

## IBM Accessibility Facebook Expert Hour on Lotus Connections 3.0 Transcript 01/18/2011

[IBM Accessibility](#) Join us right here in one hour to ask your questions and find out how Lotus Connections 3.0 enables dynamic social collaboration for professionals with disabilities. Our experts:

- \* Ann Abbott, IBM Collaboration Solutions Accessibility Lead
- \* Brian Cragun, IBM Master Inventor & Consultant with the HA&AC
- \* Damian Chojna, IBM Collaboration Solutions Software Engineer
- \* Matt King, IBM I/T Chief Accessibility Strategist

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[IBM Accessibility](#) Welcome to our second Facebook Expert Hour. :-)

[10 people](#) like this.

[IBM Accessibility](#) Today we'll be talking about the accessibility of IBM Lotus Connections 3.0.

We have our experts here today, ready to answer your questions:

- \* Ann Abbott, IBM Collaboration Solutions Accessibility Lead
- \* Brian Cragun, IBM Master Inventor & Consultant with the HA&AC
- \* Damian Chojna, IBM Collaboration Solutions Software Engineer
- \* Matt King, IBM I/T Chief Accessibility Strategist

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[Felicity Spowart](#) How is IBM's Lotus Connections 3.0 enabling the growing community that increasingly includes those with an array of human differences including language, learning etc to leveraging this evolving area of collaboration?

[Brian Cragun](#) Social software is not new for collaboration. By being fully accessible, everyone in an organization can both read and contribute to the information. Nobody needs to be left behind. Thus all ideas and knowledge are brought forward.

[Mary Jo Mueller](#) What were the biggest challenges in making IBM Lotus Connections 3.0 accessible?

[Holly Anagnos](#) Now, now. Don't all raise your hands at once lol.

[Damian Chojna](#) Lotus Connections 3.0 has a very complex user interface with many interactive components. Making these complex interactions easily accessible to users with different disabilities has been the biggest challenge.

[Brian Cragun](#) For example, on a page, there are links to major functions (Profiles, Communities, Blogs, Bookmarks, Activities, Files, and Wikis) each of those has public (in the organization) and private sets. There are tags to find things, search entry fields, and widgets such as calendars. These are all available for quick links, so we did a lot of testing to find the right balance between lots of content and being able to sort and find it quickly.

[Laura Lanham Kelley](#) Hi, all! What exactly is Lotus Connections and are you using it inside IBM? If so, how?

[Debra Frey](#) likes this.

[Ann Abbott](#) IBM Lotus Connections is a Social Software for Enterprises that enables business professionals to connect with colleagues and share information and ideas.

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[Peter Fay](#) Hi Laura: Lotus Connections is our social software solution that we use to connect with colleagues (Profiles); keep track of key internal/external websites (Bookmarks); store documents (files); blog (to our heart's content); engage with other IBMers (Communities); ad hoc web page development (wikis)

[Ann Abbott](#) Connections is used inside IBM today. All features of Connections are being used with Communities, Wikis and Activities showing high usage.

[Laura Lanham Kelley](#) Peter and Anne -- This is great. Thanks for the clarification :-)

[Brian Cragun](#) We use Connections a lot in IBM. We've been migrating from other tools to Connections as our primary content sharing system. I just looked at the stats: 15,770 communities 2,033 internal blogs 832,000 shared bookmarks, 83,000 files, and 14,000 wikis. Those are the ones I have authority to know about :-)

[3 people](#) like this

[Brian Cragun](#) I use microblogging alot, which is a part of Connections that is similar Twitter, except it is only visible to the Connections installation. I also use social bookmarks. When I see something interesting to me, I share the bookmark with other people. I can also post to communities or make a blog post out of it.

[Pushpa Baskaran](#) I use files in Lotus Connections to share info with my team. I have the choice of making it public (meaning only within company or outside) or private (I can share with certain members only). I can even give others privileges to edit that document and re-post to connections. My team has been using Connections for a while now & we LOVE it !!

[1 person](#) likes this

[Brian Cragun](#) One great thing about Files stored in Connections is that it provides built-in versioning. When you have an updated file, you post it and the next time someone follows the link, they get the updated file by default.

[Kathleen D'Adamo](#) Accounts are concerned about security regarding company info. How is this addressed?

[Brian Cragun](#) Connections installations have total control over access and authorities for all users. Access can be limited to groups and individuals per community, document or even conversation. It can be set up to allow external parties to participat...e if desired.

For example I have a private group (community) for my department where we post meeting notes.

[Brian Cragun](#) I made a wiki, just this morning and easily limited the document visibility to just four editors and viewers.

[Andrea Radcliffe Raybourne](#) What are the advantages of this tool over a traditional Wiki?

[Ann Abbott](#) Wikis can be shared and can be tagged to help find them.

[Peter Fay](#) Andrea: The Lotus Connections (LC) wiki has the same capabilities as a traditional wiki...easy customization,no html skills needed etc. The advantage with LC is that our wiki capabilities is tightly integrated with the other components...enhancing the overall collaboration experience resulting in more productive users.

