

JACLYN LEDUC:

So hello, everyone who has just joined us. Thank you for being here today for the webinar entitled Audio Description with 3Play Media. So let's get started.

So presenting today is myself. My name is Jaclyn, and I work on our marketing team here at 3Play Media. And then my colleague Ryan Martinez is here today as well, who is part of our implementation team. And he'll be here to help answer your questions at the end. So thank you so much, Ryan, for being here with us.

We have a simple agenda today. I'll start out by covering what audio description is at a high level so that you can have a solid understanding of audio description. This will include how to publish audio description, the benefits of it, and also some accessibility laws. And then I'll briefly cover who 3Play Media is and what we do and share some resources as well at the end. And then we'll also head right into a Q&A session.

Let's start with the basics of audio description. So first of all, what is it? Audio description is an accommodation for blind and low-vision viewers. It is a secondary audio track that plays in addition to the main audio track. And it's often represented by an AD icon, capital A-D, similar to the capital CC icon you would see for closed captions.

On the next slide, I'll show you an example, which is a trailer for the *Frozen* movie from Disney. Before I play that example, please note that the narration you hear in the video is actually the audio description track. So pay close attention to the main audio of the video, particularly any dialogue or contextual clues from the characters or the lack thereof. I'm going to play the video.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- From the creators of
Tangled and *Wreck-It
Ralph*, Disney. A carrot-
nosed, coal-lined
snowman shuffles up to a
purple flower peeping out
of deep snow.

- Hello.

- He takes a deep sniff.

[SNEEZES]

His nose lands on a frozen pond. A reindeer looks up and pants like a dog. Seeing the reindeer slip on the ice, the snowman smiles and moves towards him, though, actually, he's running in one spot. The reindeer falls on his chin.

The snowman uses his arm as a crutch. The reindeer paddles his front legs. Head over heels, the snowman crawls over the ice. The reindeer does the breaststroke. The snowman rolls his body but flips onto his back. And his tongue sticks to be ice.

[SCREAMS]

The snowman hurls his head. Twig arm and the reindeer lips tug at the carrot. The carrot flies off and lands in soft snow. The reindeer goes after it, with the snowman and his body parts hanging on his tail. The snowman puts himself back together again and glumly contemplates his noseless state.

The reindeer jams the carrot back in place and pants like a proud puppy. The snowman pats him with a stick arm, then he goes to sneeze. He grabs his nose with both hands. His head shoots off. *Frozen*, coming this winter in 3D.

[END PLAYBACK]

JACLYN LEDUC:

OK. So I hope you enjoyed the example here. In this clip, you may have noticed there wasn't any dialogue to provide you with context. All we really have to go off of are some vague verbal expressions and then the music. And if you weren't able to see the screen, it would be nearly impossible to know what's happening.

So the audio description track makes up for the lack of dialogue in the scene. It does a good job of visually bringing these characters to life and paints a good picture of the scene itself.

I particularly like when the description says, the snowman puts himself back together again and glumly contemplates his noseless state. I think it's just a really creative description. And it still describes perfectly well what's happening on the screen. And so I hope this gives you a better idea of what audio description is, what it's like, and also why it's really important.

There are two types of audio description, standard and extended. The *Frozen* example was an example of standard. The audio description snippets were able to fit into the natural pauses within the video. And because there was no dialogue, there was a lot of space to insert descriptions without interrupting the flow of the scene.

Now, extended audio description allows you to add pauses to the video to make room for descriptions as needed. If content is packed with dialogue, extended is a good option. It could be useful for more dense and complex content, such as lectures or dialogue-heavy presentations.

Now let's talk a bit about how to create audio description. The first option is a more proactive solution. And you can narrate at the time of recording. For example, in a lecture, the professor can describe the visuals on the slide as they go along presenting. And this allows you to eliminate the need to go back and add a description track in post-production.

There are also other solutions. You can create a text-only description, writing down all of the relevant visual information and making the text available to viewers. This method does lose that cinematic effect for the viewer and doesn't offer quite the same amount of accommodation as a traditional audio description track.

If you have created a text description and you have good recording equipment and video editing software, you can record your own voice descriptions, merge it with your source audio, and then output a second video with a description. And lastly, there's, of course, the option to outsource to a professional description vendor, where they will do it for you.

And when it comes to creating audio description, quality does matter. The DCMP stands for Described and Captioned Media Program, which provides helpful guidelines and standards to follow for audio description. It teaches us what to describe, when to describe, and how to describe. And it's a good resource to check out and reference. The link I have on the slide here is descriptionkey.org/quality_description.html.

The DCMP has five main measures for quality. According to this resource, a quality description is first accurate, meaning there must be no errors in word selection, pronunciation, diction, or enunciation. It should be prioritized, meaning that the description should narrate what is essential to the intended learning and enjoyment outcomes.

It should be equal. And to create an equal viewing experience, the meaning and the intention of the program must be well-conveyed. It should also be appropriate. And this means that the description should consider the intended audience. It should be objective and just seek simplicity. And then finally, consistent. And that means that both a description and the voicing should try and match the style, tone, and pace of the program.

