Accessibility Evaluation Report:

MIT Press Direct

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Conducted by: Accessiblü, LLC

For: Library Accessibility Network (LAA)

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Summary of Accessibility Findings

Accessiblü conducted a **high-level accessibility evaluation** of the MIT Press Direct learning platform to assess its usability for individuals with disabilities. The review was conducted using the JAWS 2025 screen reader, keyboard-only navigation, and manual inspection for conformance to select WCAG 2.2 AA success criteria.

Key Findings

This report identifies several critical accessibility barriers that prevent users relying on assistive technologies from effectively navigating the site, searching for books or resources, and accessing content. The platform has significant accessibility issues that require urgent attention to ensure equal access for all users.

Addressing these issues would significantly improve the experience for users with disabilities, particularly those using screen readers or keyboard-only navigation. Without remediation, these users will continue to experience frustration and may be unable to complete essential tasks within the platform.

Top 3 Issues Identified

1. **Inadequate Screen reader Support**
   a. Brief description: The platform lacks proper ARIA landmarks, semantic structures, and appropriate announcements for dynamic content changes.
   b. Impact: Blind and low-vision users cannot efficiently navigate the platform, understand its structure, or be notified of content updates.
   c. WCAG Success Criteria: 1.3.1 Info and Relationships (A), 4.1.2 Name, Role, Value (A)
2. **Improper Heading Structure**
   a. Brief description: Headings are used out of sequence and inappropriately throughout the platform, with content jumping between heading levels and using headings for non-header content.
   b. Impact: Screen reader users who rely on heading navigation cannot form a clear mental model of the page structure.
   c. WCAG Success Criteria: 1.3.1 Info and Relationships (A), 2.4.6 Headings and Labels (AA)

3. **Non-Accessible Interactive Elements**
   a. Brief description: Many interactive elements like expandable menus are implemented as links instead of buttons and lack proper state announcements (expanded/collapsed).
   b. Impact: Users cannot reliably identify or operate interactive elements, particularly those relying on screen readers and keyboard navigation.
   c. WCAG Success Criteria: 2.1.1 Keyboard (A), 4.1.2 Name, Role, Value (A)

Disabilities Impacted

Blind and Low-Vision Users

- **Issues:** Missing alternative text for images, poorly labeled links, inaccessible PDFs, improper heading structures, and failure to announce dynamic content changes.
- **Impact:** Screen reader users struggle to navigate the site efficiently, cannot identify the purpose of many elements, lose focus during interactions, and receive inadequate feedback about their current location within the platform.

Users with Motor Disabilities

- **Issues:** Lack of visible focus indicators, improper button/link implementation, and inconsistent keyboard navigation patterns.
- **Impact:** Keyboard-only users will struggle to understand which elements are interactive, may become trapped in certain components, and experience unpredictable focus management.

Neurodiverse Users

- **Issues:** Inconsistent layout patterns, unpredictable behavior, lack of clear feedback on user actions, and poor informational architecture.
- **Impact:** Users with cognitive disabilities will have difficulty forming a mental model of the site, predicting how interactions work, and understanding the results of their actions.

Page-Specific Findings and Impact Analysis

The following section lists the accessibility findings by page and WCAG violations and describes their impact on users.

MIT Press Direct Gateway (Landing Page)

Issue	WCAG Success Criteria	Description	Example
Missing Alternative Text	**1.1.1 Non-text Content (A)**	Images are announced generically as "graphic" without descriptive alternative text.	"Link graphic books gateway" is announced but provides no context.
Landmarks Not Identified	**1.3.1 Info and Relationships (A)**	Landmark regions are not properly identified. Only navigation regions are announced.	Screen reader only identifies "navigation region" with no other landmarks like search, main, or footer.
Inconsistent heading levels	**2.4.6 Headings and Labels (AA)**	Heading levels are used inconsistently and inappropriately.	Content skips heading levels and extended text is incorrectly marked as headings.
Improper ARIA markup	**4.1.2 Name, Role, Value (A)**	Interactive elements don't use proper ARIA roles or states.	Expandable menus are announced as links instead of buttons with expanded/collapsed states.

