Blackboard Ally

Key Roadmap Priorities

Blackboard

Ally relies heavily on User Centered design principles. Feature design is based on the outcome of UX research, usability testing and other UX activities organized through the Ally User Group and is therefore subject to change.

Ally Roadmap Principles

- Ally aims to be important part of the accessibility ecosystem
- Make accessibility more manageable and scalable
- Touch as much of the student lifecycle as possible
- Leverage more accessible content for increased student retention and success
- Catalyst for Universal Design for Learning

Priority #1

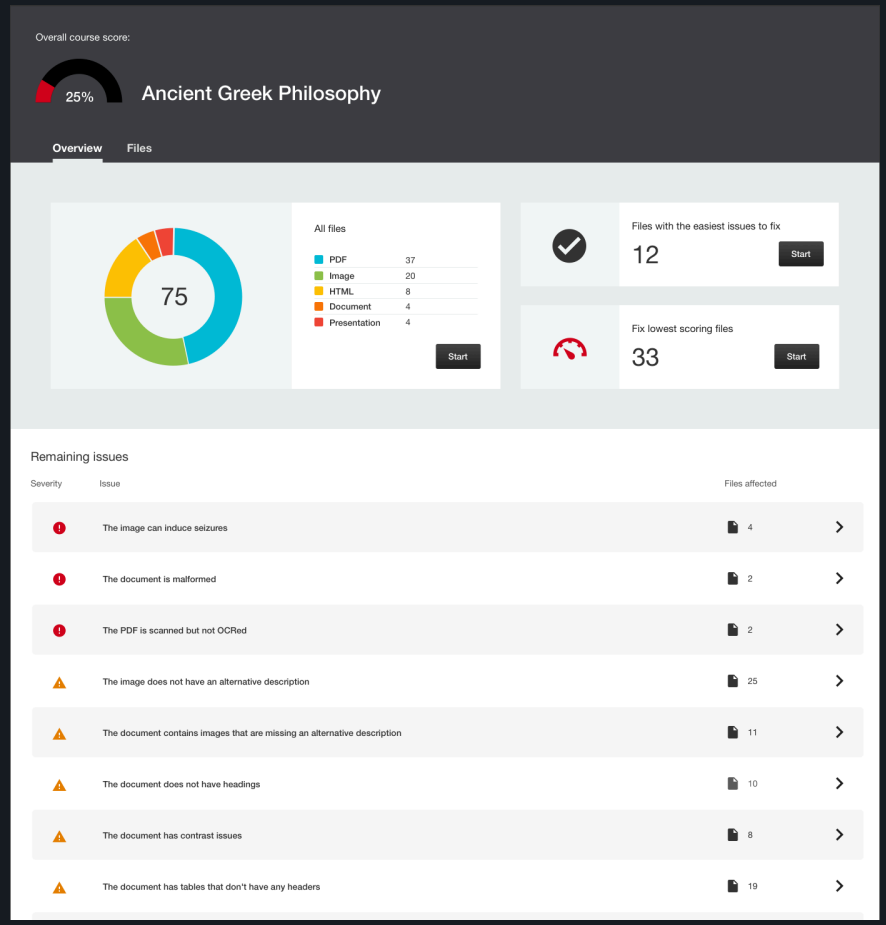
- Baseline commitment
  - Uptime
  - Performant
  - Reliable
  - Quality

Pillar 1: Ally for LMS

Overview of released functionality is available at
https://help.blackboard.com/Ally/Ally_for_LMS/Release_Notes

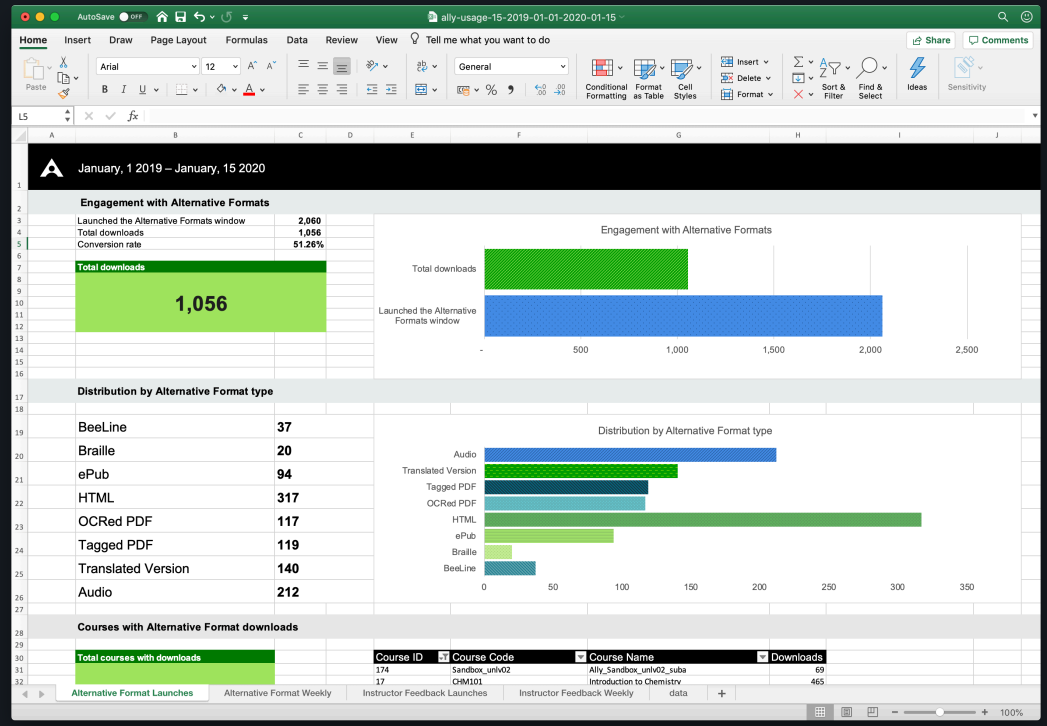
Course accessibility report (Completed - Ally 1.34)

- Instructor-facing course content accessibility report
- Provides summary at course level
- Helps with prioritization
- Work through remediation more quickly



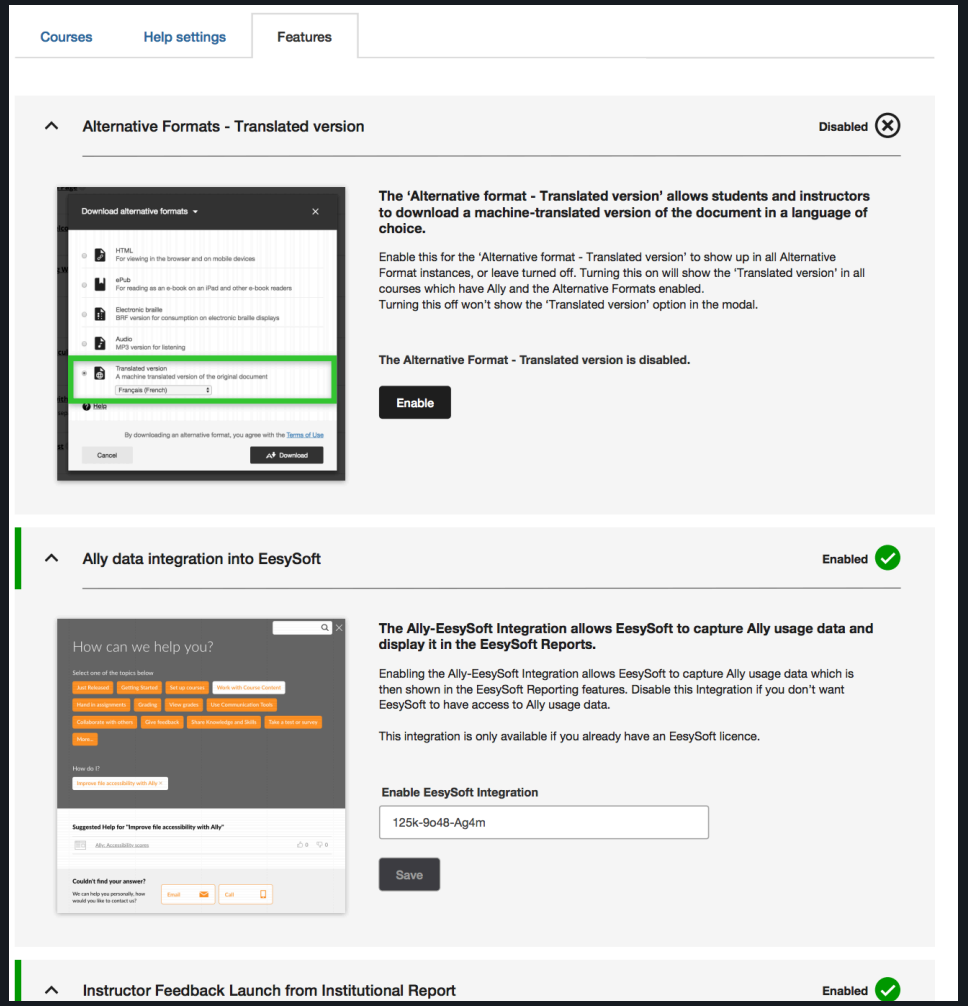
Usage reporting
(Completed - Ally 1.37)

- Ally captures detailed usage data
  - Alternative formats usage
  - Instructor feedback usage
- Expose usage data in institutional report