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[Brian Cragun](#) Connections is more than a wiki. It has communities that have lists of bookmarks, forum discussions, file sharing \*and\* wikis. You get so much more than a wiki.  
[1 person](#) likes this

[Damian Chojna](#) That's right Ann, Lotus Connections provides social features to traditional applications like wikis. With Lotus Connections it is possible for users to collaborate through a number of social tools such as commenting, tagging wikis and wiki pages, sharing wikis in larger communities.  
[1 person](#) likes this

[Kathleen D'Adamo](#) How do you work around the many visual aspects? Are there tools to help visually-impaired users?

[Matt King](#) We used the special features of a new standard for rich internet applications, this standard is called ARIA, for making Lotus Connections very understandable by someone using a screen reader.

[Kathleen D'Adamo](#) Excellent. Thanks.

[Kathleen D'Adamo](#) Seems like only the people with the questions showed up.....

[Pushpa Baskaran](#) Hi : I haven't posed a question, but am following the conversations here :)  
[1 person](#) likes this

[Paul Leone](#) Monitoring from my Android phone.

[Laura Lanham Kelley](#) Paul: Cool...no burning questions? LOL.

[Mary Jo Mueller](#) Accessibility for Web applications seems pretty complicated. Other than testing, can you tell me some specific things you did while developing Lotus Connections to ensure it is accessible?

[Damian Chojna](#) The application was developed against published web accessibility standards such as WCAG 2.0 and WAI-ARIA. These specifications and supported best practices were used to help implement the accessible solutions. In addition, blind users were involved in evaluating the usability of the application on a regular basis during development, this was fed back into the development cycle.  
[Peter Fay](#) and [Mary Jo Mueller](#) like this.

[Mary Jo Mueller](#) Thanks Damian. I'm glad to learn that blind users are also utilized to assess how well you're doing along the way. Sounds like you've done a great job in making Lotus Connections 3.0 accessible.  
[Matt King](#) likes this.

[Fran Hayden](#) Hi guys - great topic. My question is: What is so different about Lotus Connections 3 when it comes to accessibility?  
[3 people](#) like this.

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[Ann Abbott](#) Lotus Connections 3 is a radical step forward because it is the largest and most sophisticated product in the market to provide a desktop-like user experience in the cloud and also deliver accessibility on par with, or even better than, what is possible on the desktop.

[Ann Abbott](#) For example, Connections 3 includes a fully accessible rich text editor that works very much like Lotus Symphony or Microsoft Word. Connections 3 has Menues and dialogs that pop-up and overlay the screen that work just like menues and dialogs in your favorite accessible desktop programs when you are using JAWS. This was previously impossible.

[Bill Curtis-Davidson](#) likes this.

[Ann Abbott](#) But, by leveraging an emerging W3C standard called ARIA, which stands for Accessible Rich Internet Applications, and by partnering with Freedom Scientific and other AT vendors to support ARIA, the Connections team has shown that accessibility on the web can be equal to or better than anything we have experienced in Windows, Linux, or Mac. This is accessibility that crosses all those boundaries. This is truly revolutionary

[Bill Curtis-Davidson](#) and [Danny Lee](#) like this.

[IBM Accessibility](#) Please refresh your screen to see all of the comments and responses -- we're moving faster than Facebook automatically refreshes. :-)

[2 people](#) like this.

[Ccac Captioning](#) Entering now - interesting to use this FB page like this today - for different sort of "connections" - r u showing a "model" of "Lotus Connections" someplace? on a different website right now? Is Lotus an IBM trademark name (showing lack of technical savvy, yet hey, trying to learn, always learning :-).

[Ccac Captioning](#) In terms of how it's "accessible" more than other online sharing document systems, not really clear how it's "accessible" yet....thanks for further details?

[Ann Abbott](#) Thanks! You can sign up for a FREE Greenhouse account at <https://greenhouse.lotus.com/home/login.jsp> and you will be able to engage in social networking by leveraging IBM Lotus Connections 3.0 on Greenhouse.

[Ann Abbott](#) Yes, Lotus is an IBM trademark name.

[Ann Abbott](#) Rather than attempting to show a 'model', we'd like to invite you to sign up for a Greenhouse account and take Connections out for a spin yourself!

[Ann Abbott](#) Lotus Connections 3 is a radical step forward because it is the largest and most sophisticated product in the market to provide a desktop-like user experience in the cloud and also deliver accessibility on par with, or even better than, what is possible on the desktop.

[Paul Leone](#) likes this

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[Paul Leone](#) likes this

[Ann Abbott](#) "Fully accessible" means that the rich text editor, like all of Connections, has been tested and can be used by People with Disabilities by operating with only the keyboard and can be used with Assistive Technologies, like screen readers like JAWS.

