**JACLYN LEDUC:**     So, thank you all for joining us today for Intro to Audio Description. All right. So I'll take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Jaclyn Leduc, and I'm a content marketing specialist at 3Play Media. I write content on all things video accessibility. If you want to reach me after this presentation, I can be reached at J-A-C-L-Y-N@3playmedia.com. And I'm joined today by Ryan, who is going to introduce himself in the next slide.

**RYAN:**     Hello, everyone. My name is Ryan. I'm an implementation specialist at 3Play. My job essentially is to train customers and build workflows that work for a variety of needs. I also can be reached via email-- ryan@3playmedia.com-- and I welcome any product-related questions. Happy to steer you in the right direction, even for those of you that may not be customers of 3Play.

**JACLYN LEDUC:**     Great. Thanks, Ryan. So this presentation will go over several things, including what is audio description, how to create a description, the benefits of audio description, the legal landscape, as well as integrations and how to publish. And I've also incorporated several examples of audio description throughout this presentation so that you can get an idea of what it is and experience it for yourself if you haven't before.

So the first big question at hand is, what is audio description? It is an accommodation for blind and low-vision viewers. It's a secondary audio track that plays in addition to the main audio track, and is often represented by a little AD icon. So rather than tell you about it, I will show you in the next slides.

So the video on screen now is undescribed. The thumbnail is a scene from the Disney film, *Frozen,* with the snowman, Olaf, and the reindeer, Sven. For this video, I'd like you to try watching without looking at the screen. You can close your eyes or just look away, and see if you can figure out what is going on in this scene based on the

audio alone.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- [LAUGHS] Ah. Ooh. Hello.
[SNIFFS] Ah. [GASPS] [SNEEZES]

[PANTING]

[GASPS]

[LAUGHS]

[SNORTS]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[SCREAMING]

[GROANS]

[SCREAMING]

[END PLAYBACK]

**JACLYN LEDUC:**   OK. So for me at least, and I imagine for many of you, it was difficult to understand what's happening in this scene if you aren't able to see the screen. There isn't any real dialogue to provide context. The only thing we can really go off of are some expressions and the music track.

OK. So now, let's watch the described version of the same clip. This time, you can look away, or you can look at the screen if you prefer. And listen closely to the audio description to see if it's easier to

picture what is happening. So I'm going to play the video.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

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

- Ooh. Hello. [LAUGHS]

- He takes a deep sniff.

- Ah. [GASPS] [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 along the ice. The reindeer does the breaststroke. The snowman rolls his body but flips onto his back. The reindeer's tongue sticks to the ice.

[OLAF SCREAMING]

The snowman hurls his head. Twig arm and reindeer lips tug at the carrot. The carrot flies off and lands in soft snow. The reindeer goes after it with 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 his stick-thin arm, then goes to sneeze. He grabs his nose with both hands.

[OLAF SNEEZES]

His head shoots off. *Frozen* coming this winter in 3D.

[LAUGHTER]

[END PLAYBACK]

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| **JACLYN LEDUC:** | All right. So this time around, the description really makes up for the lack of dialogue in the scene. It does a great job of visually bringing these fictional characters to life, like when the narrator says, "A reindeer looks up and pants like a dog," the viewer knows that Sven, the reindeer, is a goofy reindeer. |

And the description paints a great picture of this whimsical scene. I particularly like the description when the narrator says, "The snowman puts himself back together again and glumly contemplates his noseless state." I think it is a very creative description but describes perfectly what's happening on screen. And I hope you enjoyed this example. All of this is to just give you a glimpse of what audio description is all about.

And the purpose of audio description is to narrate the relevant visual information and to describe the characters, what the scene looks like, and the actions that are taking place, as we just witnessed in the *Frozen* example. It paints an image of the visual for those who can't see the screen, such as blind and low-vision viewers.

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

Extended audio description allows you to add pauses to the video to make room for the descriptions as needed. If content is packed without dialogue, extended is a great option. It could be useful for more dense and complex content, such as lectures or 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 the recording. For example, in a recorded lecture, the professor can describe the visuals on the slides as they go along presenting. And this allows you to eliminate the need to go through and add audio description in postproduction.