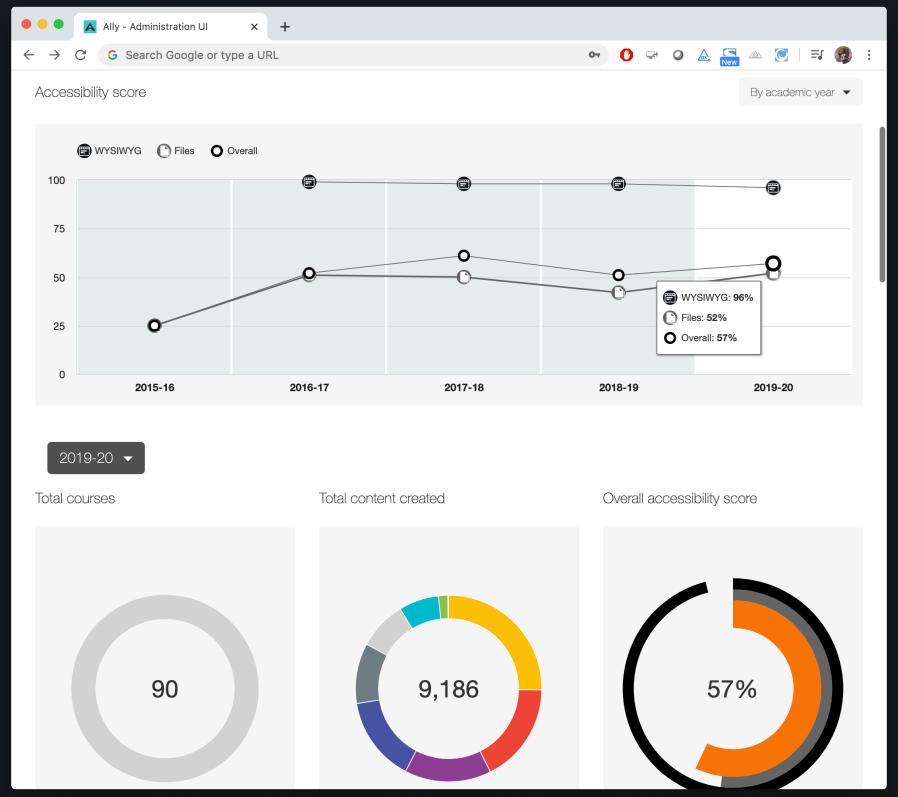
Feature flags
(Completed - Ally 1.37)

- Ally is increasingly using feature flags for large user-facing changes to help with change management
- Feature flag settings as part of Configuration UI
- Easily control what features are enabled / disabled



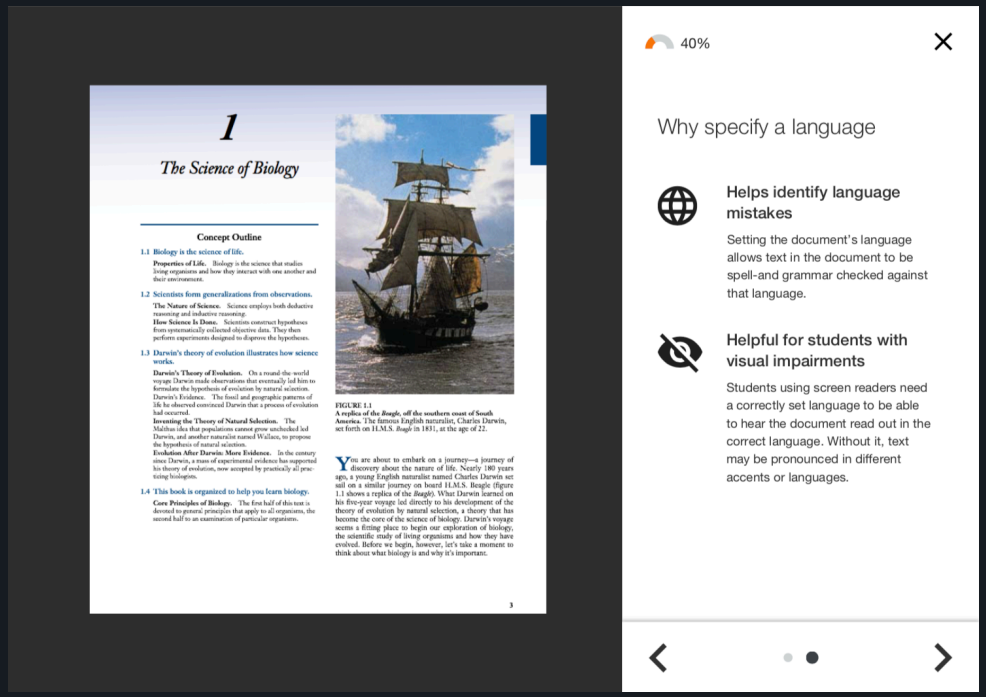
Accessibility score
(Completed - Ally 1.38)

- Remove distinction between Without Ally and With Ally score
- Significant difference between file and WYSIWYG accessibility
- Show “Overall score”, “File score” and “WYSIWYG score”



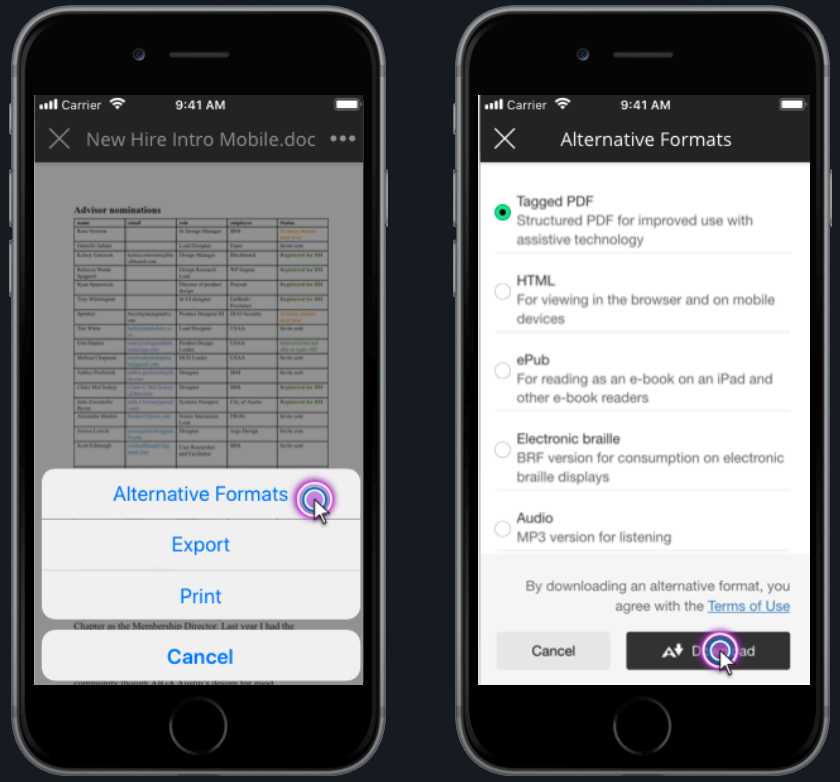
Instructor feedback guidance

- Add additional instructor feedback guidance flows
- Provide guidance for Office 2019 and LibreOffice 6



Blackboard Mobile App

- Significant use of alternative formats on mobile devices
- Make alternative formats available in Blackboard student app

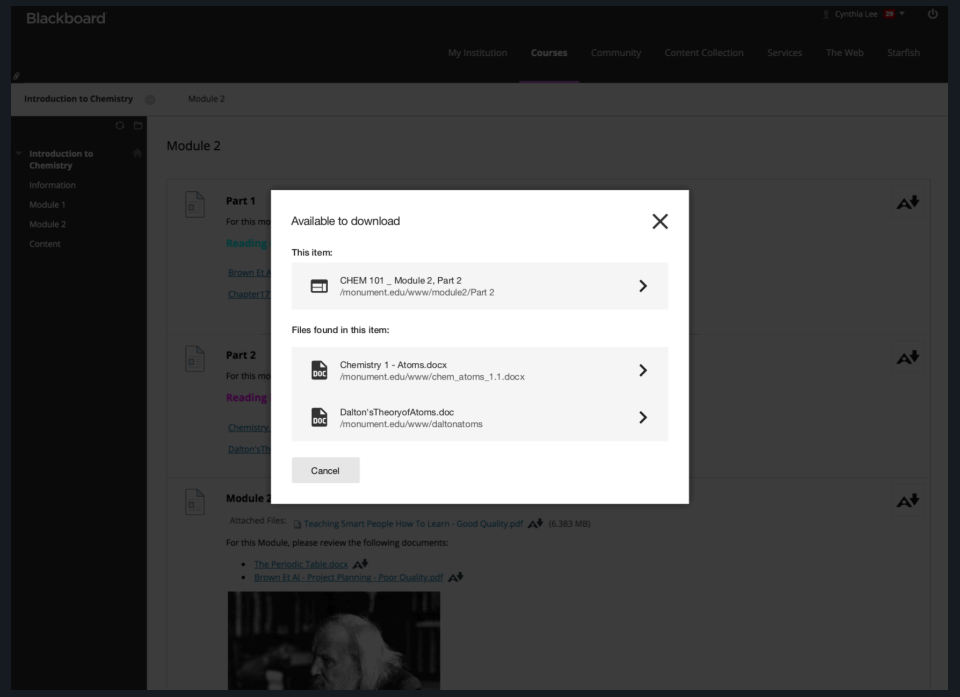


Right-to-left languages

- Add support for right-to-left languages in
  - User Interface
  - Alternative Formats
  - Machine Learning algorithms
- Initial target is Arabic

