b. Abstract

The web is an increasingly vital part of education, but disabled students are a disadvantage. Software that provides access to the web is not available on most computers and can be difficult to learn how to use. The proposed research will evaluate the effectiveness two tools designed to address these problems.

WebAnywhere provides a non-visual interface to the web from any computer, including locked-down terminals, helping to address the availability problem for blind users. But, not only blind people are using WebAnywhere, as teachers have emailed about how their students who are blind, have low-vision, and have learning disabilities are all using it. The first goal of the proposed research will be to better understand who is using WebAnywhere, why they are using it, and how different user populations could be better-supported.

TrailBlazer makes using the web easier and more efficient for blind users by letting them create and share trails through existing web sites. TrailBlazer suggests specific actions for users to complete and automates the completion of those actions. The proposed research will evaluate the effectiveness of this approach with blind students, and explore integrating it into WebAnywhere so that anyone can have access to it wherever they are.