Webinar: #6994 17. BLH Training: The Fundamentals of Audio Description

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>> Johan Rempel: Good afternoon, everyone. This is Johan Rempel from center for inclusive design and innovation. Today you have the privilege of hearing Chris Delano present on the fundamentals of audio description.

Christopher serves as the audio description coordinator here at center for inclusive design and innovation. Next slide.

So, tips for today's session. This webinar is being recorded. The webinar recording, transcript and accessible PowerPoint presentation will be made available for anyone who needs to view the recording. If you are not actively speaking, we ask that you mute your microphone. And utilize the chat window. Chris likes to keep it interactive and likes to answer questions. So please don't hesitate to, you know, enter your questions in the chat room or the comments.

And then near the end he will take questions as well. And you can either type in the chat at that point or unmute yourselves. This training serves as an example of an accessible presentation so we can ensure access to accessible communications.

Next slide. So once again we have heather our captionist providing real‑time captions today. I see she's already posted the stream text link in the chat room. Another option to select the closed captioning is to select the CC icon or the closed captioning option on the Zoom tool bar near the bottom where the bright red arrow is. And it should say closed captions if you are using a screen reader and tabbing to it.

So any of you who have heard any of these presentations you have heard about CIDI already so I will keep this really short.

We provide pretty much everything we touch is related to disability awareness, accessibility, training, technical assistance, all in the area of digital accessibility, disability access and education.

And the captioning and described audio services department which Dr. Ballenger who is on the call today is also overseeing and Chris Delano works in that department.

Next slide.

And I have the privilege of introducing Chris Delano today. This is a topic near and dear to my heart. I have a great deal of gratitude for what they do in the audio description department related to individuals who are low vision and blind. So without further ado I will pass it on to Chris.

>> Chris Delano: Hello, everyone. I'm Chris Delano. You can see I have a selfie here of myself taken on a nice day recently. I'm the audio description coordinator at CIDI and I've been with CIDI for 7 years in May.

So some of our learning objectives for today's presentation.  
At the end of this session,   
participants will be able to:  
Define audio description and   
where it fits in the world of   
accessibility.  
Recognize when audio description   
is necessary and what it means   
to provide adequate   
accommodations from a legal   
standpoint.  
Incorporate audio description   
into a video production   
workflow.

And  
Produce audio descriptions of   
basic images and video clips.

So, we are going to go ahead and cover the first learning objective: Audio description. What is it? This is a definition from the American council of the blind.  
“Audio Description involves the   
accessibility of the visual   
images of theater, television,   
movies, and other art forms for   
people who are blind, have low   
vision, or who are otherwise   
visually impaired...   
Audio Description is commentary   
and narration which guides the   
listener through the   
presentation with concise,

Objective descriptions.

You can find more about audio description and the American council of the blind on their website which is listed on this slide. The next thing I like to do whenever I talk about audio description is show people a particularly good example of audio description. I will tell you all why this is a very good example of audio description after we watch it. We had technical issues earlier. If Johan can steal the screen share from me and show this video.

[Captioned video]

>> Chris Delano: That is always one of my favorite parts of every audio description presentation. When I get to show that trailer because I think it is just so good. It is so, so good at showing off audio description and everything it can do.

And I want to point out a couple of things from that trailer that we will talk about more in this presentation. One of them is the way that the audio describer doesn't make assumptions about the viewer, but also understand that the viewer will have some understanding of basic things.

For example, when the reindeer does the breast stroke across the ice, the describer doesn't describe what a breast stroke looks like. They understand a viewer can infer what that looks like. My favorite part at the end when Olof the snow man grabs his nose and his head flies off when he sneezes that is funny for a sighted viewer and the audio describer times it to make it funny for a blind viewer.

So where does audio description fit into the history of accessibility? Well, it's pretty new as a formal concept. In  
1974:   
Gregory Frazier developed   
concept of Audio Description.

Then, 8 years later in  
1982:   
Metropolitan Washington Ear   
hosts simulcast of AD for   
American Playhouse on radio   
reading services.

. So this means that while people were listening to a play, they were also hearing a description of what was going on.  
1987‑1988:   
WGBH pre‑recorded Audio   
Description for American   
Playhouse productions broadcast   
using SAP for first time.

And then in  
1992:

Which is only 30 years ago,  
WGBH takes lead on AD for   
first‑run films nationwide.