Once you have your descriptions created, how can you publish them? So there are a few options. The first option is to upload the audio description MP4 track to your host video platform, if it supports it. This is one of the more user-friendly ways to publish audio description since it allows viewers to toggle the description on and off.

However, there is limited player compatibility for in-player audio description tracks, so it's not always possible. If your player does not support in-player audio description, you can publish one video with the description and one without. So the description would be burned into the video. This is similar to the *Frozen* example that I showed at the beginning. The last option is to have the MP4 file on hand and to provide it when someone requests it or to host it directly on your website for viewers to access.

And with 3Play Media, there's actually a fourth option. It's called the 3Play Plugin, which is a keyboard and screen-reader-accessible audio description plugin. It allows your description to play with a video player without having to republish the video. So by using the plugin, you can host the video with the description track directly on your website.

So what's the benefit of audio description? And why should it be a priority for our video content? The number one benefit is that it provides equal access for blind and low-vision viewers. In 2015, the National Health Interview Survey found that 23.7 million Americans-- and that's about 10% of the population-- have trouble seeing to some degree. So audio description is a critical accommodation for these viewers to have access to video content and entertainment.

Audio description also provides flexibility to view videos in an eyes-free environment or in situations where you are unable to look at the screen 100% of the time. It can be helpful for auditory learners, too. Research shows that 20% to 30% of students say they retain information best through sound.

It helps to increase focus for viewers as well, as we all tend to miss important visual cues when looking at screens for extended periods of time. And audio description can help to bring attention to those often-missed visuals.

It can also improve brand image. Prioritizing accessibility can position your brand as a leader in innovation. And inclusive design and equal access won't go unnoticed by consumers. In fact, 2/3 of consumers prefer to purchase from brands that stand for something important, such as equal access. Finally, audio description may be required by law. And I'll talk more about the laws in the next slide.

So there are few laws in relation to audio description. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first legislation to address equal access for people with disabilities. Section 504 applies to federal programs and federally funded programs, which must make their content accessible to those with disabilities. And this may include providing audio description for visual media.

Section 508 applies to federal programs and can be applied on a state level, too. Section 508 references WCAG 2.0, which requires audio description for video and media content.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, also known as the ADA, prohibits disability discrimination. It requires effective communication, which means providing assistive technology and services for content. There are two main sections which apply here. Title II covers government entities and the services, activities, and programs they provide. The content and materials they offer must be accessible. And yes, this may include describing video content.

Title III covers places of public accommodation. This would include restaurants, schools, theaters. Under Title III, some precedent has been set that the ADA could apply to websites, as well as physical locations. A case example for this is the *American Council of the Blind versus Netflix* and a recent settlement between the American Council of the Blind and HBO Max, which has agreed to provide audio description going forward.

The third major accessibility law in the US is the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act. And that's shortened to CVAA. The CVAA enacted the goal to phase in audio description requirements between 2010 and 2020.

So just last year, when we reached 2020, a proposal was submitted under the CVAA to expand video description regulations by phasing them in for additional market areas each year for four years, beginning on January 1, 2021. So essentially, this would just expand more audio description for broadcast material. And I believe that the FCC did put that proposal into effect. Lastly, the Federal Communications Commission, the FCC, does enforce and mandate audio description requirements for broadcast television and for online video that has previously aired on broadcast television.

And I briefly mentioned WCAG previously. So let's talk about that for a minute. WCAG, which is the international set of guidelines that helps make digital content accessible for all users, specifically people with disabilities. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, which is shorthand to WCAG, or W-C-A-G, outlines best practices for making web content universally perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust.

There are three levels of accessibility standards, A, AA, and AAA, with AAA being the highest level of accessibility. Audio description is required in WCAG 2.0 level AA for prerecorded synchronized video media. For level A, you can provide an AD track, Audio Description track, or a full-text alternative. For level AAA, you must provide extended audio description if it's necessary.

WCAG also provides success criteria for how to meet these requirements. And just one more note about this-- WCAG 2.1 is actually the most recent update, as opposed to 2.0. And 2.1 is the most inclusive and mobile-friendly guidelines. However, it's not yet referenced in any laws that I know of.

So that concludes the high-level overview of audio description. And I hope you learned something and found it helpful. I quickly want to talk about who 3Play Media is and what we offer and share some free resources and upcoming events as well.

So here at 3Play, we want to help you create compliant, accessible, and engaging videos. And we offer a range of services to help you do so, from closed captioning to live automatic captioning, subtitling, translation, and audio description.

Our goal is to make it easy, flexible, and scalable for you. Our customers can upgrade their services any time. So if you come to us at first only needing captions, but then down the line you need audio description, you can easily add that on. We also have a dedicated support and account management team who are there to help you reach your goals, talk about your account strategy, and just serve as advisors for your success.

And one of the big things about us is that we provide you with as much flexibility as possible. We work with many industries and understand that every company has different needs. So we can help accommodate numerous workflows, turnaround times, caption file formats, you name it. Anything that you need regarding video compliance and accessibility, we will work to help you with it.