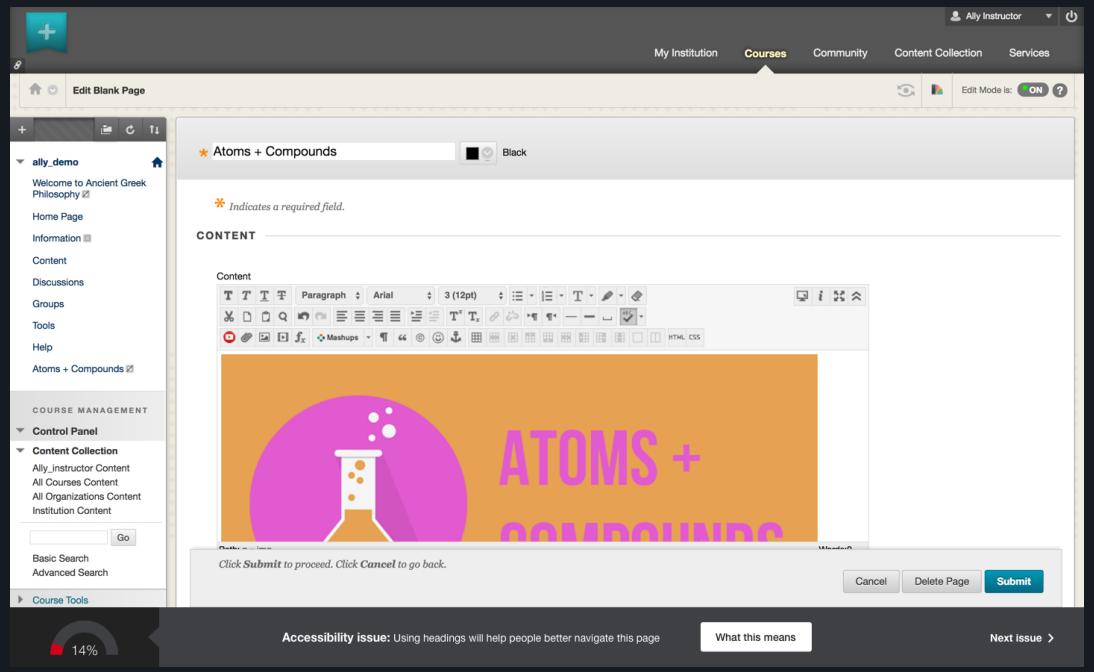
WYSIWYG Alternative Formats

- Provide alternative formats for WYSIWYG content
- Full coverage of alternative formats across file and WYSIWYG content



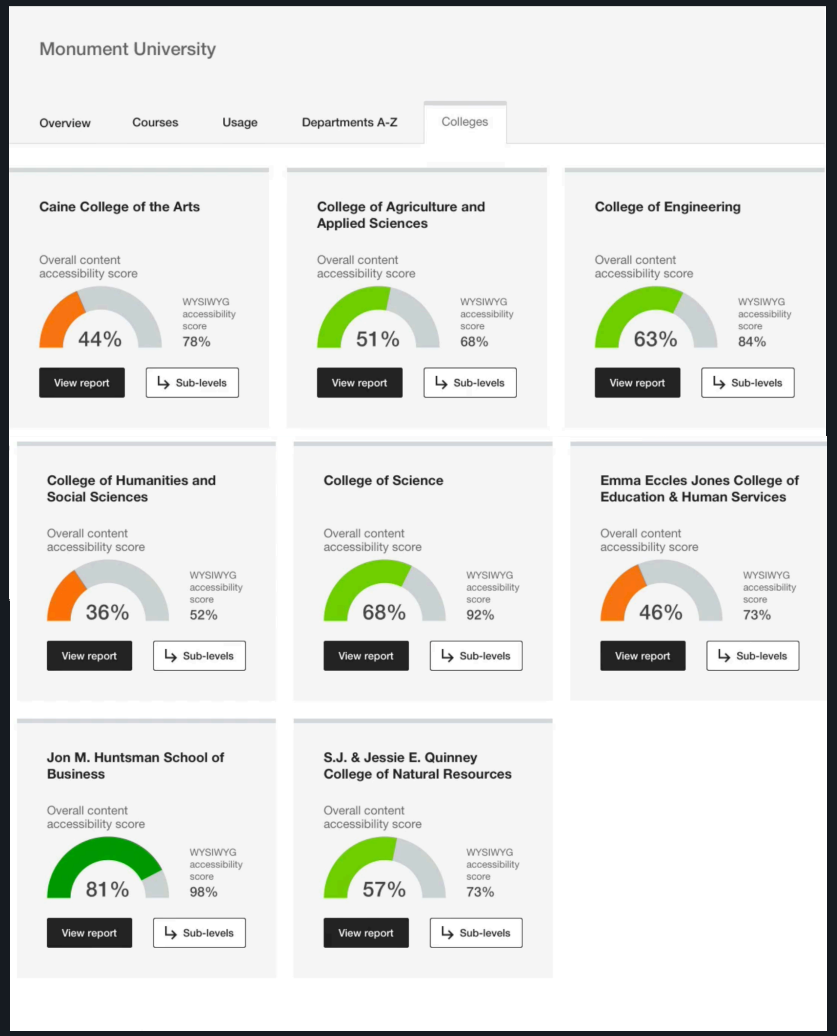
WYSIWYG Instructor Feedback

- Provide instructor feedback for WYSIWYG content
- Feedback directly embedded in content editor
  - Live score while editing
  - Highlights within the editor



Departmental reporting

- Provide reporting at departmental level
  - Based on configured institutional hierarchy
- Delegated access to departmental administrators



WCAG 2.1

- Extend accessibility checklist with additional WCAG 2.1 checks (https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/)
  - Orientation (Mobile - AA)
  - Reflow (Mobile - AA)
  - Text Spacing (Low Vision - AA)
- Focused on general readability and mobile-friendliness

Audio/video content

1. Add support for additional audio and video sources
2. Add tools to instructor feedback to allow instructors to provide captioning, transcript, etc.
3. Provide integration with 3rd party (auto-)captioning provider to provide easy captioning request workflow from LMS

External remediation

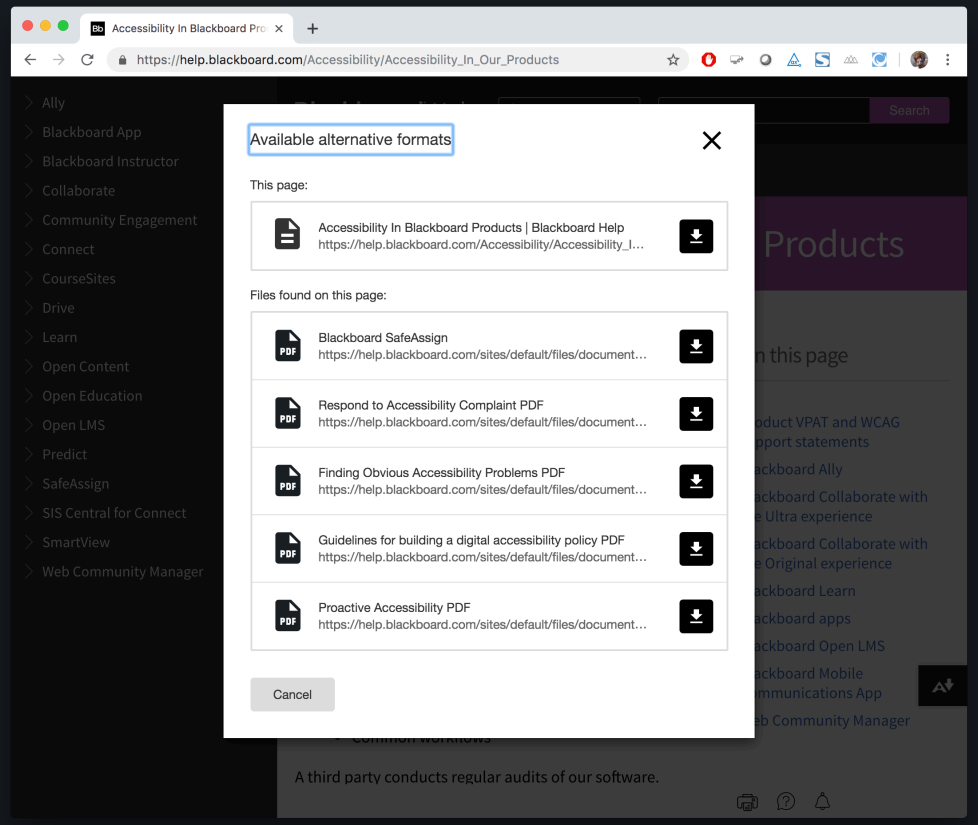
- Lots of duplicative manual remediation across institutions
- Ally can facilitate re-use of remediation by suggesting improvements made elsewhere
- When content has not been remediated before, option to have it manually remediated through integration with expert remediation provider

