

ARL Accessibility and Universal Design Working Group

Campus captioning and transcription solutions

Introduction

For audio-visual materials, captions are essential to viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing, but, often likened to curb cuts in the built environment, they also provide great benefit to a wide audience for a variety of needs and situations. Captions benefit those learning English as a second language, or who are not fluent in the language presented, and are a great tool for improving the reading and listening skills of others. Captioning creates a better viewing experience by promoting retention of material and higher user satisfaction. It also makes video material available to sighted viewers without sound-capabilities, such as in loud or crowded public spaces. A captioned video can also be searched more effectively by search engines, increasing search engine optimization of audio-visual content.

Captioning is the transcription and display of dialogue and other auditory information, such as on and off screen sound effects, music and laughter. Campus accessibility plans need to identify captioning solutions for captured classroom lectures, public speeches, and other instructional and library audio-visual materials delivered over the Web or on DVD.

Accessibility: Captioning Best Practices

Campus captioning emerged as an issue with the California Community College System, when the US Department of Education's Civil Rights Division sued the system for lack of access to electronic curricular materials. In response, the California Community College System put into place a major plan and strategy for solving the problem. Captioning was a key component of the overall plan and they put together a system-wide implementation process. In most cases, captioning has been connected with efforts to make all electronic materials, including web sites, fully accessible to students and faculty.

1. **California Community Colleges:** Guidelines for Producing Instructional and Other Printed Materials in Alternate Media for Persons with Disabilities, April 2000, Chancellor's Office, California Community Colleges, Sacramento, California

<http://www.htctu.net/publications/guidelines/altmedia/altmedia.htm>

More information on their captioning program here:

<http://www.htctu.net/divisions/altmedia/captioning/cc/ccmain.htm>

Gaeir Dietrich (gdietrich@htctu.net) is the contact person in charge of their initiative.

2. **The California State University** mounted a similar effort, “Access to Electronic and Information Technology for Persons with Disabilities” in 2007.

The Cal State Assistive Technology Initiative is available at:
<http://www.calstate.edu/accessibility/>

An alternate site is <http://ati.calstate.edu>

Mark Turner (mturner@calstate.edu) is the contact person with Cal State.

3. **The University of California** at Berkeley has made significant efforts on captioning—see information at
<http://disabilitycompliance.berkeley.edu/captioning-webcasts>

UC Berkeley’s campus-wide policy is at <http://www.ucop.edu/electronic-accessibility/initiative/policy.html>

4. **Stanford University** has established one of the most comprehensive efforts and you can find more information at <http://captioning.stanford.edu>
5. **The University of Wisconsin-Madison** was one of the first institutions to contract with external vendors in providing media transcription and captioning services statewide. Two vendors currently under contract are 3Play Media and Automatic Sync Technologies.

Wisconsin did a side-by-side comparison (including costs) of several features offered by both vendors for media transcription and captioning service to help inform needs.

The side-by-side comparison is located at
<https://kb.wisc.edu/helpdesk/page.php?id=15016>

3Play Media: <http://www.3playmedia.com>

Automatic Synch Technologies: <http://www.automaticsync.com/captionsync/>

The general best practice for all campus video purchases is to select a captioned version if available. Vendor services are commonly used by the Libraries for captioning course related materials as well as captioning major campus events.

6. The accessibility work being done at the **Ontario Council of University Libraries**—OCUL/ScholarsPortal <http://ocul.on.ca/node/135> is comprehensive and impressive including the accessibility repository work done by the Accessible Content E-Portal or Ace <http://ocul.on.ca/node/2192>

Practical tips on captioning

Captions should be, have or include:

- One new line for each new sentence, because it can be distracting to the meaning if a sentence ends on one line and then is followed by several words from the next sentence;
- Synchronized and appear at approximately the same time as the audio is available;
- Verbatim when time allows, or as close as possible;
- Equivalent and equal in content;
- Accessible and readily available to those who need or want them;
- Easy to read format;
- Appear on screen long enough to be read;
- Limit on screen captions to no more than two lines;
- Speakers should be identified when more than one person is on screen or when the speaker is not visible;
- Punctuation is used to clarify meaning;
- Spelling is correct throughout the production;
- Sound effects are written when they add to understanding;
- All words are captioned, regardless of language or dialect;
- Use of slang and accent is preserved and identified;
- Nouns and verbs are not separated from their modifiers;
- Italics are effective when a new word is being defined or a word is heavily emphasized in speech;
- Translating speech to text sometimes requires creative use of punctuation, but always remember the rules of good grammar.

Resources

ACE

Accessible Content E-Portal a consortia service, a shared repository of accessible texts, which supports the Ontario Council of University Libraries

Katya Pereyaslavskaya, Project Manager, Accessible Texts Repository, (ACE Service) ScholarsPortal/OCUL

<http://www.ocul.on.ca/node/2192>

Scholars Portal/OCUL

www.scholarsportal.info

<http://www.scholarsportal.info/>

UW-Madison Accessibility/Usability Committee

<http://www.doit.wisc.edu/accessibility/>

<http://www.wisc.edu/accessibility/>

WGBH Captioning and Video description for the Web

http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/pages/mag/pdfs/marketing_web.captioning.pdf

Contact person at WGBH is Larry Goldberg

WGBH

Media Access Group

<http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/pages/mag/captioning.html>