And there are other solutions. You can create text-only description, writing down all of the relevant visual information in the video and making the text available to viewers. And just note that this method can lose cinematic effect for the viewer, and it doesn't necessarily offer the same amount of accommodation.

If you have created a text description, and you have good recording equipment and video editing software, you could record your own voice descriptions, merge it with your source audio, and output a second video with the description track.

Another option is to create a text-only description that is time-coded, just like you would time code a captioned file. You can use this to create a WebVTT file, similar to captions, but for audio description. And this is supported natively in some HTML5 browsers. And then lastly, there's the option to outsource for professional description.

So it's good to know that there are quality standards for audio description. This is helpful if creating descriptions from scratch so that you may provide the best quality for viewers. And even if you're outsourcing, you should know what to look out for to ensure that the third-party service is following those quality standards.

For quality standards, I'm going to turn my attention to the DCMP. The DCMP stands for Described and Captioned Media Program. It is funded by the US Department of Education and administered by the National Association of the Deaf, and provides helpful guidelines and standards to follow for audio description.

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

It must be equal, and equal access requires that the meaning and intention of the program is conveyed. It should be appropriate, meaning the description should consider the intended audience, be objective, and seek simplicity. And it should also be consistent, meaning both the description and the voicing should try and match the style, tone, and the pace of the program.

From the DCMP, we learn what to describe, when to describe, and how to describe, to create great descriptions just like the one we watched in the *Frozen* example. It is a great resource that I recommend you reference, whether you're making your own description or outsourcing. And the link to that description key is descriptionkey.org/quality_description.html.

We've covered some of the basics of audio description. But the next question is, why should we describe our video content? And to answer that question, I'm going to talk about some of the many benefits of audio description. The number one benefit is that it provides accessibility.

It's an accommodation for blind and low-vision viewers. In 2015, the National Health Interview Survey found that 23.7 million Americans, about 10% of the population, have trouble seeing, to some extent. So audio description is a critical accommodation for these viewers

to have equal access to video content and entertainment.

Audio description also provides flexibility to view in eyes-free environments. So if you want to play video but you are going to be looking away from your screen, like maybe you're cooking or working on your computer, it gives you the flexibility to still grasp what's going on visually.

Audio description is also helpful for auditory learners. Research shows that the brain processes information in two channels, the auditory and the visual channel. And 20% to 30% of students say that they retain information best through sound. So description can be really helpful for those auditory learners.

And another out-of-the-box benefit is it combats inattentional blindness, which is when one fails to recognize visuals in plain sight. So audio description can help bring attention to these often-missed visuals.

It's also helpful for language development. Listening and auditory stimulus is a key step in learning and associating language with appropriate actions and behavior. So this can be quite beneficial for children's language development.

And lastly, audio description may be required by law. So there are three major accessibility laws in the US that relate to audio description, and that leads into the next section, which will cover the legal landscape of audio description.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first legislation to address equal access for individuals with disabilities. Section 504 applies to federal programs and federally funded programs, like universities, and these entities must make themselves accessible to people with disabilities. This may include providing audio description for visual media.

Section 508 applies to federal programs, but can be applied on a

state level as well. 508 references WCAG 2.0, which has audio description requirements, and those organizations that fall under 508 must comply with WCAG 2.0.

WCAG stands for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, the international standard for web accessibility. There are three levels, A, AA, and AAA, with AAA being the highest standard of accessibility. Audio description is required in WCAG guidelines for prerecorded, synchronized video media. WCAG also provides success criteria for how to meet these requirements. And just take note that WCAG 2.1 is the most recent update, but is not referenced in any laws yet.

And then there's the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, or the CVAA, which enacted the goal to phase in audio description requirements between 2010 and 2020. The rules on description require that the top 60 TV markets, including major networks, cable viewing, primetime viewing, and children's programming, provide 87 and 1/2 hours of described programming per calendar quarter.