Pillar 2: Ally for Websites

Overview of released functionality is available at https://help.blackboard.com/Ally/Ally_for_Websites/Administrator/Release_Notes

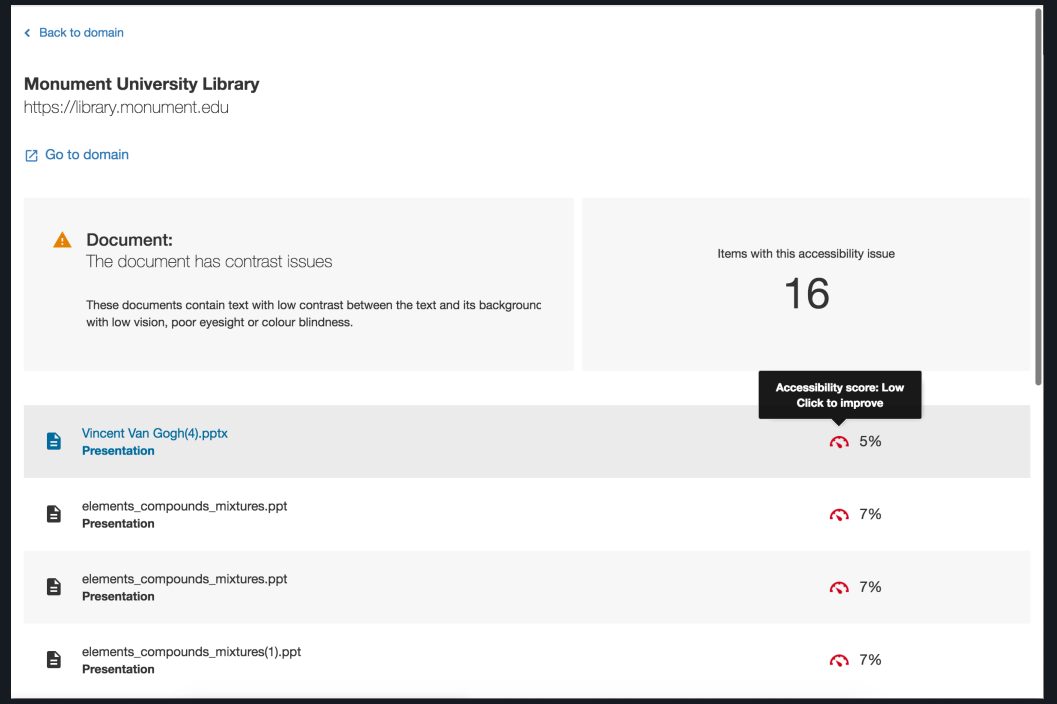
Alternative formats
(Completed - Ally 1.30)

- Automatically provide alternative formats for web pages and embedded content such as PDFs, PowerPoint and Word
- Helps improve accessibility for all website visitors



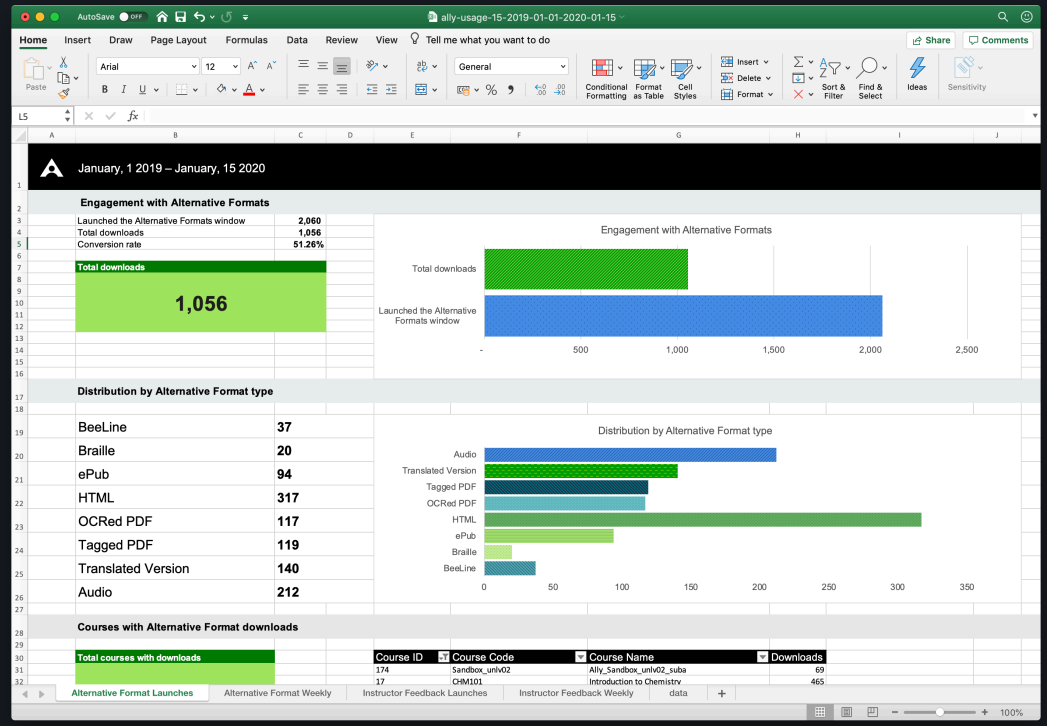
Content creator feedback (Completed - Ally 1.36)

- Feedback and guidance to fix accessibility issues in website content
- Launched from the accessibility report



Usage reporting
(Completed - Ally 1.37)

- Ally captures detailed usage data on alternative formats usage
- Expose usage data in accessibility report



January, 1 2019 – January, 15 2020

Engagement with Alternative Formats

Launched the Alternative Formats window	2,060
Total downloads	1,056
Conversion rate	51.26%

Total downloads

1,056

Distribution by Alternative Format type

BeeLine	37
Braille	20
ePub	94
HTML	317
OCRed PDF	117
Tagged PDF	119
Translated Version	140
Audio	212

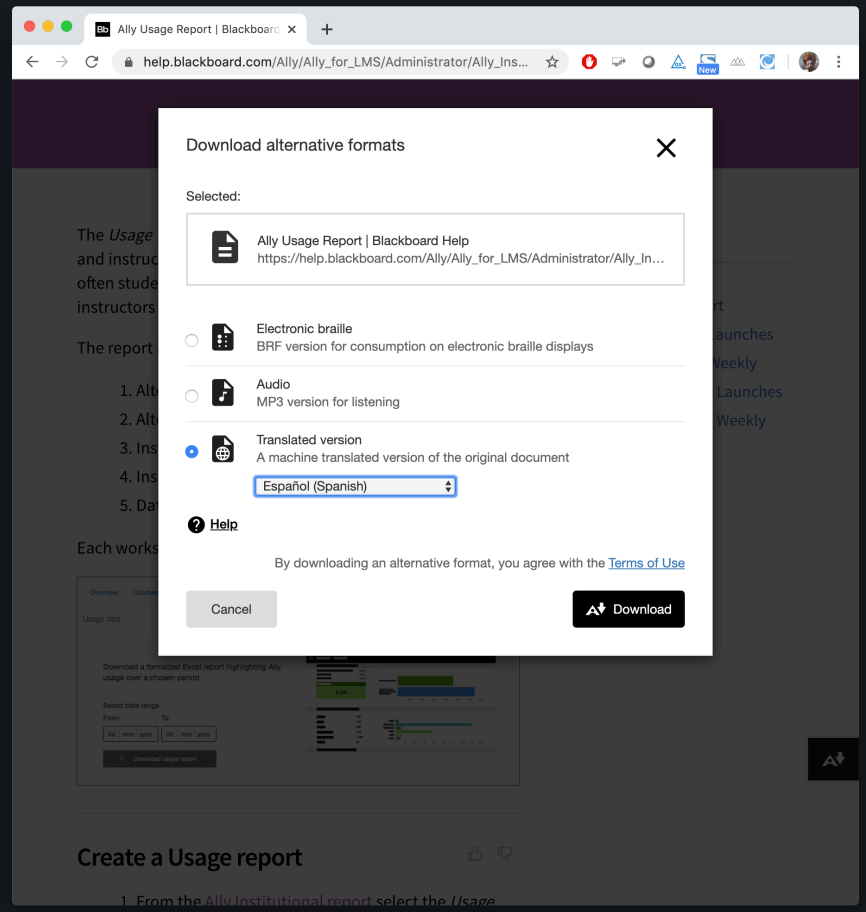
Courses with Alternative Format downloads

Total courses with downloads

Course ID	Course Code	Course Name	Downloads
174	Sandbox_unlv02	Ally_Sandbox_unlv02_suba	69
17	CHM101	Introduction to Chemistry	465

Translated Version alternative format (Completed - Ally 1.37.2)

- Significantly improve quality of translated version alternative format
- Retain layout, styling, links, images, etc.



