



# Report on Accessible Media (ROAM)

Version 1.0  
February 2, 2015

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## Appendix F - Best Practices

In conducting the ROAM research, best practices around various aspects of media accessibility were identified. These are included in this appendix to provide additional detail on technical considerations and library workflow procedures.

### Best Practices in Creating Captions and Descriptions

There are several guidelines for creating captions and descriptions. For captions on the web and local playback, the [Caption Key](#) <sup>26</sup> guidelines from the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) can be used to produce in-house captions, or used for quality assurance purposes to evaluate a commercial product or service.

The DCMP captioning guidelines include:

1. Captions appear on-screen long enough to be read.
2. It is preferable to limit on-screen captions to no more than two lines.
3. Captions are synchronized with spoken words.
4. Speakers are identified when more than one person is on-screen or when the speaker is not visible.
5. Punctuation is used to clarify meaning.
6. Spelling is correct throughout the production.
7. Sound effects are written when they add to understanding.
8. All actual words are captioned, regardless of language or dialect.
9. Use of slang and accent is preserved and identified.<sup>27</sup>

The Canadian Network for Inclusive Cultural Exchange research project (2004) provides the following guidelines for creating video descriptions:

1. Understand the type and purpose(s) of the video, so you can determine what visually conveyed information is germane to that purpose, and what's not germane.

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<sup>26</sup> "Captioning Key," Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP). Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.dcmp.org/captioningkey>.

<sup>27</sup> "Caption It Yourself," Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP). Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.dcmp.org/ciy/>.

2. Understand the material presented, so you can make sense of what you see, and convey that sense to the learner.
3. Understand what someone who can't see needs to know to follow the program and make sense of the material presented; so you can determine what needs to be conveyed, and what doesn't – because it's apparent from the audio, or because it's not helpful (enough).
4. Observe closely and accurately.
5. Speak simply, clearly and concisely, so what you say is easy to understand the first time it's heard.
6. Respect the audio. Description is intended to complement the audio, not compete with it and create confusion.
7. Be an objective and positive observer. Your purpose is not to convey your personal feelings about the program or to point out what you perceive to be its shortcomings.
8. Disappear. Good description directs attention to the presentation, not to itself.<sup>28</sup>

Other resources for description and captioning include:

- DCMP's [Description Key](#)<sup>29</sup> and [Caption It Yourself](#)<sup>30</sup> tools
- Accessible Media Inc.'s [Described Video Best Practices](#)<sup>31</sup>
- The American Council of the Blind's [Audio Description Project](#)<sup>32</sup>
- Web Accessibility in Mind ([WebAIM](#)) guidelines<sup>33</sup> (for media accessibility on the Web)
- Media Access Group's [Caption FAQ](#)<sup>34</sup> and [Guide to Producing Programs for Viewers with Vision Impairment](#)<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "Online Video Description" Canadian Network Inclusive Cultural Exchange. Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://cnice.idrc.ocadu.ca/guidelines/video.php>.

<sup>29</sup> "Description Key," Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP). Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.dcmp.org/descriptionkey>.

<sup>30</sup> "Caption It Yourself," Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP). Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.dcmp.org/ciy/>.

<sup>31</sup> "Described Video Best Practices," Accessible Media Inc. Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.ami.ca/media-accessibility/Pages/Described-Video-Best-Practices.aspx>.

<sup>32</sup> "All About Audio Description," The Audio Description Project. Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.acb.org/adp/ad.html>.

<sup>33</sup> "Captions, Transcripts, and Audio Descriptions," WebAIM. Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://webaim.org/techniques/captions/>.

<sup>34</sup> "Captioning FAQ," Media Access Group at WGBH. Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/pages/mag/services/captioning/faq/sugg-styles-conv-faq.html>.

<sup>35</sup> "Mag Guide Vol. 2," Media Access Group at WGBH. Accessed January 8, 2015, [http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/pages/mag/resources/guides/mag\\_guide\\_vol2.html](http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/pages/mag/resources/guides/mag_guide_vol2.html).

