

IFTF Accessibility Testing Project for Interactive Fiction

Player Panel proposal

This document contains a summary of IFTF's accessibility testing project, and its proposal to work with AbleGamers' Player Panel program in order to complete its work.

This was written by Jason McIntosh (jmac@jmac.org) in September, 2018.

Project summary

The [Interactive Fiction Technology Foundation](#) (IFTF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation founded in 2016. It supports technologies and services that enable the ongoing play, creation, and study of interactive fiction (IF), which we broadly define as text-centric digital games and related work. This includes games in the style of classic text adventures, more experimental hypertext work, and everything in between and beyond.

One of the programs that IFTF chartered at the time of its own founding is its accessibility testing project (<https://iftechfoundation.org/committees/access/>). Due to its reliance on text and its tendency to let players play at their own speed, IF has always enjoyed relatively high accessibility among digital games. But this has always been a happy accident of sorts, and as technology develops and new ways to present text-based work becomes available to creators, IF's accessibility has started to slip. We aim to help address this by measuring the state of accessibility within contemporary IF play platforms, and then reporting our findings and recommendations to the IF community.

To this end, IFTF's accessibility testing committee has prepared a pair of very short text games specifically created to offer IF platforms accessibility challenges: one is a parser-driven treasure hunt, and the other is a web-based hypertext work. We would like a testing panel, comprising players with disabilities and users of various assistive technology setups, to play through these games and then answer a short survey about their experiences with them. We plan to transform this gathered data into a public report that should help IF game and tool creators be more mindful of accessibility needs, and also a methodology that can assist developers in testing their own work later.

Questions from AbleGamers

Here are the IFTF team's answers to four questions posed by Mark Barlet in regards to this Player Panel proposal.

What type of player are you looking for?

In the most broad terms, players with some degree of interest in interactive fiction would be ideal. Some knowledge of how parser-based text adventures work is useful, but not required. (Players without this knowledge should be willing to learn it on the job, of course!)

Because of the text-centric nature of IF, we would especially welcome testers with visual or mobility impairments, and users of related assistive technologies. (But of course we would welcome representation from other players, as well.)

What would you like them to do?

We will provide the players with two short IF games to play through: one parser-based game, and one hypertext game, both constructed specifically to present accessibility challenges.

We'll ask testers to try to get to the end of both games, and will provide "walkthrough" documents to consult in case they get stuck.

After getting as far as they can in the two games, we would then like testers to complete two short surveys about their play experience.

How long do they need to do it?

The games are both very short, and should take an hour or less each to play through. Players can take as long as they'd like with the surveys, thereafter.

What are you paying them?

We will offer a \$10 Amazon gift card to every tester who completes the surveys.

Followup

For further questions or other followup communication, please contact Jason McIntosh at jmac@jmac.org or 617-792-3829. You can also address further questions directly to the whole team at accessibility-testing@iftechfoundation.org.