

ADVENTURES IN ALT-TEXT

Craig Hayward, MLIS
State Library of North Carolina
Accessible Books & Library Services (ABLS)



Begin at the Beginning

A note or two about the bigger picture

ACCESSIBILITY



What is Accessibility?

Accessibility is:

- The practice of making information, activities, and/or environments sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible.
- When you make what you do or offer accessible you help the most people you can, not just those with disabilities.
- Accessibility is Equitability. What I do for one person I should be able to do for others.



From the Authority - WCAG

In Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG):

- **1.1.1 Non-text Content** - all non-text content that is presented to the user has a text alternative that serves the equivalent purpose...
- **Other Forms, as needed** – large print, braille, speech...
- **Images – Alt-Text**



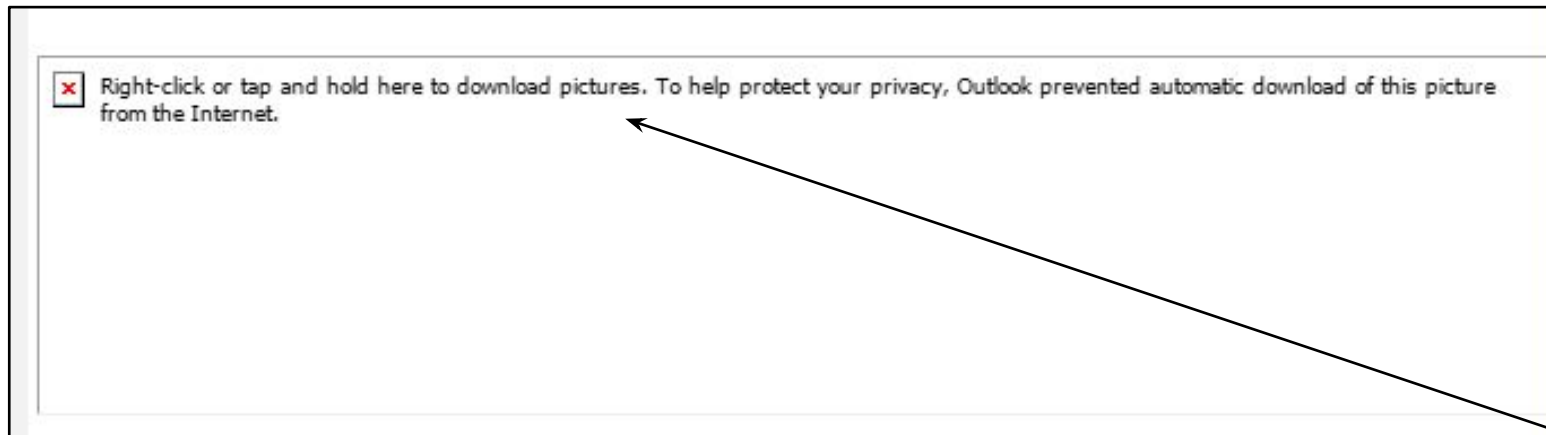
The Curb Cut Effect

Everything Changed in 1990



Alternate Text (Alt-Text) Is For Everyone

“Right-click or tap and hold here to download pictures...”



1. What if I don't use a mouse?
2. What if my library doesn't allow images in email?
3. What's the point of the image connected to the words? It's purpose?

Alt-Text's Role

Alt-Text makes things equitable

- Provides a way to describe images to those who can't see it
- Provides a placeholder when images can't be displayed for those who could see it
- Provides a navigation or entry point to places

Alt-Text's Types

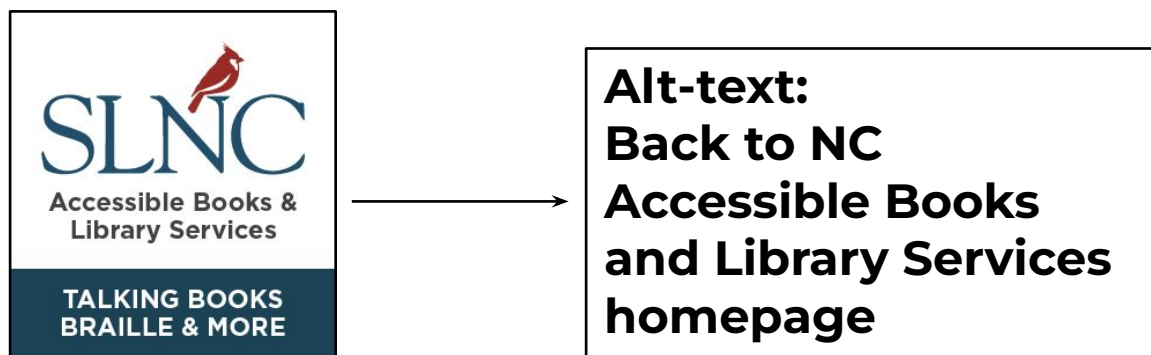
Two (2) Types of Alt-Text

1. Functional – some kind of action performed
2. Descriptive – describe an image in detail or something happening in the image