- Canadian Association of Broadcasters' 2012 [Closed Captioning Standards and Protocol for Canadian English Language Television Programming Services](#)<sup>36</sup>

## Best Practices in Caption File Formatting and Playback

SubRip or SRT is the recommended caption file format because of its ubiquity and versatility. Files are usually only a few kilobytes in size and therefore easy to store, edit, and deliver or receive via email. SRT is also compatible with and loadable into YouTube, Vimeo, and many local playback media players, such as VLC. For VLC, an SRT file similarly named and co-located with a video on a storage device (e.g. *worldpeace.mp4* and *worldpeace.srt*) allows for straightforward playback with a simple toggling on and off of the captions across platforms.

SRT is also a good back-up to address errors. Errors in open captioning cannot be corrected without modifying the actual video file, whereas correcting closed caption files with a text editor such as SRT is easy and quick. (Technical note: always retain the unaltered original file when making corrections and save variants as plain text, i.e. *.txt* with UTF-8 encoding.)

Some video formats such as MP4 allow for captions to be directly integrated and then automatically triggered in a number of media players: VLC, QuickTime Player (version 10) and iTunes. Libraries could therefore produce an MP4 with built-in closed captions along with a separate external SRT file, for additional flexibility in deployment.

## Best Practices in Media Procurement

As noted on page 48 of the [Accessibility Information Toolkit for Libraries](#)<sup>37</sup>: “Libraries should consider making every attempt to purchase media that is already captioned.” It is also recommended to obtain separate caption and/or transcript files from the vendor at the time of purchase, wherever possible.

Where an accessible version of the media is not available, blanket copyright clearance for producing captions or an accessible version of the material could be secured at the time of purchase. This permission should not come at additional cost. It is a mutually beneficial practice for the institution securing permission to share the captions and/or the accessible version with the copyright holder after the fact. Offering this accessible content can further encourage rights holders to grant permissions for captioning or describing their media.

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<sup>36</sup> “Closed Captioning Standards and Protocol for Canadian English Language Television Programming Services,” (August 2012). Canadian Association of Broadcasters. Accessed January 8, 2015, [http://www.cab-acr.ca/english/social/captioning/cc\\_standards.pdf](http://www.cab-acr.ca/english/social/captioning/cc_standards.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> “Accessibility Information Toolkit for Libraries,” Ontario Council of University Libraries. Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.ocul.on.ca/node/2127>.

The OCUL Electronic Journals and Databases License Agreement<sup>38</sup> contains sample language for obtaining accessible formats or permission to provide them where unavailable from the vendor: this may become of increasing importance as libraries license more databases that include video content. Additionally, though provided in the context of non-media resources, the accessibility requirements as stated in the model license are quite broad and could serve as a starting point for discussion with media providers. Additional sample language and other procurement considerations can be found in the Procurement section of the OCUL Accessibility Information Toolkit for Libraries.

## Best Practices in Discoverability of Accessible Library Media

A number of OCUL institutions have made it their priority over the past few years to include accessibility information for newly-acquired media. The location of this information is most commonly the 546 field of the MARC record, which includes information about the physical disc. However, other MARC record fields are also used to indicate the presence of captions:

500 - general note

520 - summary note

650 or 655 - subject or index term, e.g. "Video recordings for the hearing impaired."

Many libraries have created a pre-selected search or filter on accessible media in their catalogue or discovery layer. This is probably the most user-friendly way to ensure that the material is discoverable, as it removes the guesswork involved in entering search terms (e.g., "captions" vs. "captioned"). It can also serve as a marketing tool, indicating that the library provides access to and actively promotes accessible material.

## Spotlight on Ryerson University Library & Archives' Services for Persons with Disabilities

The Ryerson University library has a very well-scoped accessible media accommodation workflow, which includes both in-house and outsourced production. This spotlight provides detail about these workflows and is based on interviews with several library staff.

### *What media is captioned?*

Requested materials held by the library as well as classroom content is processed through the library. Funding sources for library-held materials come from the library budget. Other requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis to identify the appropriate revenue sources (i.e., departmental videos should be funded by the department).

### *Do faculty play a role?*

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<sup>38</sup> "OCUL Model Licenses," Ontario Council of University Libraries. Accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.ocul.on.ca/collections/licenses>.

