Reading PDF documents with NVDA

Assistive Technology Team, July 2012

This guide has been written using Adobe Reader X and NVDA. It is assumed that you are familiar with the JAWS reading keys. For a refresher see NVDA Keystrokes for Reading Text located at http://www.abdn.ac.uk/assistivetechnology/documents/Staff/NVDA_Reading_Keys.docx

Note that some PDFs may not be accessible due to the way they have been produced. If this is the case you should contact the distributor of the PDF to ask for an accessible copy.

Accessibility Setup Assistant

When you first open Adobe Reader while NVDA is running, you will be presented with the Accessibility Setup Assistant where you can set up your preferences for reading the document.

If the Accessibility Setup Assistant does not start automatically and you wish to set up or change your preferences, you can open the Accessibility Setup Assistant at any time:

1. Go to the Edit menu, **ALT+E**
2. Choose the Accessibility submenu, **Y**
3. Press **S** for setup Assistant. The first page of the Accessibility Setup Assistant opens

Useful settings within the Accessibility Setup Assistant
By default Adobe Reader only shows a single page at a time to a screen reader.

This means that you cannot use the find command, list of links or list of headings to access anything before or after the first page of a document.

On screen 4 of 5 of the Accessibility Setup Assistant you should change the radio button to "Read the entire document at once." Changing this setting may mean that some large documents take several minutes to load, however it will allow you to navigate the document more efficiently.

Navigating a PDF document

As well as reading a PDF document from beginning to end there are several ways to navigate a PDF document:

Use shortcuts to move between pages
To move to the next page: CTRL+PAGE DOWN
To move to the previous page: CTRL+PAGE UP
To move to the first page: CTRL+HOME
To move to the last page: CTRL+END

To go to a specific page: CTRL+SHIFT+N. Note that this moves you to the physical page of a document, rather than to the page numbered N. For example, a document might have four preface

pages numbered with roman numerals. If you use CTRL+SHIFT+N and then type 20 and press Enter, you will arrive at the page numbered 16 in the document, rather than the page numbered 20.

Using the bookmarks list

To switch to the bookmark list from the main document, press F6. If you hear "Tree View" before a heading, this indicates that the bookmark list is open and you can navigate it by using the arrow keys. If you hear "Page Thumbnails", you will need to choose the bookmarks list by pressing CTRL+TAB and then pressing Enter to open the bookmarks list.

Bookmarks may be in a tree, that is, there may be several nested levels of bookmarks. If NVDA announces a heading and says "collapsed" after it, you can open the next level of bookmarks by pressing the right arrow. When you have located a bookmark you want to jump to in the main document, press Enter to jump to the top of the page containing that bookmark.

You will need to press F6 twice to return the focus to the document rather than the bookmarks list.

Use NVDA Find

To search the document using the NVDA Find Command: NVDA+CTRL+F, then press NVDA+F3 to repeat search in forward direction or NVDA+SHIFT+F3 to repeat search in the background direction.

Use NVDA list of Headings

To navigate list of headings: INSERT+F5, ALT+H, TAB. Note that in long documents with many headings it may take some time for this list to be built.

Use NVDA list of Links

To navigate links in a document: INSERT+F7, ALT+K, TAB. Note that in long documents with many links it may take some time for this list to be built.

Further Information

For further help and advice, please contact the Assistive Technology Team by email at atech@abdn.ac.uk or by phone on 01224 273336.