Functional Alt-Text

Functional Alt-Text is all about Actions

1. Click on a logo/image and go somewhere else



2. Start or perform some process

Functional Alt-Text

Start or perform some process



**Alt-text:
Print this page**



**Alt-text:
Send this by email**



**Alt-text: Follow
us on Instagram**

**Yes, even on
Instagram and all
social media. People
that are blind use
ALL social media!**

Descriptive Alt-Text

Descriptive Alt-Text is All About Image Detail

1. Help the user get a sense of the detail of the image
2. What's happening, depicted or who is there

The difference between knowing there is some kind of image there and experiencing the image itself

Descriptive Alt-Text

“If anyone ever tells you alt text isn’t important, show them @NASA’s alt text for the #WebbSpaceTelescope images,” Kate Meyers Emery tweeted. “They are able to convey the wonders and beauty of these in words, making these breathtaking views accessible.”

Descriptive Alt-Text



<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/07/20/nasa-images-accessible-text/>

Beyond Alt-Text

Long Description

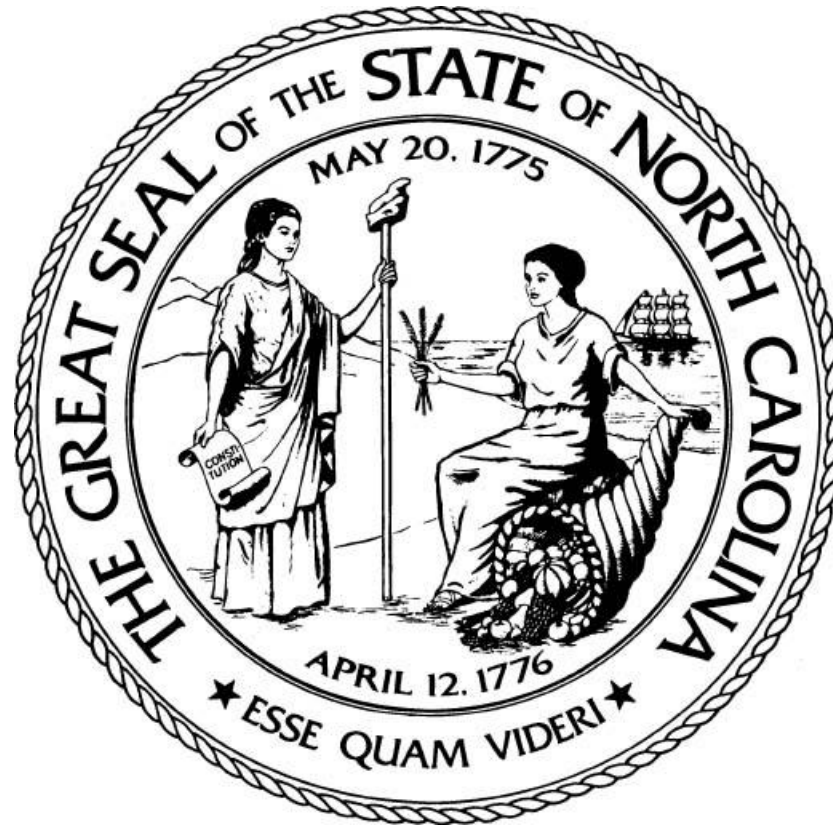
- When Alt-Text is too limiting
- Complex Images
- Detailed graphs and charts
- Illustrations of text on the page that relies on the user
- Maps showing locations

Long Description

Long Description is Three (3) Parts

1. A short description as Alt-Text of the image and where to go for more info
2. A long description of the image somewhere
3. A link to the long description page

State Seal of NC - Long Description



Alt-text: The Great Seal of the State of North Carolina. For more description about this image use the long description link that follows this image

[Long Description of image shown](#)

State Seal of NC – Long Description

THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

Placed upon the Great Seal Of North Carolina there is a representation of the figures of Liberty and Plenty. Liberty, first figure standing, her pole with cap on it in her left hand and a scroll with the word "Constitution" inscribed thereon in her right hand. Plenty, sitting down, her right arm half extended toward Liberty, three heads of grain in her right hand, and in her left the small end of her horn, the mouth of which is resting at her feet, and the contents of the horn rolling out. The background on the seal contains a depiction of mountains running from left to right to the middle of the seal. A side view of a three-masted ship is located in the ocean and to the right of Plenty. The Latin words "Esse Quam Videri" are placed at the bottom around the perimeter as the State's motto and the date "20 May, 1775" is placed with our Coat of Arms.

Alt-Text Context Determines Type to Use



Resources and More Information

- WCAG 2.2 – <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>
- James Webb @NASA – <https://www.nasa.gov/webbfirstimages>
- Deque University - <https://www.deque.com/blog/great-alt-text-introduction/>
- ABLS Librarian's Guide to Accessibility – <https://statelibrary.ncdcr.libguides.com/ABLS-Accessibility-Guide>



QUESTIONS



Contact Me

Craig Hayward, MLIS

- SLNC – Accessible Books and Library Services
- Email – craig.hayward@ncdcr.gov
- Web – <https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/blind-print-disabled>
- Craig's Desk (podcast) – <https://nccraigsdesk.podbean.com>