Impact Summary:

The MIT Press Direct landing page's lack of proper landmark regions makes it difficult for screen reader users to understand the page structure. Inconsistent headings further complicate navigation, while poorly labeled images and interactive elements leave users unable to understand the purpose of key platform features.
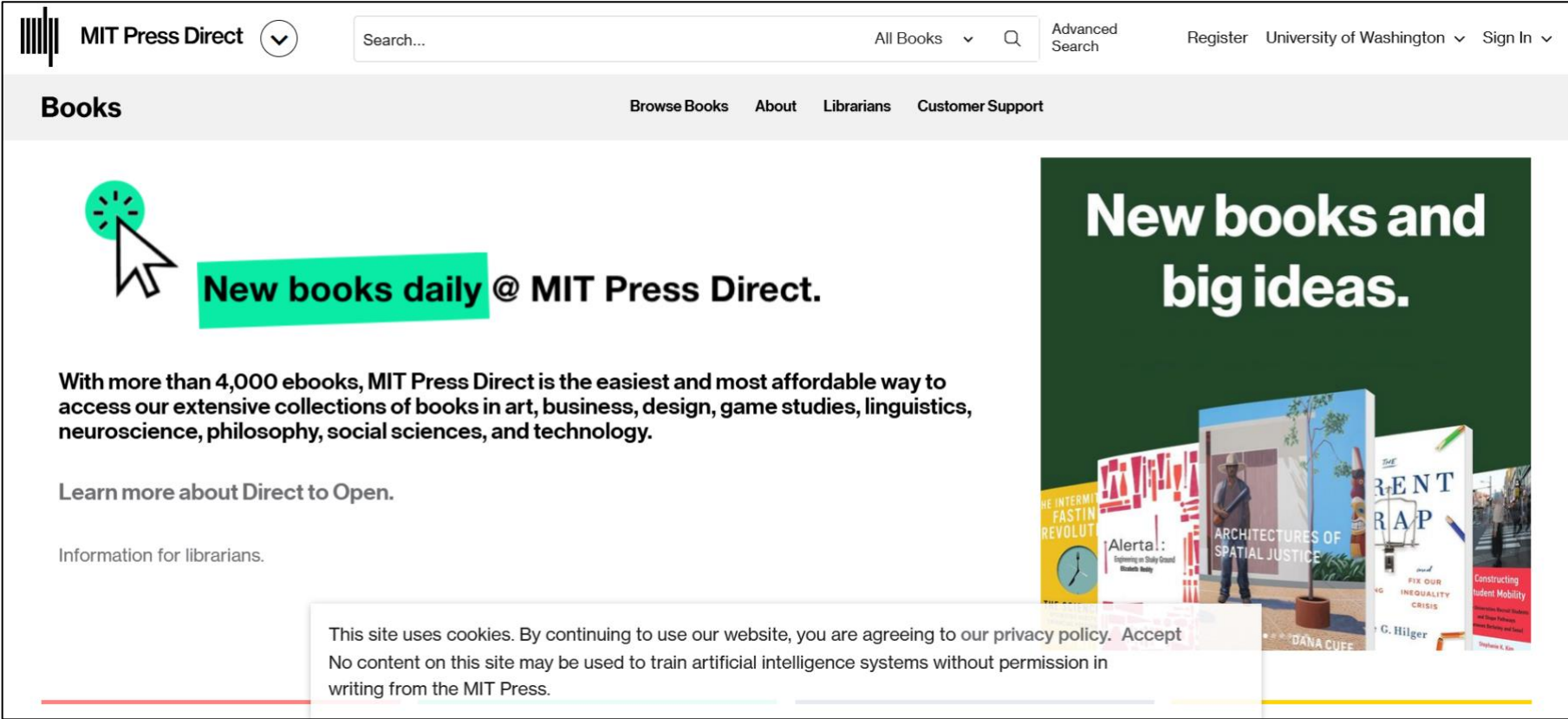
MIT Press Direct Landing Page

Figure 1. Screenshot of the MIT Press Direct landing page.

MIT Press Direct Search Page

Issue	WCAG Success Criteria	Description	Example
Color-only Indicators	**1.4.1 Use of Color (A)**	Resource availability is indicated only by color (red/green).	Available resources have a green box, unavailable ones have a red box, but this is not conveyed to screen readers.
Loss of Keyboard Focus	**2.4.3 Focus Order (A)**	Focus is lost after interacting with certain elements.	After collapsing sort options, focus jumps back to the search input instead of remaining at the user's location.
Lack of Meaningful Link Descriptions	**2.4.4 Link Purpose (A)**	Links use URLs as their accessible names rather than descriptive text.	Links are announced as "Link https://doi.org..." rather than with meaningful descriptions.
Missing Live Regions	**4.1.3 Status Messages (AA)**	Search results are not properly announced when filters are applied.	Users aren't notified when checking a filter changes the displayed results.

Impact Summary:

The search page presents significant barriers to screen reader users. They cannot tell which resources are available versus unavailable, receive no notification when filters change the results, lose their place when interacting with controls, and cannot determine the purpose of many links.

MIT Press Direct Search Results Example

Figure 2. The page shows the search results for the term "marketing."