So it's only been 30 years since someone could go to a movie theater and potentially watch a block buster film with audio description. And then,  
1998:

As I'm sure you have heard many times over the course of these presentation, the  
Section 508 of Rehabilitation   
Act requires AD on federal   
agency media.

So any media produced for a federal agency or paid for with federal funds has to be audio described.

And then in  
2008:

The  
Described and Captioned Media   
Program publishes its   
Description Key, guidelines for   
captioning and the description   
of educational media.

And then in  
2017: The Section 508 refresh

Which  
requires WCAG 2.0 Level AA   
adherence, which includes Audio   
Description (1.2.5).

1.2.5 is probably more information that you need to know.

So, some of those legal requirements ‑‑ and these always come up in discussions about accessibility is what is legally required. As I said,  
Section 508: Requires adherence   
to the WCAG 2.0 level AA Success   
Criteria compliance.

There are three different levels of success compliance for WCAG 2.0. You have level  
A: A media alternative is   
provided, such as text.

That would be if I had a video on my website, I can provide a text description of what happens on the video. Separately as an alternative to the video. Level  
AA: Description is provided   
through synchronized media, such   
as an alternate audio track.

That would be if I'm showing a video on my website or at some presentation, I provide for people a second audio track that they can listen to that has description. This is what most people experience when they go to a movie theater. And then level AAA means description is provided  
through extended descriptions,   
allowing for more description   
when pauses in the video are   
insufficient, typically as a   
separate version of the video.

So this is when you are like me and you are talking very fast in your video and you don't leave a lot of breaks in your sentences and there's not a lot of pauses. This is called extended descriptions. This is when a  
video is edited to add pauses   
and description directly onto   
the video.

I always recommend to people when they say they need to get audio description on their video is always do extended descriptions. That provides so much more flexibility for the description. It makes it so much easier to understand and watch if you are a blind or low vision user.

So how do you know if your video needs audio description?

Well the obvious part is important visual  
information is presented without   
spoken description.

These are  
Title images, charts, graphs, et   
cetera.  
Any movements or actions that   
affect or influence the scene.

And I know that sounds very fancy but what that means is for example if you are giving a video on how to use a certain product and you are demonstrating how to use that product, that is an important visual implement of the video. And then any  
Names and titles.

Often times people introduce themselves and say who they are, but sometimes they don't and we put that information on text on the screen. That's important for audio description. You need to say who that person is and what their title is. Some less obvious reasons that you need AD that you might not notice is visual information  
that enhances the information is   
presented without spoken   
description.  
”B‑Roll” footage that shows the   
concepts in action.

Those are important visual information for a viewer. They need to know what that looks like in order to reinforce the understanding of it. And any  
Costuming or other physical   
characteristics that influence   
perceptions, such as uniforms   
and cultural features.

This came up often when we were doing work with the National Park Service. A lot of the people speaking in their videos were wearing park ranger uniforms. That's the only thing that gives them a special characteristic. So we mentioned when a person was wearing a park ranger uniform. There's a couple of tests I like to run before doing audio description. The first is a closed eye test.  
In this test, you would “watch”   
the video with your eyes closed,   
then make notes about what   
elements of the video were hard   
to understand without visuals.   
If you find that there are audio   
elements that confuse you   
without the visual, the video   
will need description.

The next is the audio off test.  
In this test, you watch the   
video without the audio and make   
notes of what are the most   
interesting and engaging visual   
elements. Then, watch the video   
again. If the most interesting   
visual elements are not   
explained or described, the   
video will need description.

These are very easy ways to experience a video and think to yourself what am I getting from this video that might be lost on someone who might be blind or low vision?

So how to approach adding audio description to your videos. The most often one is as needed post production. This is where a video has been created already. So we are in the post‑production phase and they are adding after.

This means you are adding AD to a video only when a  
need has been brought to your   
attention.  
Gives much needed access.  
Can cause delays in access to   
video by client.  
Budgeting may not have been   
done.

If you are doing planned post‑production. So you know you are going to add audio description before it's released but after they have been made that's great. It creates accessible content for any future blind and  
Costs should be accounted for in   
initial budgeting.

But  
Need may never arise.

And that can be hard to justify.

