##### The Open University

# From library to kitchen table: managing the overhaul of the OU Library’s Being digital activities

## 1. Introduction

Being digital is an award-winning, open access collection of short activities which teach digital and information literacy skills. Our poster presents how we successfully planned and managed the relaunch of the collection in time for next phase of the UK website accessibility regulations that came into place in September 2020.

### Project Team

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[Being digital website (Opens in a new window)](https://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/)

## 2. Background

### About us

* The multi-award-winning Open University Library underpins the University mission to be “open to people, places, methods and ideas”.
* Being digital was originally created by the library in 2012 to develop essential skills for study, work and lifelong learning.
* Learning & Teaching Librarians in the library’s Authoring team:
* are part of a creative team
* create accessible teaching materials
* use learning design principles

## 3. Project stages

### Rationale for the project

* Update the activities and improve their accessibility in time for the next phase of the UK website accessibility regulations that came into place in September 2020.
* Modernise the look and feel of the site, including its 40 activities, in line with university branding.

### July to December 2019: Gathering existing information and initial set up

* Project team set up
* Authoring team audit existing activities for content and currency
* indicates that most if not all activities need a refresh
* Accessibility librarians check existing website and activities for accessibility issues
* indicates that every activity needs to be looked at on an individual basis for accessibility
* Systems team update to latest version of Xerte and completely stripped-down version to remove previous OU customisation

### January to March 2020: Training and developing guidance

* Project team train all authors in Xerte – new tool to learn for many
* Xerte guidance written – becomes a working document as we discover more things about accessibility and workarounds
* Pandemic strikes! OU staff move to home working

### April to June 2020: Creation stage

At this point staff were adjusting to working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the legal deadline for the project remained the 23rd September all our internal deadlines were revised.

* Systems team create new Being digital website
* Authors recreate all activities from scratch

### July to September 2020: Finalising and relaunching the website

* Activities peer reviewed by fellow authors and checked for accessibility
* Accessible Word/PDF versions produced
* Accessibility statement written with tips for screen reader users.
* Systems team redirected old URLs to new ones and website finalised
* September 2020 – new Being digital website with refreshed activities launched

## 4. Project management from the kitchen table

Some of the ways we managed our project.

### Planning

* Individual Microsoft Planner boards for project team, for Authoring team and for Accessibility/technical issues
* Planner buckets (columns) setup for each stage of the project
* Each activity given a card on Planner with checklist of tasks which helped monitor progress between different stages
* Authors assigned to cards helped manage and share workload and work was easily redistributed when pandemic hit

### Developing

* Extensive guidance on using Xerte and making activities accessible was developed – this constantly evolved throughout the project as we encountered new challenges.
* Authors buddied up to peer-review content
* Each activity was tested for accessibility. Some issues could be resolved in-house. Others involved liaising with Xerte developers
* Progress was constantly monitored

### Communicating

* Many different teams were involved in the updating of Being digital: Authoring team, Systems team, Digital development officer, Engagement and Insight team, Accessibility group and the Library Website Accessibility Regulations Group
* Deadlines for the Authoring team were added to staff calendars for each stage of the project. Scheduling worked back from September 23rd 2020, allowing for technical development and testing time.
* Transition from office to working from home meant regular updates via MS Teams:
* on the project progress with the Authoring team
* between project leads
* with the Library Website Accessibility Regulations Group and the Accessibility Group
* regular review of planner, reporting back on progress

## 5. Obstacles and lessons learned

### Was it better to start afresh?

* For us it was! Our previous version of Xerte was personalised which caused issues when upgrading to different versions of Xerte
* We opted for a stripped-down vanilla (out of the box) site which meant recreating all our existing activities
* Possibly led to more creativity as activities had to be created from scratch

### Expect the unexpected!

* Pandemic impacted on work and personal lives
* Conflicting pressures on IT Support team who had to support home working
* New Xerte release to improve accessibility required additional retrospective work on all images

### Importance of providing feedback

* The Xerte community forum was used to report accessibility issues. There was a quick response from Xerte developers, who have included fixes in the new release

## 6. The future

### Insight project

* A new project is currently being drafted (March 2021) to work with the OU Library's student panel to get feedback about the refreshed Being digital site.

### Xerte

* New version to be released soon which resolves some current accessibility issues

### Developing the collection

* Plan to add new activities to the collection to further enhance digital capabilities and employability

[Being digital website (Opens in a new window)](https://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/)

Contact us if you have any questions about Being digital using our [feedback form (Opens in a new window)](https://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/feedback)