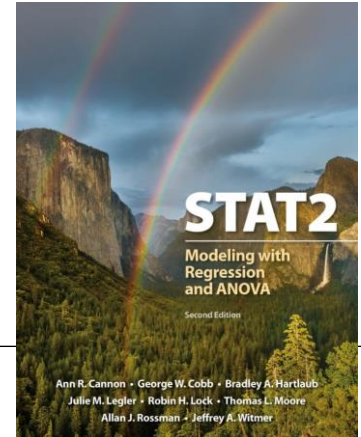
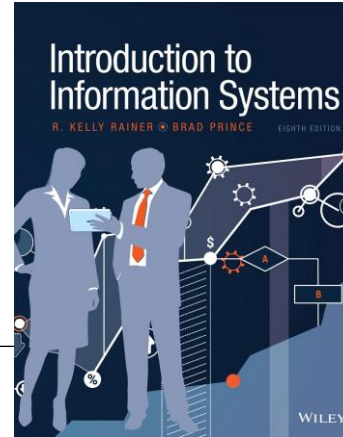
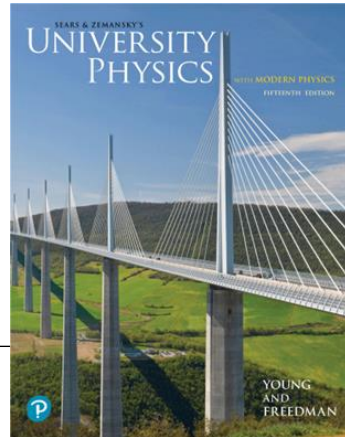
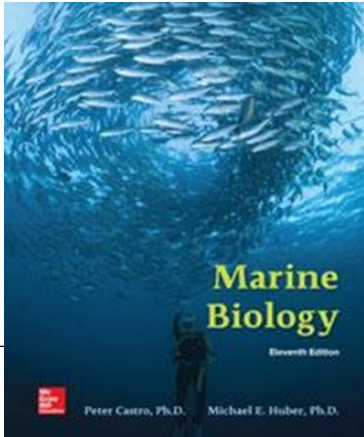
Not just for novels - Math/STEM and more



eBooks leverage web technologies, including a11y

Complex books with rich extended “descriptions”