So some post‑production audio description considerations. Time. Post production AD will take time to create. Anywhere from a week to 2 months depending on the length of the video. Also cost. There's no way around it. Audio description can be expensive. And then you need to consider the voice. Some AD creators choose to use synthesize speech. You want to make that decision for what fits best for you. And then the biggest one is the delivery. How will you deliver those audio descriptions? Are you going to do the separate audio track or do a timed text track which is something like a caption track that you may experience when you are doing captioning. Or are you going to do the extended descriptions or unextended descriptions on a separate video. Those are things you need to decide on before doing AD on a video. You want to make sure what you are getting at the end will be useful for you.

Now if you are planning ahead and haven't made a video yet, there are preproduction audio description considerations. So you might make these during the conception and creation of the video where you  
Work closely with the   
script‑writer to insert AD into   
the narrative.

You can  
Plan for what visual elements   
need to be shown versus what can   
be removed to reduce confusion.

This is a great time to start working on audio description because you can mix those little visual elements that are going to be causing problems for an audio describer that you know aren't useful. They are just kind of eye candy. You can get rid of them. This also means that the audio description will be more natural sounding because it will be part of the script. It is part of what is already made into the video. If you do this, the guidelines of Section 508 and WCAG guidelines say you don't need audio description. Now, you can also make plans during production of the video. So you can  
Allow text and graphics to   
remain on screen for longer   
period of time.

You can  
Give space between speakers so   
there is time for description.

And you can  
Avoid loud background music.

These all make it so much easier to add that description after its been made or after.

I mentioned working the audio description into your script can save you a lot of trouble. So here's ways to work AD into your script.  
When creating the script for a   
video—or even when presenting   
without a script—do not consider   
any visual element to be a   
“given.” You will have viewers,   
clients, audience members, and   
more who cannot or do not see   
the visual information. If a   
visual element is present,   
describe it with these   
considerations:

Consider  
Content For charts and graphs,   
describe trends and important   
figures, but avoid overload.

Consider  
Context Where is it located?  
If it’s moving, how and where?

And then consider  
Aesthetics What color is it?   
What shape is it?

These are the three things that you want to consider when your description and these are the three things, I think are the most important order. Content first, then context and then the aesthetics. Sometimes you don't need to describe what color something is or what may be small animals on that person's jacket. You can just say the person is wearing a uniform or the image has a line graph. You may not need to describe the color of the line.

Some other ways to make your content AD less is make sure to have introductions. Introduce yourself  
and your speakers.  
Reading Text Always read the   
full text that you are   
displaying.  
If the text you are displaying   
is too much to read, consider   
making cuts.  
Avoid Clip Art The more you add,   
the more you describe.  
Images can be confusing and   
distracting.

I see presentations all the time that are covered in clip art that is totally unnecessary. Just remove it. No one wants to see it. You are putting it there because it may look nice but it can cause trouble later on.

Now, here at CIDI we focus mainly on educational audio description. This means that what we are creating with our audio description is intended for an educational purpose. That can be for a student at a university or a client needs their training video or demonstration video described. So I want to cover the key points of educational audio description. Consider the educational goal of the video and use that as a guiding factor in choosing the description.  
For example, the same video can   
be shown in several classes with   
different goals in each—identify   
the goal for this use.  
Prioritize information over   
aesthetics.  
Time is limited, so educational   
elements should be described   
before entertaining or artistic   
elements.  
Exclude unnecessary and   
confusing description.

So,  
Information overload and   
description fatigue can ruin the   
experience.

And then,  
Trust the listener’s ability to   
comprehend the material.  
Do not condescend, patronize, or   
talk down to listeners.

We covered a little bit of that when we were discussing the Frozen trailer earlier. You can trust that the viewer knows what a breast stroke is. You don't have to describe it. Some key concepts of image description. I know you may have taken a training on writing alt text for images. It's very similar. There are different ways to approach it though. So I  
Work from the inside out What   
aspect of the image catches your   
attention first? That should be   
your first description.  
Give only relevant details The   
color of the airhorn, what the   
man is wearing, and the weather   
are all irrelevant in this   
example image and do not add   
anything to the content.

You will see this image in a little bit. So think about what is relevant to the purpose of this image. What is it trying to say and talk only about those details.

And then read the text on any image as it is written.  
There is no need to give context   
to the text that isn’t there.

So  
Saying the name implies that   
it’s the man’s name.