And just this year, a proposal was submitted under the CVAA to expand video description regulations by phasing them in four additional market areas each year for every four years. And that would begin on January 1, 2021. So I believe that's still pending approval, but it could mean that there's more audio description to come.

And last but not least, the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the ADA, is a broad anti-discrimination law and prohibits disability discrimination. It requires effective communication, which means providing assistive technology and services for content.

Title II covers government entities and services, activities and programs they provide. The content and materials they offer must be accessible so as not to discriminate towards people with disabilities, and this may include describing video content.

Title III covers places of public accommodation, such as restaurants, schools, theaters. And under Title III, some precedent has been set that the ADA may apply to websites as well. And there's been some action to enforce web accessibility under the ADA.

One lawsuit that comes to mind is the *American Council of the Blind versus Netflix.* And Netflix under the settlement agreed to provide audio description for many of their streaming titles. Netflix now offers audio description for nearly all of its original content and other movies and TV shows that they license.

So after all is said and done, why is audio description important? To me, and I think to many others, it's about accessibility and equal access. We know that there are many benefits, like we've discussed. But the fact that it provides equal access to people is a strong motivator to step up and offer audio description for our video content.

And in this final section, which we've called the Audio Description Guide, we will cover some of the video players that support audio description and our audio description process at 3Play. So our process at 3Play consists of three steps.

We start with a time-coded transcript, which is actually what we use as a first step for captions. From there, human describers go in and create time-coded descriptions based on the content. After that, the description file itself is time-coded and created using synthesized speech.

So you have the audio description file. But from there, how do you publish it? Platforms that natively support audio description tracks are pretty limited. There is Able Player, OzPlayer, Brightcove, JW Player, Ooyala, Kaltura, and now Wistia. There is still a long ways to go for audio description players. Hopefully this list will grow, but for now, there are some other options you can turn to.

The first is to upload the audio description MP4 track to your host

video platform, if it supports it. If it does not support it, you could publish one video with the description and one without, such as the *Frozen* example at the beginning.

The last option is to have the MP4 file on hand and to provide it when someone requests it, or to post it directly on your website for viewers' access at any time. And there is a fourth option for publishing, and I'll pass the presentation off to Ryan to talk a bit more about that.

**RYAN:** Thank you, Jaclyn. So this tool that we're about to cover here, the 3Play Plugin, is really designed to get at the point that Jaclyn made about a uniform experience for all users. I had mentioned in some of the chat questions that audio description currently isn't the norm, although it is somewhat surprising given the industry trends and the way things are headed.

But major, major platforms like YouTube and Vimeo, for example, do a fantastic job with closed captions. But they don't currently offer solutions for audio description, which is where the 3Play Plugin comes in

Please skip one more. Perfect. So the 3Play Plugin essentially creates an interactive and accessible video experience for all viewers. Naturally, you won't get some of the functionality our plugin offers if you go to a video player such as YouTube.com and watch the videos within that platform.

But where the plugin really offers a lot of benefits is the ability to embed fully accessible, interactive videos to a website or learning management system, in the case of some of our education customers. It is compatible with most video players and publishing platforms.

So the good news is, if you're already using a platform that doesn't offer an audio description solution, you don't have to change

anything about your existing process. You can simply build a tool like the 3Play Plugin into your existing process to improve the overall accessibility of videos that may be posted to something like your website.

The last option at the bottom there, the last point to highlight, is that it does enable you to add audio description to videos more easily, even for players that don't have a description solution of their own.

So when it comes to publishing the 3Play Plugin, there's an option to actually publish audio description from directly within the 3Play account system. So this example, I'm about to open up our account system and show you that example live. But what the screenshot illustrates is how, once 3Play completes both transcription and audio description on a file, you can then publish our plugin in order to take advantage of those resources that we have provided to you.

So if we skip to the next slide, there's a screenshot, actually, of the different views and the features that you can select when you're building out this plugin with, again, the intention of perhaps including this video on your website. So you can select things like an interactive transcript that follows along with the video and include audio description. And it provides a really easy-to-use embed code that you can then use to add those videos to your site.