Book Navigation (The Feeling of Space)

Issue	WCAG Success Criteria	Description	Example
Incorrect PDF Headings	**1.3.1 Info and Relationships (A)**	PDFs have incorrect semantic structure with paragraphs marked as headings.	All paragraphs in the PDF are announced as "heading level 2" instead of normal text.
PDFs Missing Page Identification	**2.4.2 Page Titled (A)**	PDF pages lack proper identification.	Users cannot determine which page they're on or how many total pages exist.
Unidentified Link Destination	**2.4.4 Link Purpose (A)**	PDF links for different sections lack proper accessible names.	All PDF links are announced simply as "Link PDF" without indicating which section they refer to.
Users Not Notified of Page Changes.	**3.2.2 On Input (A)**	Navigation between PDF pages doesn't provide context of page changes.	When moving between pages in the PDF, users aren't notified of page changes.

Impact Summary:

The book-viewing experience is particularly problematic for screen reader users. The PDFs inspected had incorrect semantic structure, making it impossible to distinguish between headings and paragraphs. Page navigation provides no context about the current location or total pages, and links to different sections all have identical accessible names.
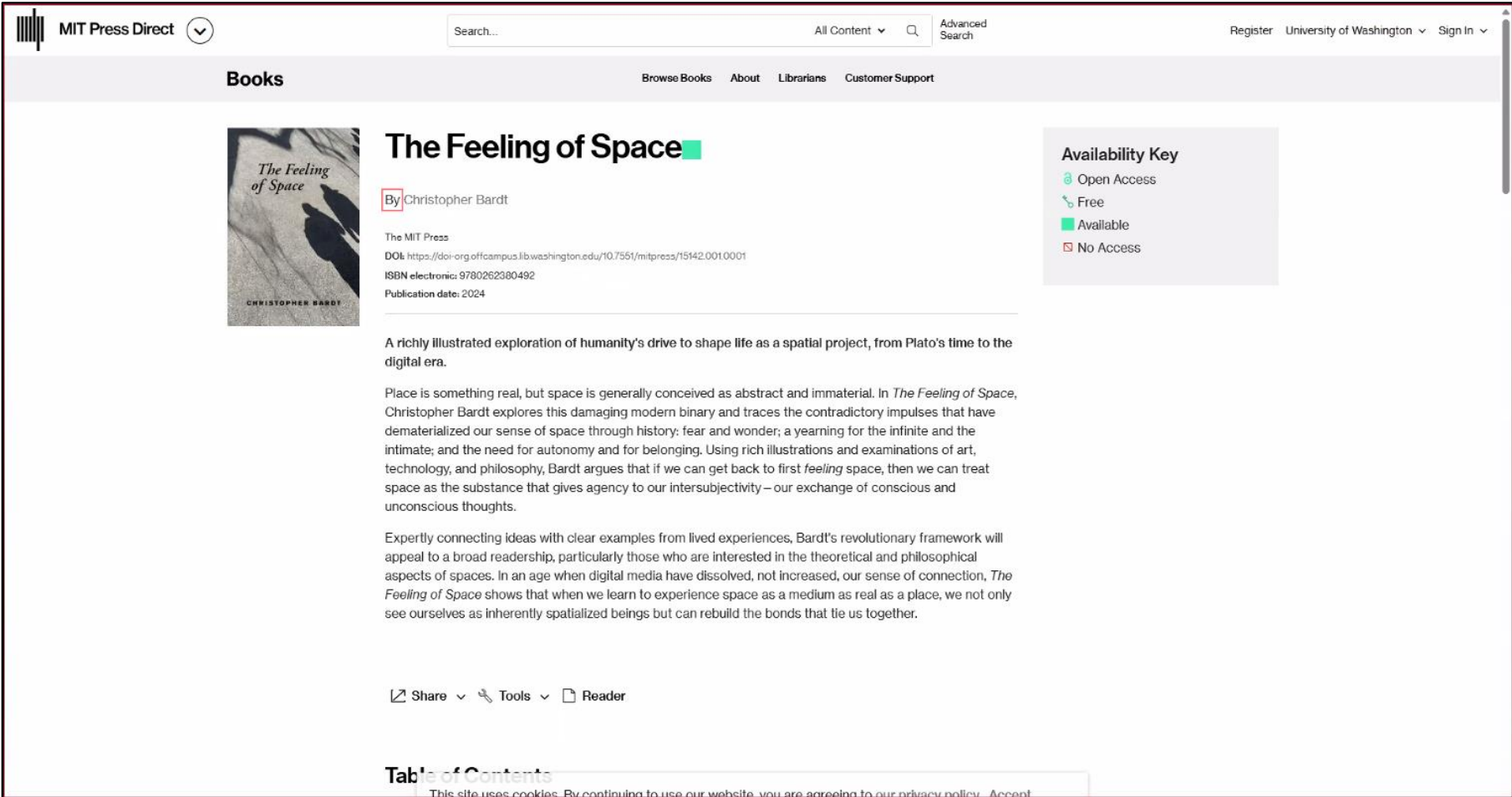
MIT Press Direct Book Example

Figure 3. An example of the MIT Press Direct book page. Shown is the book "The Feeling of Space."