Before we move on to some example images and videos, I want to stop for a second and give everyone a chance to ask any questions. The next step will be to practice. I appreciate people who participate in these and will give me some of their descriptions. You can put them in the chat. If you are feeling particularly excited about a video you can turn on your microphone. For now are there any questions about what I have discussed so far?

All right. So we will be moving on to some practice images. So this is a graph practice. If you  
Look at the image on the left   
and describe it. Remember to   
focus on key elements and not   
overload on details.

Would anyone like to put a quick description of this graph in the chat box? Or turn on your microphone and tell me what you are thinking.

"There's exponential growth" that's a great thing to mention, Sam. Thank you. Anything else anyone else thinks is an important element for description in this image?

Catherine says in the last 40 years under graduate tuition and fees have increased sharply. Molly says a graph showing the extraordinary increase in undergrad tuition since 1978. Those are important details. You all have a piece of the puzzle. We are going to bring it together. So this video was ‑‑ this graph was shown in a video that I was describing. This is how I would describe it.  
A line graph shows the   
exponential growth of   
undergraduate tuition and fees   
compared to the academic year.   
In 1978, the cost was $582.   
By 2015, the cost is $8,580.88.

So you are all hitting on important elements. Sam, you zeroed in on exponential growth. Perfect. Catherine, you mentioned it was over 40 years. And the sharp increase. I like that Molly and Sarah both included the specific years of 1978 and 2016. I think those are all good short descriptions. This is how I would describe it. You will notice key concepts here.  
Do not include all of the data   
if all of the data is not

Necessary. None of us did that. We didn't include every year or dollar amount. If you do, this contributes to  
information overload. If all of   
the data is interesting,   
consider including a table or   
access to a table.  
Use the right terms “Exponential   
growth” is a term with a lot of   
implications about the shape of   
a line. Use it only when it’s   
the correct word to use.

And you  
Use names like “line graph,”   
“bar graph,” “pie chart,” and   
etc.

So you all nailed that perfectly. Anyone who has taken a math class knows what exponential growth means. You don't need to go into detail describing the line. Saying exponential growth fills in a lot of information. You can  
Avoid using overly complex   
graphs. If your line graph shows   
the complex relationship between   
four or more elements, consider   
summarizing the graph and   
include access to the data   
outside of a presentation.

If you are describing a graph that has all of that information and has so many elements, that's a great reason to have extended description or you may need to pause the video and describe a little more detail but be wary of the information overload. And then,  
Only describe relevant   
aesthetics in this example, we   
would not need to describe the   
line as blue.

The blue color of the line meant nothing for the information there. It was blue because that was the default color that someone picked on Microsoft Excel. So we didn't need to describe that. Most of you probably didn't even notice it was a blue line. So coming up next, we have a practice image that I love. I alluded to this one earlier. Look at the image on the right and describe it how you believe an audio describer would describe this image. I will give you a second if you want to drop some quick descriptions in the chat or speak up if you feel necessary.

Does anyone want to send in any last second descriptions before we move on? I will give you my description. Here they come. Sarah says a picture of a man named Jeff foster holding up an air horn... [Reading].

So those are hitting some important notes. Here's how I described the image:  
An older man holds an air horn   
outside of a home. Text reads   
“Jeff Foster: Tired of Birds.”   
The Weather Channel logo appears   
in the lower right.

So, you all got it correct. Mentioning Jeff Foster's name, the airhorn and the birds. Those are the most important aspects of the image. I start from the inside out like I said earlier. When you look at the image, first you see the man holding the airhorn. Then you notice the text at the bottom. Jeff Foster, tired of birds. And I think it's relevant to include the weather channel logo. This was put on the weather channel. That gives it some amount of authority. It makes it more legitimate than if it was just posted anywhere on the Internet. I like to put text reads Jeff Foster, tired of birds. Some of the humor of this image comes from the fact that his name is put on the lower third and lends credence to it.

Note I didn't mention the color of the airhorn. I don't describe what Jeff is wearing. I don't give a lengthy description of his home or how many trees are behind him because all of that information is unnecessary to understanding the humor or the intent of the image.

I also don't necessarily say that he see holding it menacingly even though I think that's a good description of Jeff Foster because if a man is holding an airhorn you can assume he see pressing the button on the airhorn. He has a purpose for the airhorn. One key things of audio description is not giving an interpretation to the viewer. You want the viewer to come to their own interpretation of the person.