[Ccac Captioning](#) Are there any special features for deaf people? or perhaps not needed for something purely text online? yet will ask anyway: improved voice recognition system there? e.g. for speakers who want to do real time chat (speaking, have hearing loss or are deaf yet speak) while working on document together?

[Brian Cragun](#) There are no special features for deaf or hard of hearing. It supports posting of captioned videos.

[Laura Lanham Kelley](#) Brian -- Do you not need the special features because of the primarily text-based nature of the platform? Sorry, platform might not be the right word :-)

[Brian Cragun](#) You're correct. Because it is totally text and visually based, it already has support built-in for deaf and hard of hearing.

[Ccac Captioning](#) It's good to be clear, thanks Brian and Laura, and others here, e.g. when IBM says "People with Disabilities" and "accessible" - it's primarily speaking about "accessible" features for people with mobility and vision differences.

[Brian Cragun](#) We include all disabilities in our accessibility assessment. I can assure you they have been tested against 508 and WCAG 2.0 standards. Because Connections has no audio component, and has no video as part of the interface, it passes those requirements.

[Brian Cragun](#) We are very aware that people with hearing limitations have needs for any audio content. I invite you to visit our AbilityLabs page (<http://www-03.ibm.com/able/projects/intro.html>) to see our automatic captioning tool and Sametime conference translator which are designed to solve the kinds of problems you originally mentioned.

[Robert Kinsman](#) Another IBM product, Cognos Business Intelligence, includes How-To videos with Business Insight (also built using WAI-ARIA). These have been closed-captioned to ensure accessibility.

[Ccac Captioning](#) likes this

[Frances W West](#) Robert, per our email last year, let's schedule some time so I/we can become familiar with the Cognos accessibility work..

[Laura Lanham Kelley](#) What exactly is ARIA and what does it do?

[Matt King](#) When someone creates a web page that does fancy stuff like change automatically, pop-up menus, and stuff like that, ARIA tells the person creating the page what special codes to put into

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the page so the page can tell the web browser what t...o tell the operating system about what is happening, so a program like JAWS can look at the browser or the operating system and then tell the user what is going on.

[2 people](#) like this.

[Paul Leone](#) It's an emerging W3C standard called ARIA, which stands for Accessible Rich Internet Applications, giving a "desktop" like experience on the web. See the comments to the post 3 down from yours.

[1 person](#) likes this

[Kathleen D'Adamo](#) For the experts, how do you work around the many visual aspects? Are there tools to help visually-impaired users or other accommodations?

[IBM Accessibility](#) Matt answered this below:

Matt King We used the special features of a new standard for rich internet applications, this standard is called ARIA, for making Lotus Connections very understandable by someone using a screen reader.

[Brian Cragun](#) In addition to ARIA enablement for screen reader users, Connections uses a common GUI design that has been researched for usability by sighted users. It has great layout and visual organization. The design is fully capable for high contrast and large fonts. Good for anyone with diminished or aging vision. :-)

[Rich Schwerdtfeger](#)

To answer the question, the reason ARIA is better than having to do the combination of MSAA and IAccessible2 is that you can make your web application accessible at 20 percent of the work it takes to do it by hand. The browser is doing most of the heavy lifting in supporting the platform accessibility APIs. It is much easier to add a few simple attributes than to have to implement and manage all that low level API work and to have to do it for every operating system platform your browser runs on.

So, if it is easier to do with ARIA authors are more apt to support accessibility with it and more apt to do it right.

[2 people](#) like this.

[Marnie Hoover](#) How is it that ARIA could make accessibility better than what we have in Windows or Mac?  
[4 people](#) like this.

[Ann Abbott](#) Because of the way most web software is built, there is more information about the structure of the contents on a page than there usually is about content presented in a desktop application. This additional semantic information is available to assistive technologies. For example, when presenting information, instead of writing code that sort of paints text on the screen that looks like a list, the web author can use code that says "here is a list."

[Ann Abbott](#) ARIA has special features that take this to a new level. For example, the author can say "here is the part of the page that contains the main stuff" by using what we call an ARIA landmark role of "main." ARIA 1.0, which is in the final steps of becoming an industry standard, has many such features, and there will be more in the future.

[Marnie Hoover](#) Thanks, Ann!

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[Ann Abbott](#) You are all invited to sign up for a FREE Greenhouse account at <https://greenhouse.lotus.com/wpsgh/wcm/myconnect/lotus+greenhouse/lotus+greenhouse+next+site/home/lgh+next+homepage> and then log on to Greenhouse and go to IBM Lotus Connections on Greenhouse at <https://greenhouse.lotus.com/wpsgh/wcm/myconnect/lotus+greenh...ouse/lotus+greenhouse+next+site/home/products/ibm+lotus+connections>  
[2 people](#) like this.

[IBM Accessibility](#) This concludes our Facebook Expert Hour on Lotus Connections 3.0. We appreciate that you joined us and asked questions. If you have topic suggestions for future sessions, please post them here.  
[6 people](#) like this.