Advanced Search Page

Issue	WCAG Success Criteria	Description	Example
Random Heading Levels Used	**1.3.1 Info and Relationships (A)**	Headings are inconsistently implemented.	Page uses a mix of H1-H5 headings without logical hierarchy.
Form Fields Lack Instructions	**3.3.2 Labels or Instructions (A)**	Some form fields lack clear instructions about expected formats.	DOI search doesn't provide format guidance.
Filters Use Links Instead of Buttons	**4.1.2 Name, Role, Value (A)**	Filter controls are implemented as links instead of buttons and don't announce states.	"Link filter" expands options but doesn't announce its expanded state.
Updates Not Announced	**4.1.3 Status Messages (AA)**	Updates after interactions aren't announced to screen readers.	When search filters are activated, no status message is provided.

Impact Summary:

The advanced search page presents challenges for screen reader users due to improperly implemented filters that don't announce their states, inconsistent heading structures, and lack of feedback when interacting with controls. These issues make the advanced search functionality difficult to navigate and use effectively.

MIT Press Direct Advanced Search Page

Figure 4. The search page for MIT Press Direct has "Advanced Search" and "Author Search" options.

Code Snippets

Here are examples of critical WCAG failures with recommended fixes:

1. Interactive Element Role (4.1.2)
Current implementation:
html
```
<a href="#" class="filter-toggle">Filter</a>
```

Recommended fix:
html
```
<button aria-expanded="false" class="filter-toggle">Filter</button>
</div>
```

2. Proper Heading Structure (1.3.1)
Current implementation:
html
```
<h3>MIT Press Direct is the easiest and most affordable way to access our extensive collections...</h3>
<h4>Browse Books</h4>
```

Recommended fix:
html
```
<p>MIT Press Direct is the easiest and most affordable way to access our extensive collections...</p>
<h2>Browse Books</h2>
```

3. Status Messages for Dynamic Content (4.1.3)
Current implementation:
html
```
<!-- No announcement when filters change results -->
<div class="results-container">
  <!-- Results content -->
</div>
```

Recommended fix:
html
```
<div class="results-container">
  <div role="status" aria-live="polite" class="sr-only">
    Showing 1-20 of 15,646 results for "marketing"
  </div>
  <!-- Results content -->
</div>
```

4. Accessible Names for Links (2.4.4)
Current implementation:
```
<a href="https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/12345.001.0001">https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/12345.001.0001</a>
```

Recommended fix:
```
<a href="https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/12345.001.0001">View DOI for "The Feeling of Space"</a>
```

5. Proper Image Alternative Text (1.1.1)
Current implementation:
html
```
<img src="books-gateway-logo.png" alt="graphic">
```

Recommended fix:
html
```
<img src="books-gateway-logo.png" alt="MIT Press Books Gateway">
```

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

The MIT Press Direct platform presents significant accessibility barriers that prevent users with disabilities from effectively using the service. The platform requires substantial remediation to achieve WCAG 2.2 AA conformance and provide an equitable experience for all users.

Recommended Fixes
- **Implement proper landmark regions** (header, main, footer) to enable efficient navigation for screen reader users.
- **Correct heading structure** throughout the site to establish a logical content hierarchy.
- **Convert interactive toggles from links to buttons** with proper ARIA attributes to announce their states.
- **Provide meaningful alternative text** for all non-decorative images.
- **Announce dynamic content changes** when filters or search results update.
- **Fix PDF accessibility** by ensuring proper document structure, navigation, and page announcements.
- **Provide consistent focus management** to prevent users from losing their place during interactions.
- **Use descriptive link text** instead of raw URLs for all hyperlinks.
- **Implement proper form labels and instructions** for all input fields.
- **Add text alternatives to color-based indicators** for resource availability status.

Disclaimer

Accessiblü prepared this report as a high-level accessibility evaluation of the MIT Press Direct platform. The evaluation utilized industry-standard testing methodologies, including screen reader testing (JAWS 2025), keyboard-only navigation, and manual inspection for select WCAG 2.2 AA success criteria.

This report does not represent a comprehensive WCAG compliance audit and should not be seen as a certification of accessibility compliance. While we have identified significant accessibility concerns and usability barriers, this evaluation was limited in scope and may not encompass all accessibility issues on the platform.

No Legal Liability:

Accessiblü offers this report for informational purposes only. It assumes no legal responsibility for accessibility violations or compliance failures resulting from its use. Organizations seeking formal certification should conduct a comprehensive audit and user testing with individuals with disabilities.

Limitations of Testing:

This evaluation was conducted at a specific time, and platform updates may have occurred after testing was completed. Additionally, while automated tools and expert reviews were utilized, real-world users with disabilities determine the true measure of accessibility.