So next is a video description. So this comes from one of my favorite films of all time. We are going to watch about 15 seconds. I will play it through a couple of times. There won't be any audio because the audio is really unnecessary to what's happening in the video. So I want to make sure I muted that. So let me set that up for you. If anyone has any questions, put them in the chat and I will get to them.

>> Johan Rempel: You might still be setting it up. We are not seeing any video or audio.

>> Chris Delano: I'm trying to get it up. It wasn't an option when I went to share. Now it is. Why is that?

I have it open. I'm looking at it right now.

Zoom is telling me it's not there. I will share my whole screen. Is anyone seeing a black screen right now?

>> Johan Rempel: Yup.

>> Chris Delano: Okay. I don't know why Zoom is being weird. We are going to watch 15 seconds.

Now, I'll go back to the start and play it over.

Okay. I'll go back to sharing my presentation. Hopefully Zoom will be friendly to me.

Okay. So, I'm going to walk you through my process for describing this 15 seconds of video.

If anyone wants to throw their description up before I give mine, I will look at it but I'm going to go ahead in the sense of saving time, I will jump in.

I would describe the 15 seconds of this film:  
Ashitaka, carrying a bow, rides   
his galloping red elk through   
the forest. A monster crashes   
through the trees pursuing him.

When you watch that clip there's a lot of action happening.  
When writing this description, I   
considered these to be the key   
factors:

First is the name.  
Names: In this case, the boy’s   
name is Ashitaka.

We know that because his name is mentioned earlier in the film. His name is on the credits. This name is on the description of the film when you look it up. It's given information. There's no reason to hide that. Even though his name isn't said in that scene we know his name is established. It would be confusing if we didn't give his name and defaulted to a generic term because it will come up so much in the film that we should make sure to include it.

The location. We knew this was in a forest. That's an easy thing to include in the description. Some context. Context would mean the direction or what is happening through the film. Think of it as prepositional phrases. We know it is down a hill or toward  
the town; on the back of a red   
elk; away from a monster.

And then  
Details: Carrying a bow.

So we know that if you are familiar with [inaudible] and the concept of Chekhov's gun, if they are carrying a bow, they are probably going to shoot the bow. So I want to describe that so the person knows it's there so they are not caught off guard. And then of descriptors. One word would be quickly. It's very quick. The action is very fast. Another would be closely. Everything is close to each other in that forest. Those are words to think about.  
My original text: “Ashitaka,   
carrying a bow, quickly rides   
down a hill in the forest on the   
back of a red elk away from a   
monster.” This description is   
clear, but it is also wordy and   
long. Let’s identify some of the   
areas of improvement.

First of all,  
It does not convey the urgency   
of the scene.

Secondly,  
The spatial context is cluttered   
in one spot of the sentence.

So everything is in those prepositional phrases one after another.  
There are too many thoughts in   
one sentence.

When you are writing a description, writing concise short sentences is better than longer lengthy ones.  
By splitting the description   
into two sentences, we could   
more cleanly formulate a   
description. Cutting the adverb   
“quickly” and instead using a   
more vivid adjective in   
“galloping” brought more   
intensity into the scene. The   
spatial context of “down a hill”   
was unnecessary. The second   
sentence gives action and   
urgency by using words such as

SLR  
“crashes” and “pursuing” instead   
of “away from.” Consider the

Word choices to help take you from a wordy description and paint a clearer image. So, considering some of the educational content of this clip. Consider the  
video as if it is being shown in   
these different contexts:

So,  
A Japanese history class focused   
on 1500s Japan.  
An animation class.  
A course on fashion in Japanese   
animation.  
A history of animation class.

These are all different contexts that the video could be shown in where you would describe things differently.  
What would you describe   
differently in these different   
contexts?  
How would you describe things   
differently if the class is   
about Japanese history versus   
animation history?

If you are familiar with princess Mononoke and you are familiar with that animation studio, you could teach an entire class on the history of Japanese animation through the lens of that studio. The techniques used for that animation might be more relevant than what's actually happening in that clip.

So, my next example is another video. This one is much shorter. It is intended to be funny. So I do want everyone to take a chance on describing it. And let me pull that up once more.

And then share my screen.

There is no audio. This clip should play twice all the way through.

All right. Does anyone want to throw up a quick description of that video?