Accessibility score
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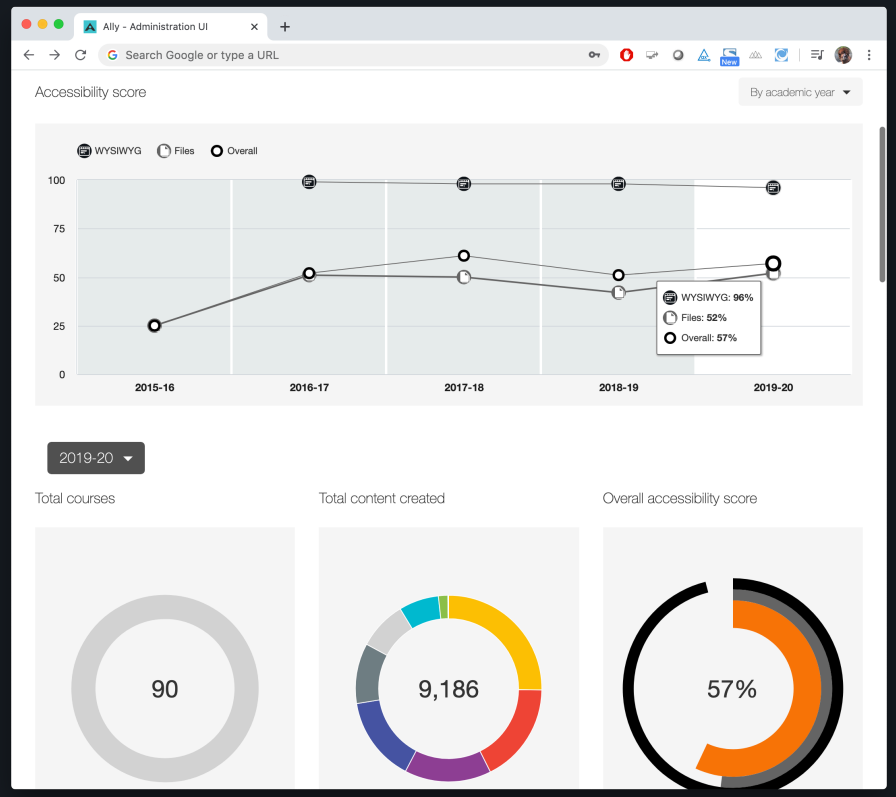
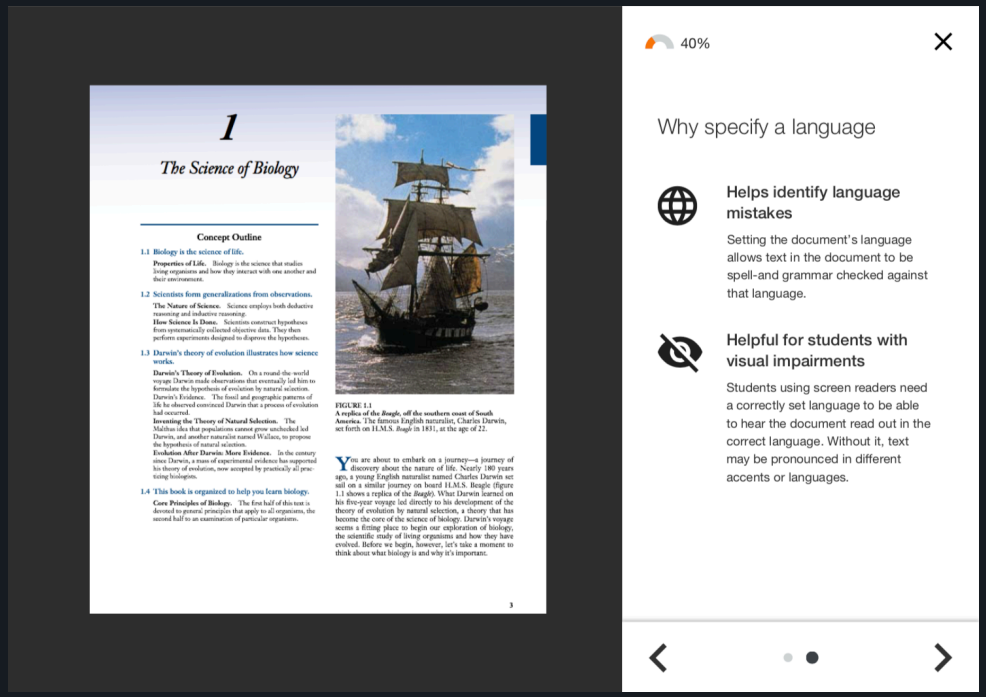
- Significant difference between Web Page and File accessibility
- Show “Overall score”, “File score” and “Web Page score”



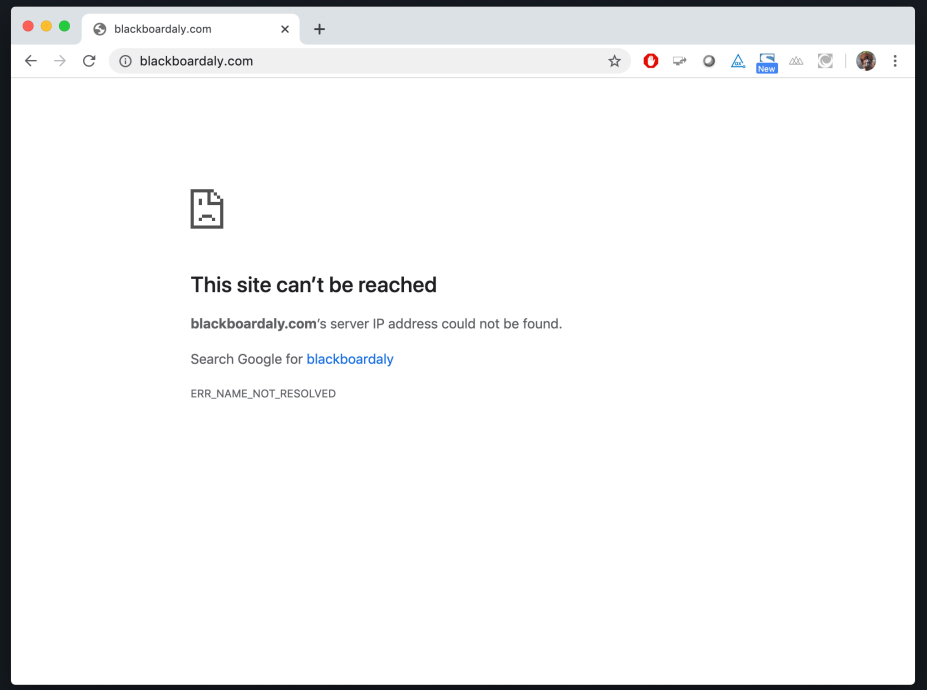
Content creator guidance

- Add additional content creator guidance flows
- Provide guidance for Office 2019 and LibreOffice 6



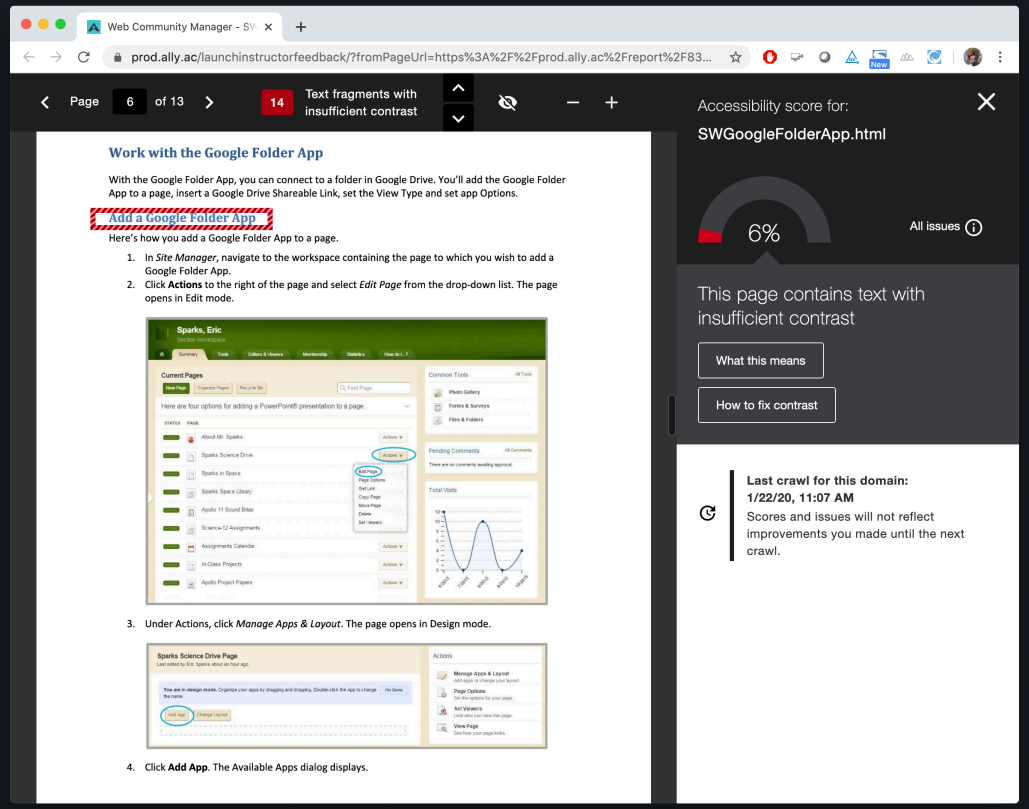
Broken link checking

- Broken links are common web accessibility issue
- Check web page content for broken links
- Incorporate in web page accessibility score