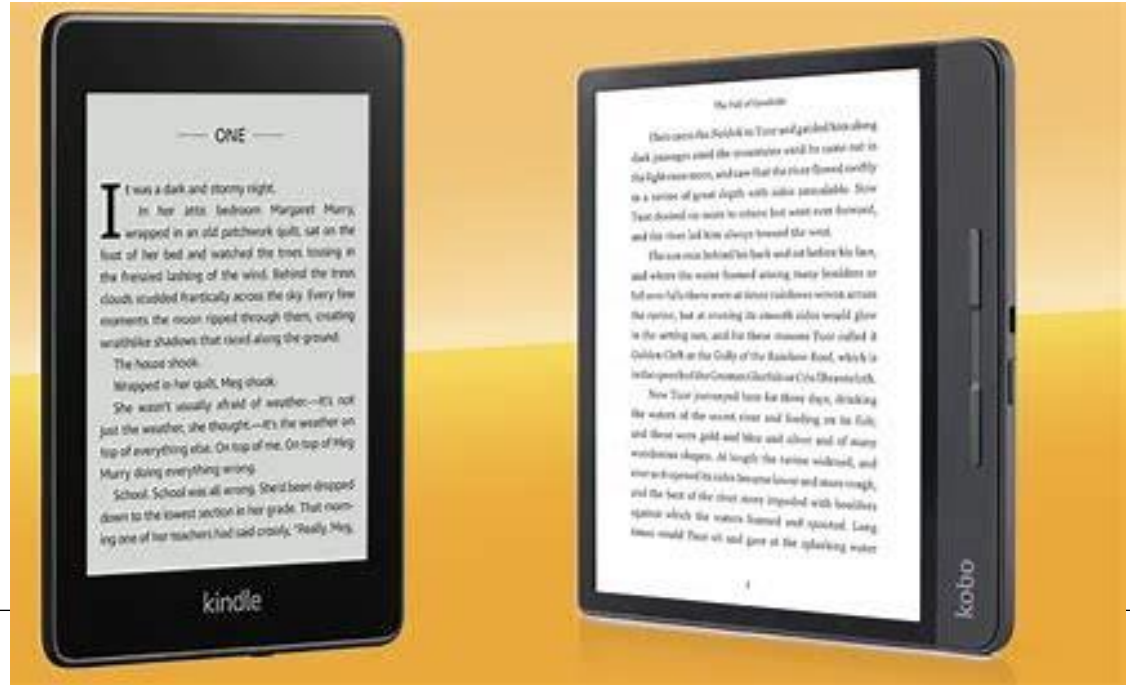
Math and Chemistry as MathML



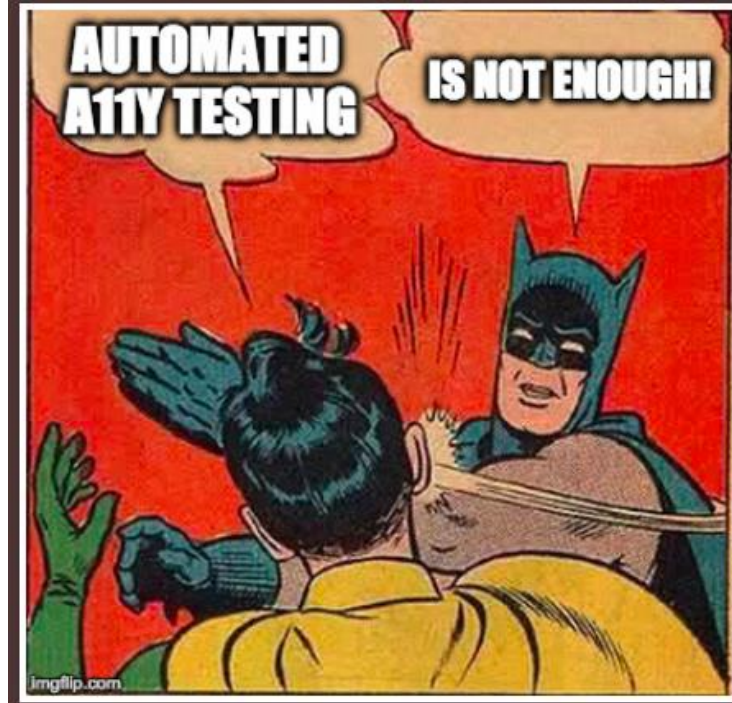
Reading apps and devices



Products – hardware devices such as eReaders
Services – apps and websites



Automated testing is not enough



The backlist



ABE Lab - Accessible Backlist Ebooks Laboratory

The project (promoted by EDRLab with Fondazione LIA and Koninklijke Bibliotheeka) aims to analyze processes and workflows by which ebooks of different types and formats can be transformed into accessible EPUBs in the easiest and less costly way



Activities

- Collection of data on ebooks backlists
- Identification of recurrent accessibility issues and workflows to remediate them
- Identification of open-source and commercial tools for remediation
- Testing of the tools to define the most effective workflows depending on the ebook complexity

Metadata: What about the display?



Accessibility metadata: most common mistakes



At Fondazione LIA we have developed a methodology, tools and infrastructure for ebook Quality Assurance that benefits from the best of machines and the best of humans. The most common mistakes we find are:

- Accessibility metadata that do not reflect the content of the accessible file (e.g., MathML even where no formulas are present)
 - Or presence of features within the e-book that are not listed in the accessibility metadata (e.g., TOC, or page-list)
- Lack of specification conformance metadata
 - Or metadata indicating conformance to specifications, even when there are serious accessibility errors
- Indications in the Accessibility Summary metadata (free text) that are not listed in the machine-readable metadata

What's next



Long range forecast

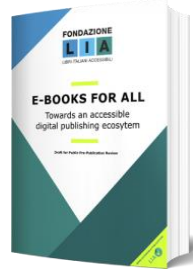


- Workflow integration and optimization
- Exploring Artificial Intelligence for image description, summarization, translation, interrogation
- More complex accessible books with fixed layout: comics, children illustrated books, art books
- Areas not directly covered by the EAA – learning management systems, audiobooks, journals

Resources



- **E-books for all. Towards an accessible publishing ecosystem**: a manual that identifies the role each actor may play in the accessible digital publishing ecosystem, describes the critical elements to be considered and provides the relevant references to the international standard accessibility specifications or guidelines to be followed
- Our **newsletter** with news from the world of accessible publishing and reading, news on regulations and standards, events and Reading in the dark®, training courses and inclusion projects, the latest news from the LIA catalogue
- [Trello board](#) **Tools for Accessible Publishing**



Resources



- inclusivepublishing.org – articles, case studies, resources, mailing list, more
- Tools from DAISY
 - EPUBCheck, ACESMART, Knowledge Base, WordToEPUB
- Tools from others
 - Bookalope
 - Kindle, Thorium Reader, Vitalsource Bookshelf
- Publishing @ W3C

Call to Action



- If you are an author, publisher, platform – don't fall behind your competition or become legally vulnerable, get up to speed with requirements
 - If you are an educator – save time and money, deliver better for your students and increasingly leave the world of retrofitting accessibility behind
 - If you are a print disabled reader – wherever in the world you are, enjoy the positive benefits of the EAA, as the publishing industry makes ebooks accessible out of the box
-

Q&A

