Web Site Goes Viral | CPD

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A basic single-serving web site, released in conjunction with a July 9 WebAIM webinar, went viral overnight, leaving web administrators struggling to keep up with demand.

WebAIM (Web Accessibility in Mind) is a program of Utah State University’s Center for Persons with Disabilities, and provides web accessibility evaluation tools and training to web site designers and developers. The webinar discussed the many accessibility and usability issues of carousels, or rotating slide shows. Jared Smith, WebAIM associate director, created a basic web site which, ironically, uses a carousel to demonstrate the usability and accessibility issues.

By 8 a.m. the next morning, the sample web site had about 700 viewers at any given time, with 50,000 viewers in only a few hours.

“It was a bit unnerving to wake up to over 200 text messages and maybe 1000 twitter alerts,” said Smith. The site address was tweeted nearly 3000 times in the first day and quickly prompted attention and discussion on reddit and other technology forums. reddit is a social news and entertainment web site where registered users can submit content, which is then voted up or down in popularity by other registered users.

The sample web site features a slide show that rotates so fast, it’s difficult to read each slide as it goes by. Smith said the web site is frustrating to use and mostly inaccessible to people with disabilities, and that was the point.

“The server isn't keeping up with the 10 page views per second,” Smith said Wednesday morning. “I'm scrambling right now to keep the server running and just relishing in the massive amounts of traffic we're getting.”

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