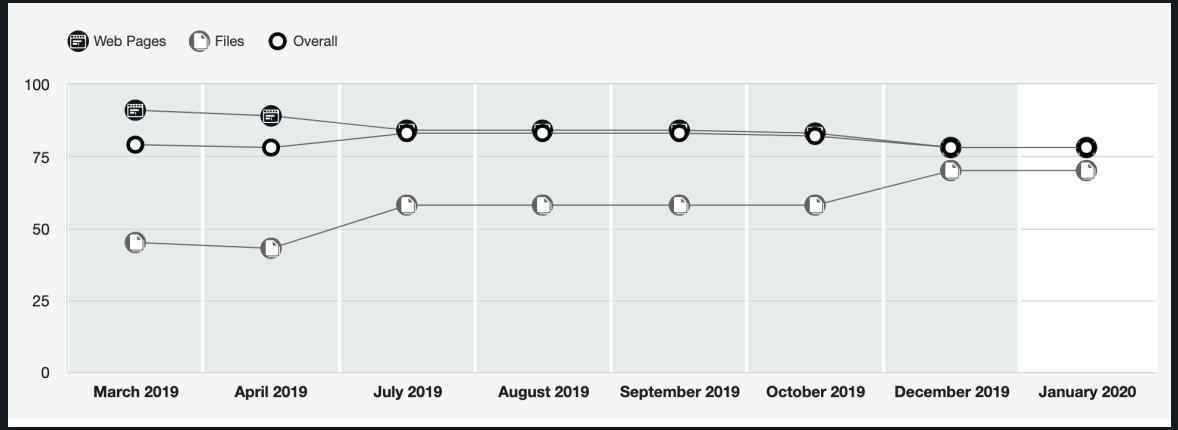
Web Page feedback

- Provide content creator feedback for Web Page content
- Highlighting on page where specific issues exist



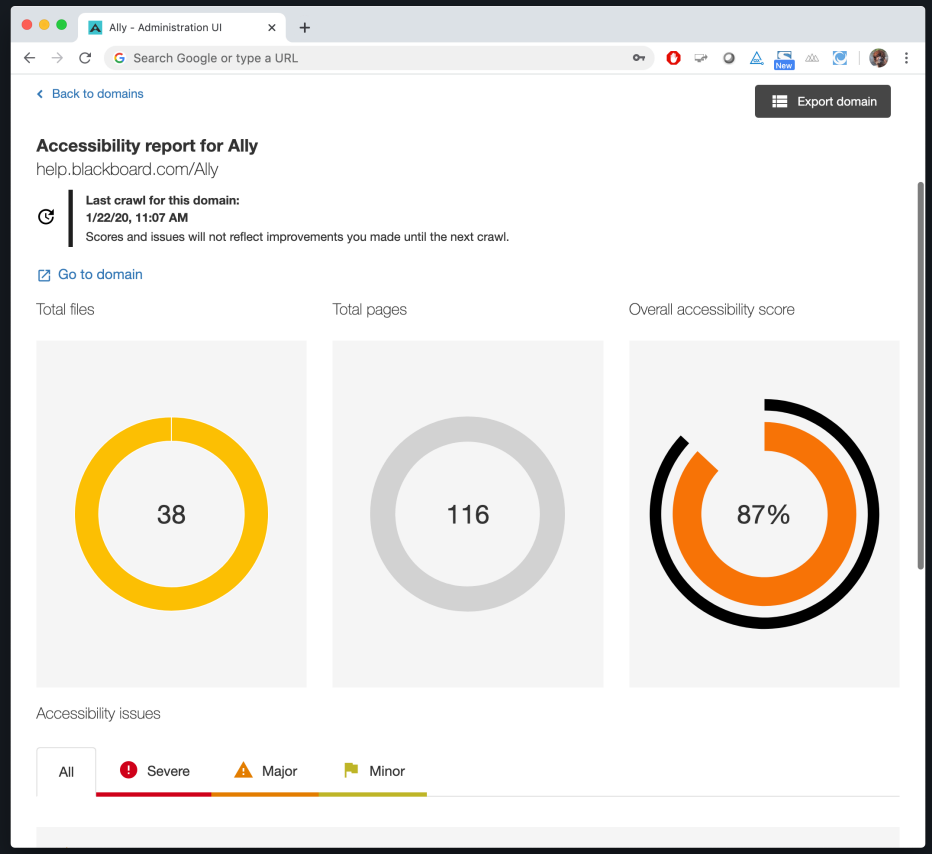
Domain scoring

- Ally already shows evolution of accessibility score of entire website
- Show accessibility score evolution by (sub)domain



Access Control

- Allow for creation of users (and groups)
- Limited access to specific (sub)domains
- Only see relevant content

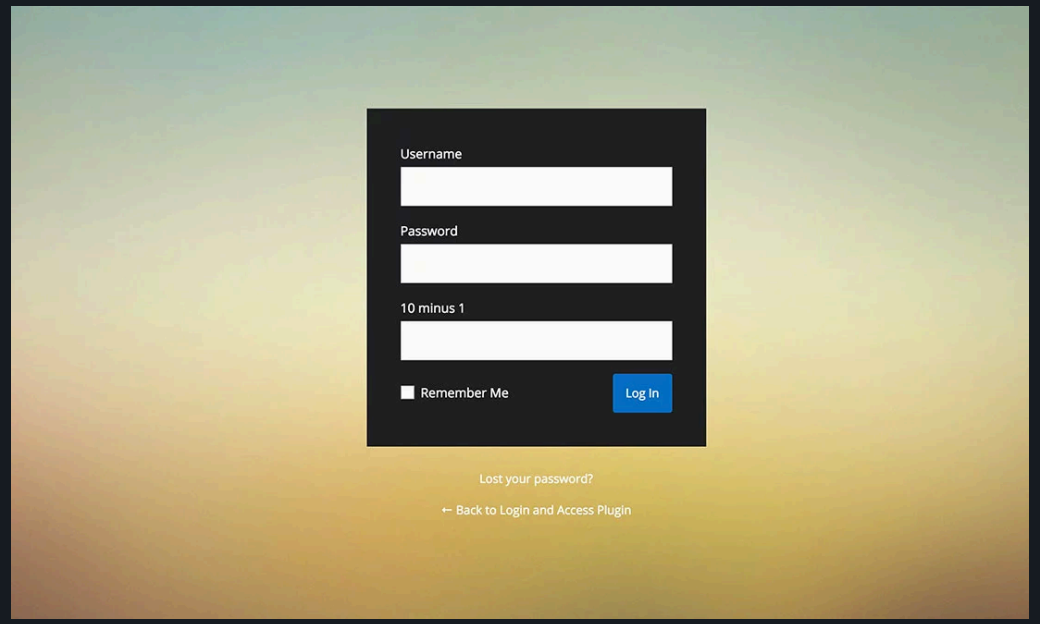


Re-Scan On Demand

- Allow for re-scan of (sub)domain to be triggered from the accessibility report
- Quicker updated report when making changes

Password Protected Content

- Allow for (static) content behind password to be scanned and checked
- Full range of public and private content



Pillar 3: Ally for Web Community Manager

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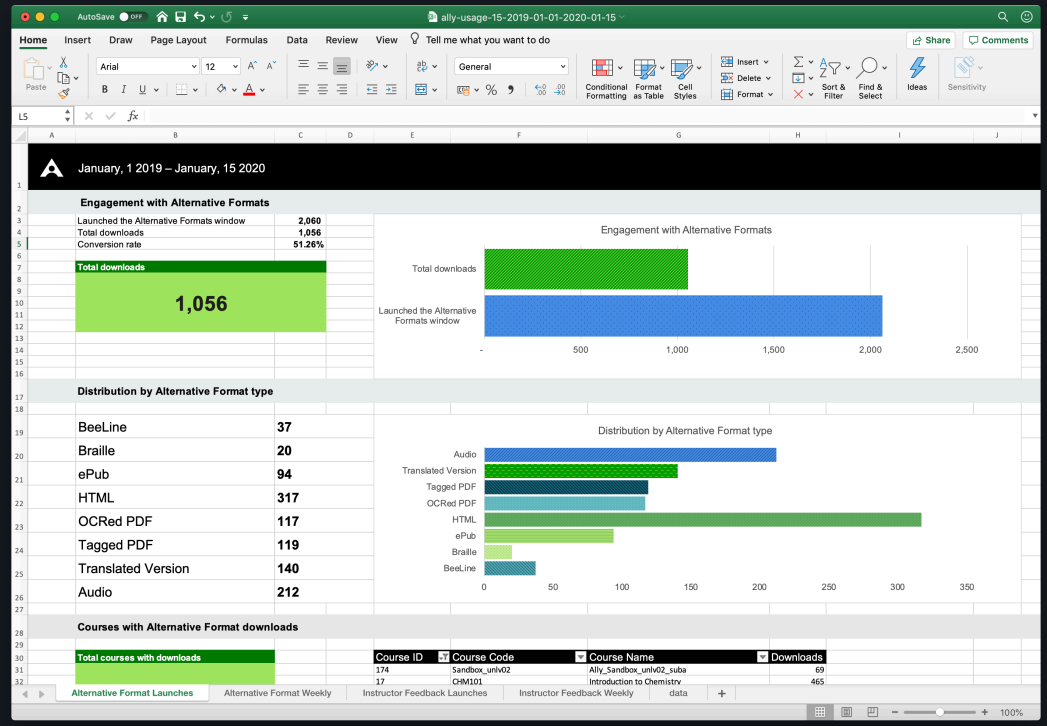

