Accessibility :: Workstation and Lab Accessibility

There are about 1,100 computer workstations available to students at Humboldt State University. Some of these are single workstations, some in computing laboratories managed by departments for discipline-specific instruction and use, some in laboratories managed by Academic Computing and available for general campus use, and others in facilities managed by service units that provide information and online services to students, such as the Testing Center. No matter how these workstations are situated and managed, they must be reasonably accessible.

It is not unusual for computing labs simply to “appear” on campus: a new lab might be created using outside grant or gift funding or by a department gathering up all its older computers and placing them together in a room. However, this may result in a facility that is not accessible to all potential users. Anyone contemplating establishing a new computing lad, remodeling an existing lab, or placing new furniture in a lab should contact Facilities Management [1] and the Student Disability Resource Center [2] (SDRC) for guidance on ensuring that the facility will comply with the Univeristy's accessibility policies. Academic Computing [3] also can provide assistance. Identifying and correcting problems during the design/planning stage is much easier and less costly then mitigating a problem after the facility is up and running.

Students experiencing accessibility difficulties should contact the lab manager or the SDRC for assistance.

Design Requirements for New and Remodeled Labs

New and remodeled computer lab facilities must conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG). [4]

General Facility Physical Requirements

ADAAG must be used when designing a new computing lab facility or planning a major upgrade to an existing facility, such as furniture or workstation replacement. The accessibility requirements set out in the ADAAG must be met in order to ensure universal access to the facility's adaptive workstations and commonly-used items such as printers, telephones, and trash cans. The use of HSU's comprehensive accessibility checklist [5], including measurement requirements, is strongly recommended.

General Workstation Requirements:

Physical Requirements:

At least five percent, or one unit, of the workstations in the facility must meet the following minimum requirements for accessible seating areas:

Knee clearance:

- Height = 27 inches

- Width = 30 inches
- Depth = 19 inches

Workspace clearance:

- Floor to top of surface = 28 to 34 inches

To meet the seating needs of as many individuals as possible, all workstations should meet the minimum requirements for accessible seating areas (knee clearance and workspace clearance). Some students may require an adjustable-height table to accommodate a wheelchair or to accommodate a disability where the individual cannot sit down. Each computer lab facility with at least 20 stations must be equipped with at least one adjustable-height table (electrical adjustment is recommended). All chairs should be wheeled. It is generally recommended that adapted workstations be situated close to the main lab entrance and on the outer bank or row of workstations so as to minimize navigation through crowded aisles.

Technology Requirements:

- Sound cards
- Appropriate amount of memory to support the use of adaptive devices and software
- Adaptive input methods:
    - Ergonomic keyboards
    - Trackballs
    - Virtual and other alternative keyboards
    - Joysticks and hands-free pointing devices

The equipment should remain installed for the remainder of the semester if continued use is required. The Student Disability Resource Center [2] also maintains a supply of alternative input methods that can be installed quickly once a request has been made.

Windows-based computers:

- Windows Accessibility features installed and available from the Start Menu and Control Panel
- Headphone jacks
- Assistive technology software installed with shortcut keys enabled:
- Screen reading program such as JAWS [6]
- Screen magnification program such as ZoomText [7]

More information and resources are available on the Microsoft Accessibility [8] website.

Macintosh computers:

- Universal Access System Preference Pane (Mac OS X)

More information and resources are available on the Apple Accessibility [9] website.

Related Topics

Accessibility [10], Labs [11], Policy [12]

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Links:
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[2] http://www.humboldt.edu/disability/
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