I can play it again while everyone is writing a description real quick.

All right. Sarah says a slow-motion clip of a dog attempting to... [Reading].

Catherine says the video is from the perspective... [Reading].

Christine says in slow motion a dog... [Reading].

These are all very close to what I wrote. So let me bring back up my presentation here.

So my description is very similar to a lot of you all’s.  
In a backyard, a person throws a   
frisbee for a dog. In slow   
motion, the dog follows the   
frisbee closely, focused   
intently on it. The dog leaps   
into the air to catch it but   
misses. The dog’s attention   
turns towards the camera and it   
collides with it and its   
holder. The view shakes as the   
camera tumbles to the ground.

So my description is focusing on as it says at the top "describing failure." One of the most important things about describing a video or any sort of movie or film is that you need to allow the person using audio description to experience it in the same way as a sighted person would. In this case you want to make sure that you are making it seem that the cog is going to catch the frisbee until the last second. Just as the sighted viewers are experiencing watching the dog and thinking it's going to catch the frisbee and then it doesn't and we need to allow the nonsighted viewers to have that joy of experiencing that moment of failure. So the dog's attention turns to the camera and it collides with it. I don't mention at the beginning of the description that someone is recording this because we inherently know that there is someone recording this with a camera. A person who is using audio description also goes into the experience understanding that this is filmed presumably. It has been described as a film. We are shocked as sighted people when the dog collides with the camera because for a moment, we forget the camera is there until the dog hits it. So capturing that in the description in saying of course the dog collides with the camera. We are also allowing the person using the audio description to remember and recognize there is a person filming this. And then of course the view shakes as the camera tumbles to the ground. So a good description on how the camera falls.

So, the third video example and the last one I have for all of you is I think a very fun video as well. Let me bring that up.

This video is called squirrel gets wild ride on spinning bird feeder.

We can watch this one through a couple times if you would like. I think it's fun.

I want to play it one more time because I'm laughing it at. One last time and then we will describe it.

I cannot promise no animals were harmed in the filming of this.

All right. So does anyone want to pop a description of what we all watched in the chat?

When it comes to videos like this, I find that I will put it on loop or isolate that short little part of the video. This video is about 15 seconds long. I will watch that 15 seconds over and over and over again. And I will write my description as it is playing. And sometimes I will slow it down and watch tiny parts of it over and over again to get the perfect description of it. So if someone wants to share their description, feel free. Molly says, a squirrel... [Reading].

Linda says squirrel climbs up... [Reading].

Sam says a squirrel climbs up... [Reading].

I love bits of each of these. I think you are all doing a great job. Sarah says a squirrel jumps on to a bird feeder... [Reading].

So those are all very similar. Here's my description of this video:  
A common squirrel climbs a thin   
pole which holds a hanging   
cylindrical bird feeder. The   
squirrel climbs onto the bottom   
of the feeder, but the feeder   
begins to spin. The squirrel   
holds on with both hands and   
feet. The spinning grows faster   
and the squirrel loses its front   
grip, now holding on with just   
its back legs. It spins fully   
outstretched. It’s tossed from   
the feeder and twirls through   
the air.

So, we have very similar words in our descriptions. One thing I did was make sure to mention it's a common squirrel. It's not a red squirrel. It's not a flying squirrel. It's the kind you experience in most backyards. By calling it a common squirrel I don't have to describe the squirrel. The hanging bird feeder is important because it explains how it spins. The squirrel climbs on to the bottom of the feeder and holds on with both hands and feet. I make sure to say that because I mention it loses its grip. I take a sentence to say it spins fully out stretched. It does it for quite a while. That squirrel is holding on for a while with just its feet. It's impressive. Finally it's tossed from the feeder and twirls through the air. Part of what that makes that clip so delightful is when the squirrel is spinning in the air. I think Sarah mentioned it finally spined to the ground. I want to mention it's spinning. We are describing motion here.

All right. And that brings us with plenty of time for discussion or questions. I think in our last presentation we called it our answer slide. I have answers for most of your questions. Audio description is an art more than a science. So if you have a really good question, I might share that question with you. I might not have an answer to it but I can do my best.

>> Thanks for the presentation. I have a question. Would you have two different ‑‑ say you are going to put something up on YouTube, would you have two different versions? One where it's audio described and one where it's not?