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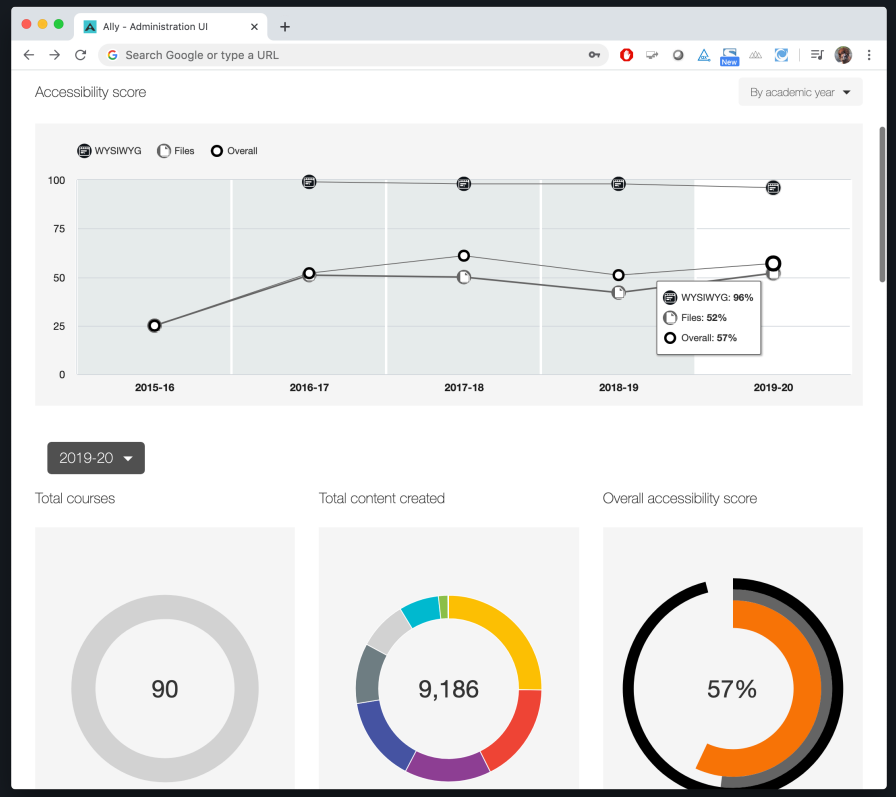

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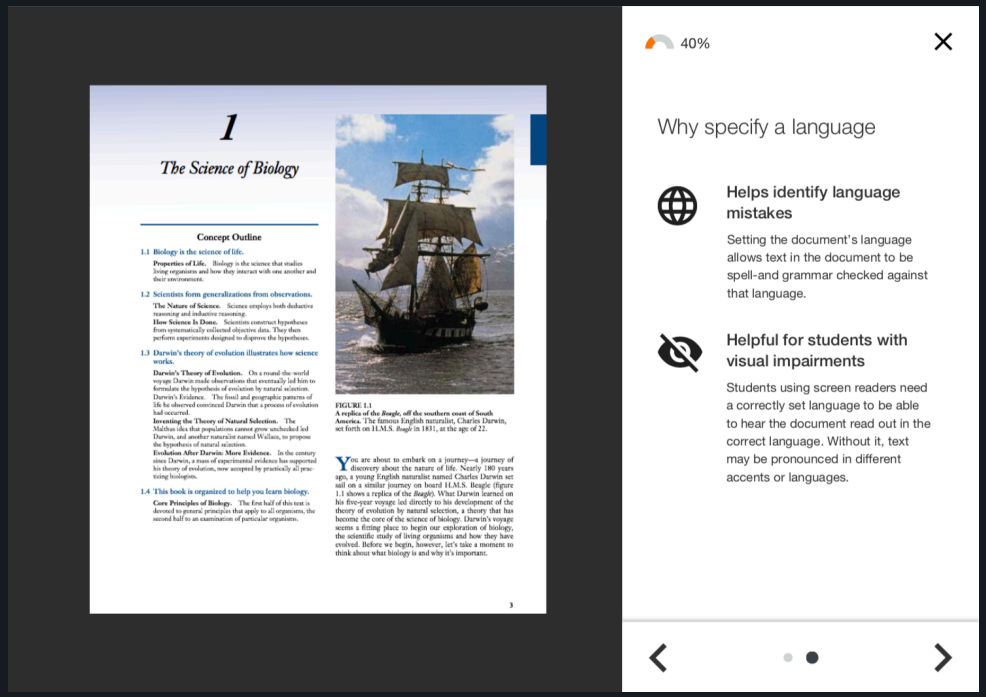

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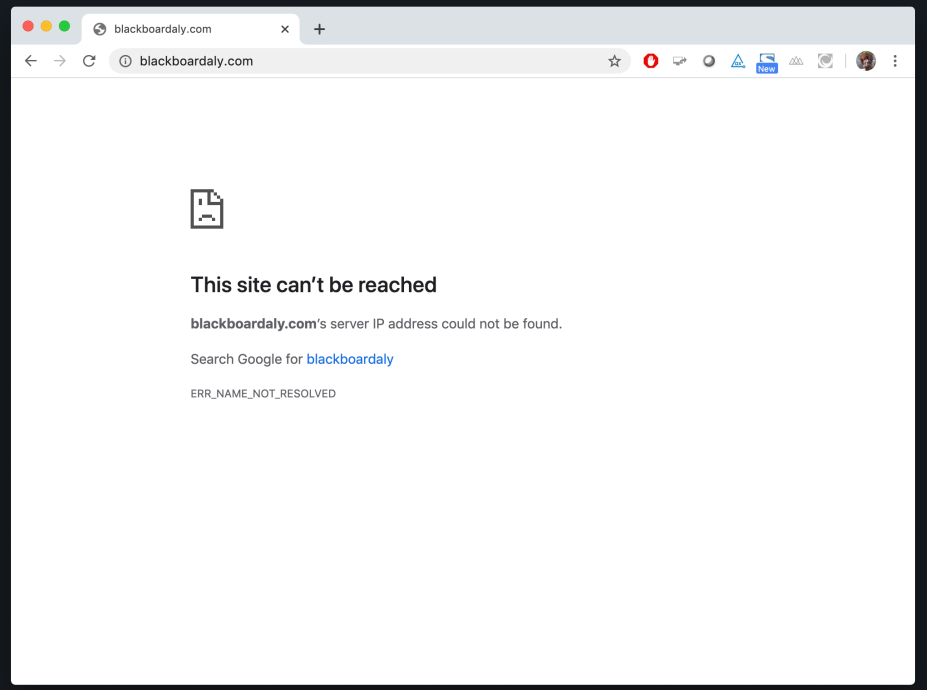
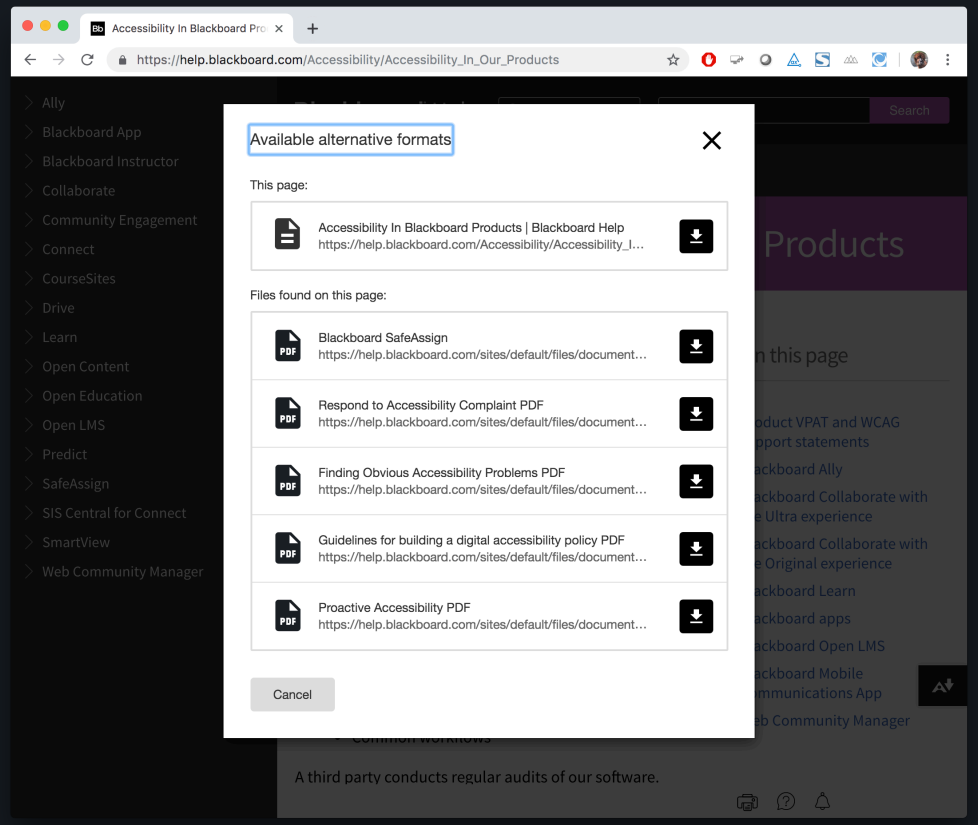


Web Page alternative formats

- Ally already provides alternative formats for embedded content such as PDFs, PowerPoint and Word
- Also provide alternative formats for web page content