Instructors usually contact the library to place an accessible media accommodation request on behalf of their students. Some faculty will caption preemptively; others will wait for the student to request accommodation.

*What kinds of materials has the library worked with?*

- Physical DVD and VHS formats
- In-house videos
- Streamed media
  - · Recorded lectures
  - · Podcasts
  - · Commercial films
  - · Art films
- 16 mm films pose a challenge as they cannot be captioned and much of the older technology to watch these has been deaccessioned.

*Does the library outsource captioning work?*

The Ryerson university library staff engage with commercial service providers and also caption in-house.

*Example of an outsourcing scenario:*

A student who is hard of hearing would like to watch a DVD held in the library collection.

1. Library staff secure permission to caption the work from the copyright holder
2. The physical DVD is sent out to a commercial service to be captioned
3. A transcript is sent to library staff to review for quality (having access to an additional copy of the video is helpful at this stage)
4. Feedback from staff is forwarded to the commercial service
5. A physical copy of the captioned DVD is sent back to the library, in addition to a caption file in SRT format
6. Library staff add an accessibility note to the MARC 546 field, and the accessible DVD copy is included in the same case as the original DVD.

*Example of an in-house captioning scenario:*

A faculty member would like to show a small film clip in her classroom.

1. Staff write a transcript and save it as a separate file (usually in Word). This document is then used to create the captions.
2. Captioning permissions are requested
3.
  - a. If the copyright holder does not respond or cannot be located; the clip is screen-captured and uploaded – either to a private library YouTube account or to Camtasia - and captioned using the transcript. The final captioned version is only shared with the student with a disability.
  - b. if permission or copyright clearance is obtained then the clip is uploaded into the library YouTube account. The script is also loaded into YouTube to create captions. The captioned YouTube clip is shared with the whole class.
4. When captioning is complete, staff download the caption file in SRT format from YouTube. Both the SRT and the Word document versions are retained.

*What are some considerations and recommendations for captioning permissions?*

- Permission to caption can be difficult to acquire at the time of purchase if the purchase is made via Amazon or similar online platforms
- Some national organizations that produce video, such as CBC or the National Film Board (NFB), either do not retain captioned versions or do not usually respond in a timely fashion to requests for permission to caption. This could be a result of the AODA being provincial rather than national legislation<sup>39</sup>.
- Lists of accessible media copyright holders should be shared among institutions across Ontario.
- Sharing captions among OCUL institutions can help to reduce costs as long as vendor licenses allow this.
- Documentation about rights holders should be retained alongside the captions to facilitate sharing (where allowed) and ensure that information about permissions is readily available
- Institutions could set up a shared document, which would document permissions received. This document could be a click-through agreement sent to copyright holders asking them to agree to:

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<sup>39</sup> The AODA does not apply to Federally Regulated Organizations.

- Have a video captioned by the institution
- Agree to extend this permission to all OCUL institutions
- Receive a complimentary captioned copy

## Contact

<http://library.ryerson.ca/services/disabilities>

## Spotlight on Carleton University's Paul Menton Centre (PMC) for Students with Disabilities

Though independent from the library at Carleton, the PMC provides a good example of a well-run volunteer-based accessibility service. The PMC has student volunteers trained for various disability-related services. In response to the increasing demand for accessible course materials, the centre staff selected and trained some of these volunteers to be captioners. Quality control and volunteer turnover are carefully managed with supportive supervision for the specialized volunteers. The students have a dedicated work space and equipment, and their shifts are determined in a way that prioritized the demands of their own studies.

While the PMC initially had to devote considerable resources and staff time to establish and manage the captioning program, the result is a considerable output volume of quality captioned video.

The quality of the service is maintained in part due to the following standards:

- a “no guesswork” policy on the part of the captioner
- multiple rounds of proofing and quality control
- three-week turnaround deadline from request to delivery

The PMC's success in developing internal captioning capabilities is part of a much larger strategy at the cultural level throughout the university, leading to the establishment of a positive working relationship with faculty and more inclusive classroom learning environments.

## Contact

<http://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Email: [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca)

Tel: 613.520.6608, TTY: 613.520.3937