# DAISY Consortium

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Letter to the Editor:

A Plea for Accessibility: Why Higher Education Must Prioritize EPUB 3

To the esteemed editors of The Chronicle of Higher Education,

The educational landscape is rife with innovations, but as an accessibility expert with over two decades of experience, I find it disheartening that many higher education institutions have yet to harness the full potential of EPUB 3, a format that fundamentally transforms the reading experience for students.

As you well know, the transition to digital materials has been a boon for higher education. It offers flexibility, reduced costs, and adaptability. However, the predominance of PDFs, while convenient, severely limits the potential of true accessibility. This is where EPUB 3 shines.

What sets EPUB 3 apart is its alignment with the principles of universal design. Given the rich tapestry of learning needs among our student populace, a format that accommodates varied access requirements is not just an advantage—it's an imperative. EPUB files can be tailored for screen readers, magnification software, and other assistive technologies. It's not just about being compliant; it's about being compassionate and understanding of the unique challenges our students face.

The recent endorsement of EPUB 3.3 as a formal W3C Recommendation should serve as a clarion call. This isn't a mere industry nod—it's an affirmation that EPUB aligns with the highest standards for digital content.

While its accessibility features are commendable, EPUB 3 offers additional advantages that enrich the learning experience. Its robust search capabilities streamline academic research. The inherent adaptability of the format ensures content thrives across a myriad of devices, making learning mobile and unrestricted.

Our collective goal in higher education is to foster environments where every student, irrespective of their physical or cognitive abilities, can thrive. If we are to truly champion inclusivity, we need to look beyond mere compliance and aim for genuine accessibility. Adopting and promoting EPUB 3 as the standard for course materials and publications is a decisive step in that direction.

I urge the academic community, institutional decision-makers, and fellow educators to consider this not as a mere format shift, but as a necessary evolution in our approach to inclusive education.

With utmost respect for the work you do,

George Kerscher Ph.D.