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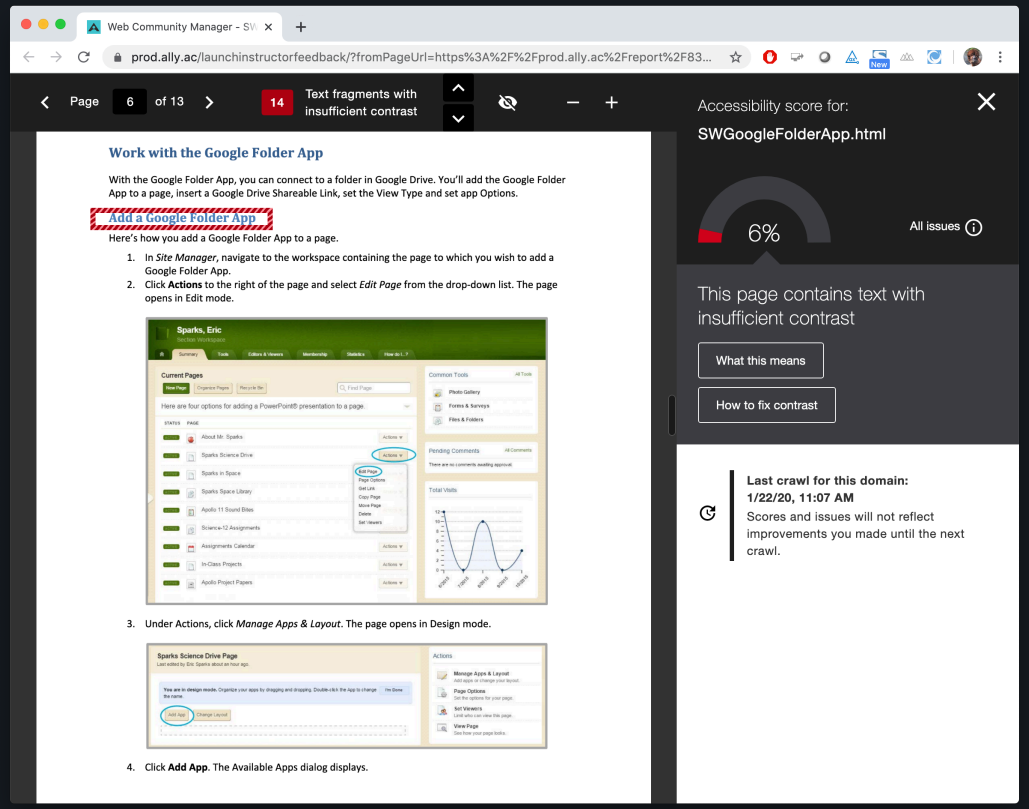
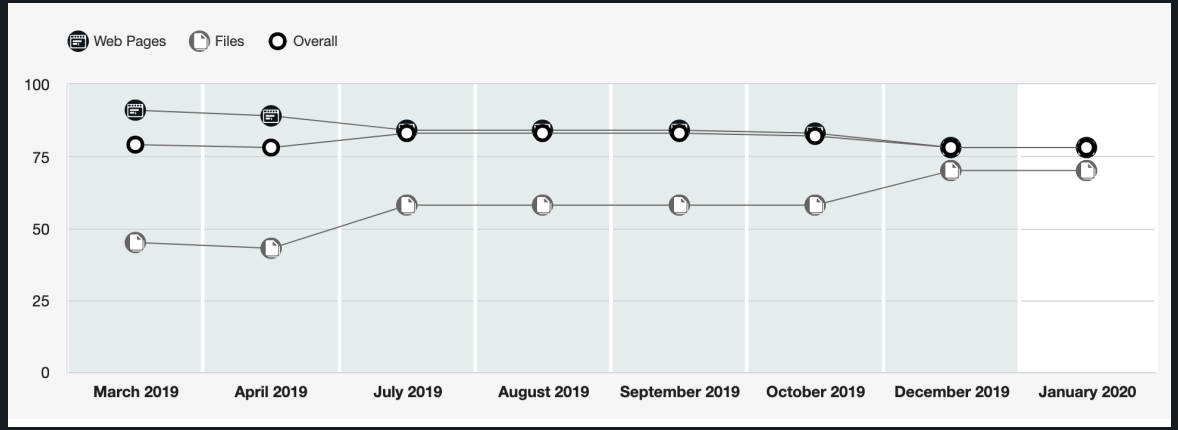


Section scoring

- Ally already shows evolution of accessibility score of entire site
- Show accessibility score evolution by section



Re-Scan On Demand

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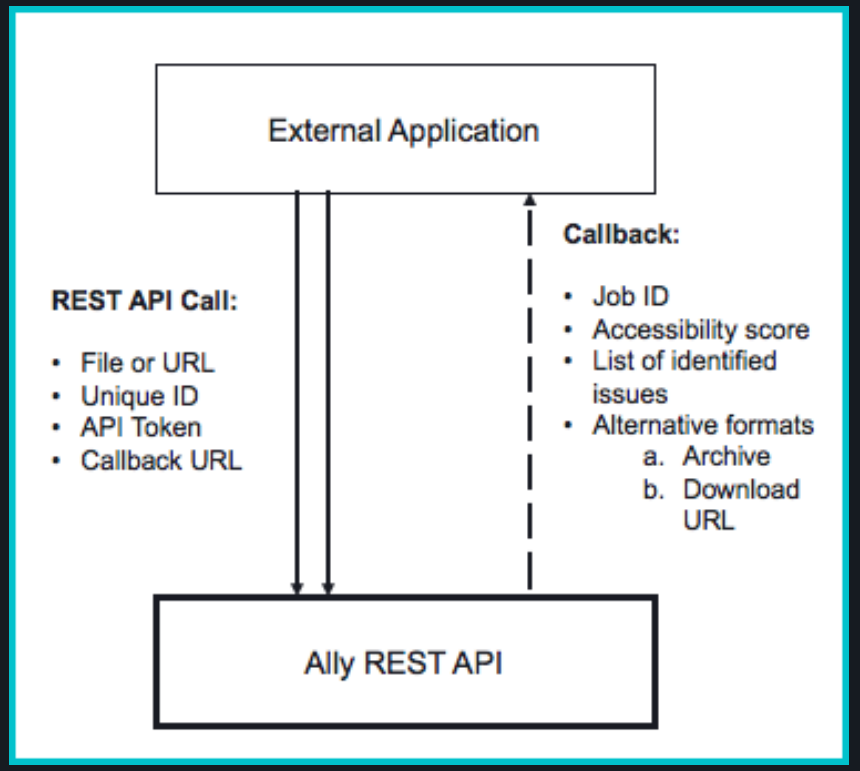
Pillar 4: Custom Integrations

Custom integrations

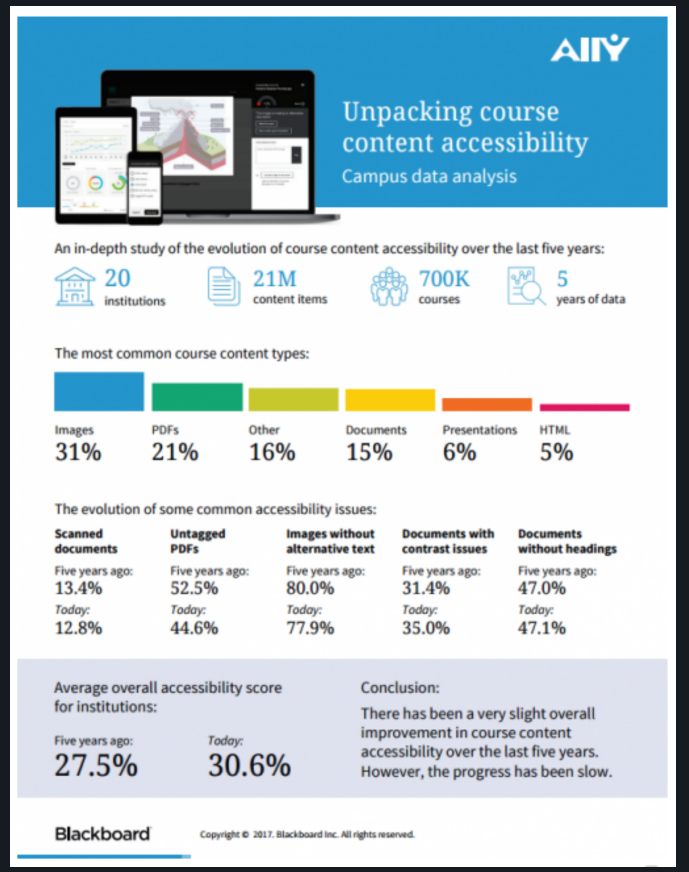
- Apply Ally's capabilities in other contexts
- REST API that consumes content and returns:
  - Accessibility score
  - List of issues
  - Alternative formats



Pillar 5: Research and impact

Research projects

- Ally has a wealth of course content and accessibility data
- 2020 focus on new data studies, whitepapers and other research
  - https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/05/18/data-show-small-improvements-accessibility-course-materials
- Community activities around data and research



Learning Analytics

- Ally data is automatically included in Blackboard Data
- As part of roadmap, produce xAPI and Caliper statements that can be stored in institutional Learning Record Store
- Allow for including accessibility information and alternative formats in prediction algorithms and other research projects

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