And so I'll snag back the screen share here so I can show you the process of actually publishing that 3Play Plugin from a file that is, again, in our account system. So in this piece here, again, I'm looking at a video that has been uploaded to 3Play. And because the transcription and audio description steps are now complete, I can actually add audio description, or the option, I should say, to turn audio description on or off to this video.

And I can also feature things like a search option. So if I want to search for a word like speaker, I get these tick marks according to exactly where that word occurs in this video. So I can actually click

and jump right to that point.

So there's a lot of really cool, accessible features that this affords you. But the most compelling case for the plugin is, once again, no matter what video platform you're using, it pulls that video information into 3Play.

And from here, it's just a matter of checking boxes of features you want to see, and actually using either this hosted link to give folks at your organization a preview of what to expect when these files are added to a website, or something, again, as simple as taking this embed code.

And I should mention I am not our web guy. I don't do any of that customization as far as our website-- the 3Play website-- is concerned. But as a 3Play user, I can just copy that right from our system and go to a web page-- this is just a sample web page that I'm on here-- and just take it exactly as it is. When I copy and paste it from 3Play, it once again pulls over all of those accessible features.

So this is a really great way to create a uniform experience for all users by being able to direct them to a single page. And regardless of what resources they rely on, they can either turn captions on or off, hide this interactive transcript, or, again, namely take advantage of this audio description feature. And with that, I'll go ahead and turn it back over to Jaclyn so she can conclude the rest of the presentation with some more high-level items about audio description.

**JACLYN LEDUC:**     All right. Thanks, Ryan, for that demo. That was awesome. Let me just get back into the presentation quickly. We are almost through. The last part of it is just to close out the presentation. I want to encourage you all to take some next steps to learn more about video accessibility.

So we have a free virtual event coming up in 2021 called Access at

Home, which goes from February 8 to the 12. And the discussion will cover five frameworks for a radically inclusive accessibility program over the course of five days. And you can register for that for free at any time at 3playmedia.com.

We also offer a free video accessibility course, which is a six-part course we designed to help you become an accessibility leader at your organization. And you can find that and register for it at courses3playmedia.mn.co. Finally, I'll direct you to 3Play Media's portal of resources at learn.3playmedia.com, where you can find blogs, recorded webinars, ebooks, and workbooks that will help you stay well informed on video accessibility requirements and trends.

And with that, we come to the Q&A. We have a couple of minutes left. It looks like Ryan has been busy answering your questions in the Q&A window, but we have a couple additional ones. The first one I think I can answer. Someone asked if there's any recommendations in resources for using audio description during a live online presentation, such as on Zoom.

This is kind of a workaround. It's tricky for live situations, but for this, I would recommend describing as you go. So if there's an image on the screen when you're presenting, describing that in the moment, especially the presentation is being recorded, can be really effective in terms of audio description and visual narration. So that would be my recommendation.

And it looks like we have another question. Ryan, this one might be for you. Someone asked, does the iframe for the plugin provide a title attribute? Can you speak to that?

RYAN: Sure. Yeah. So I included some of that response in the text as well. And I would mention, Dennis, and anybody else on this call that has specific questions, feel free to reach out. But we do-- I'm not sure I'm quite understanding the question. But the video ID that the video has been uploaded to-- so if it's on YouTube, Brightcove, Kaltura, any

of the integrations we offer-- all of that information tracks back to the same video ID.

So any metadata on that video within something like YouTube, for example, when you embed the plugin, because it all feeds back to the same video ID, everything like analytics, views, click-through rates, SEO benefits, will all track back to that video platform, regardless of whether someone's going, for example, to YouTube.com and watching the video, or going to your website where the 3Play Plugin has been embedded. Hopefully that helps to clarify.

**JACLYN LEDUC:**      Awesome. Thanks, Ryan. So I think we've come up to the half-hour mark, so we will be hopping off. Thank you all so much for your questions and for joining us today. We hope you enjoyed this webinar.