We also offer a lot of free resources. On our website, you'll find weekly blogs, free white papers, checklists, and research studies. We also have tons of monthly webinars like this one, which I'll talk more about in the next slide. And then we also have a free video accessibility course, which goes more in-depth on video accessibility knowledge so that you can hopefully use that knowledge to help drive initiatives at your organization.

OK. So thank you all for listening. We now have some time for Q&A. So I think we can jump right into that. Let's look at the Q&A box. OK. Lots of good questions.

Please give some info on closed captions and open captions. Sure. I can answer to that one. So closed captions would be classified as when you can watch a video and turn the captions on and off. So it's up to the viewer if they want to turn it off. And you'll see them displayed at the bottom of the screen as normal, in the black text box.

When you see open captions, there's no option to turn them on and off. They are what we call burned into the video or merged with the video. So that's the main difference. And it's really just a matter of capabilities with whatever video player you're using or maybe the format that you want. Both are valid, but that's the main difference.

So I have, actually, a question for Ryan, if he minds jumping in. The question is, can you explain how the 3Play Plugin works with video players like YouTube or Vimeo?

RYAN MARTINEZ:

So that's a great question. We get that quite a bit. And I had mentioned it in some of the Q&A questions that were going around. For folks on the call, it's sort of an interesting world that we live in where, in many cases, both captions and audio description are required for WCAG 2.0 AA compliance. But video players like YouTube and Vimeo don't actually have native support or native solutions for audio description much like they do for closed captions.

So within the 3Play system, many of our customers choose to integrate their video players with the 3Play account so that we can see their library of content. And once we complete the transcription and captioning or audio description work that we do and those files are hosted in our system, the plugin allows us to basically put a wrapper around your YouTube or your Vimeo video and incorporate some interactive features like an interactive transcript or the ability to pull up an audio description track even for content that is, in fact, hosted on YouTube.

So there is a link that I will also put in the Zoom chat as well for folks to reference. But there are a couple of really great examples on our website of files that you'll notice are actually YouTube players. But they do feature the option to click AD and listen to that audio description track right from within the plugin itself. So it basically takes advantage of your content that's hosted on YouTube by wrapping that content with interactive features that wouldn't otherwise be available out of the box.

JACLYN LEDUC:

Yeah, definitely. Thanks for sharing that example. I was going to mention that. People should definitely check that out because it shows you exactly what the plugin looks like, and it's great. Thanks, Ryan.

All right. It looks like you answered a lot of questions. Someone asked, with the plugin, what if the content needs login access to view? Will it still work? Do you have any insight to that, Ryan?

RYAN MARTINEZ:

Yeah. So generally, it sounds like that's being what's referred to as in some cases private or unlisted content. In most cases, videos do-- especially using our integrations-- they have to be public in order for 3Play to access that content.

We do, however, see a number of situations where folks are hesitant to upload content to video platforms if it doesn't already have captions. I do want to highlight that 3Play, both in terms of captions as well as descriptions, we follow very strict standards. And we deliver high levels of accuracy for all of our services.

So in many cases, again, your content has to be first made public so 3Play can access that content and then automatically post captions or description if the player supports description back to that video file. So without it being public, you can upload content manually to our system and download any resources you need to make sure wherever it's hosted it can be made accessible. But content, for the most part, needs to be public before 3Play can access it via our integrations.

JACLYN LEDUC:

Right. Thanks, Ryan. That makes sense. And I think we can do one more. I wonder if you have any insight to this one. So someone was asking about extended audio description and how it works. Can you talk about how it works, at least with 3Play?

RYAN MARTINEZ:

Yeah. So great question. So you have a couple of options for extended audio description. Number one is to download the video file right from 3Play. So that would include the video file plus the audio description track. And it would actually auto pause and resume that video. So the duration of the video would increase slightly based on how many pauses and how much description was added.

The other option, though, is that 3Play Plugin, the link that I threw in the chat. And what that actually does is we inject a bit of JavaScript into the video so that it does, in fact, auto pause the video and auto resume it when the 3Play Plugin is used.

Even for players like Brightcove-- is a good example that supports secondary audio tracks, Brightcove does not support extended secondary audio tracks because that auto pausing and resuming cannot be read by all video players. So with the downloadable option, that can just be uploaded into any video player as its own media asset. So you know that the description will always play with the video.

If you choose to use the plugin, that's a more interactive option. But it allows you to embed that video content on a web page without impacting the overall duration of the content because of how that JavaScript auto pauses and resumes it. So there's a lot of magic happening behind the scenes there. But hopefully that gives you a little bit more insight.

JACLYN LEDUC:

Awesome. Yeah. That's a good way to put it. Magic behind the scenes. So I think we're at the top of-- yeah, we're at 2:30. So we are going to hop off.

I know there was a lot of questions. I'm sorry we couldn't get to all of them. But I really appreciate everyone being here today. And I hope to see you at some of the future events that I mentioned. And thanks, Ryan, again, for being here to help field some questions as well. Super helpful.

RYAN MARTINEZ:

Thanks, everyone.

JACLYN LEDUC:

Thanks so much. Have a great day, everyone.