>> Chris Delano: Absolutely. That's how I would handle it personally. This actually happened this week and it's a little specific and probably didn't come up on a lot of people's radars but I'm an accessibility person who works in audio description and a big nerd. Recently an update to the hearthstone mobile game came out and it became a big deal because they released a trailer for it and then released a separate trailer on their website called audio described. Now, if they had up loaded that trailer and had the second audio option up there to turn on audio descriptions, a lot of people may not have noticed it. It wouldn't have been something I know about it but because they posted a second video, it said to the viewers and the people who have a disability, hey, we care enough about providing accessible videos that we are going to post a whole separate video for you and we are going to label it audio described and you can share that video. It did a lot for getting the word out that there was an audio described version. Molly says how much time do you spend for making AD? Ie4 minutes per 10 seconds of content? This is hard because every audio description is going to be different. Then it's going to be different throughout the course of the video. There might be scenes that are 20-minute-long scenes in a movie that I can audio description in like 5 minutes because nothing is happening. Then there are more intense or delicate scenes with a lot of action so 5 minutes of a video could take me four hours to write a good description of. So it's hard to give you a cut and dry answer. My answer is at CIDI at least we tell people that it can take between 4‑6 weeks to describe a film. Sometimes it's much shorter than that. Sometimes I have to have a conversation with the person and say this is going to take more time. So there's not really a cut and dry answer. But it really is a very movie by movie film by film situation to judge off of. Sarah says in the picture of the guy with the air horn it's hard to audio describe the man's age. I feel like a lot of assumptions need to be made which might feel a little bit uncomfortable to do.

I would never say the man is an octogenarian. I would never describe him as a man in his 70s. I wouldn't say he's a retiree or mentioner or any of those other terms. I described him as an older man because that's really, I think a very objective way to describe him. He is clearly an older gentlemen. He see not Youthful. He see not ancient. A term like older is a fair enough term that can't really be objected to.

People might say he's not in his hundreds but he is older. This is a hard question for audio description because it comes up a lot when describing people because sometimes a person's physical appearance is very important to the audio description. And sometimes it is very much not important. And the person who is making that decision can make the wrong decision.

For example, when describing a National Park's video, I don't spend a lot of time describing what the individual rangers look like. I might describe the clothing that they are wearing. Like I mentioned, the uniform is important. I might describe them in very broad terms. Usually only when it's important to differentiate different park rangers from each other. For example, I might say there's two park rangers working in the field. The older park ranger picks up the flag while the younger park ranger puts a hole in the ground. Just to give a comparison between them. I try to avoid doing that because it can be very difficult to find that line about how much we want to give description‑wise.

Sometimes a person's physical appearance is very important to what you are describing. If I'm describing a film that is, for example, about the meeting of two cultures, if it's maybe about the west African diasporas to India I might describe what they are wearing and carrying and physical features so people understand these are different looking people. That becomes relevant to the understanding to what's happening in the film.

There was a great article recently where a person was describing when Zoom attendees were asked to describe themselves for anyone who might be blind or low vision who are attending the Zoom, people would spend a lot of time describing what they looked and the article writing the article said this was a waste of time. I don't need to know this person has red curly hair. It's not relevant. It made people uncomfortable because some people were being asked to describe themselves and felt if I don't say this part of my description people might think I'm trying to hide what I'm looking like but maybe that's something they don't want to talk about. Only describe the parts that are important, be objective as possible, and if you find yourself describing how someone looks and you think this could be read really rudely or this could be something read insensitive to definitely step back and reassess the situation. Sheryl said I think a blind audience expects descriptions to assume... [Reading].

That's true. If you say an older person is holding an airhorn and they are standing outside their home and they are tired of birds, it lends a different understanding to the situation. If it's a young person this might be a young person who is doing this because they want to or they are having a little bit of fun. If you say an older person, you may understand that this person lives in this house and may have lived here a long time and the comment "tired of birds" adds to the understanding of the image. This person may have been terrorized by birds for decades. That's a very difficult line to cross. Christine, you mentioned it's the only thing we can conclude about him. We don't know his actually age. We don't know if he see retired. Exactly. On another note I tend to try not to describe people in fully gendered terms. It's sometimes impossible to describe people as a man or women because that's a distinguishing feature that people understand but I tend to not use those terms unless they are very relevant. I will describe someone as a park ranger before I will describe them as a woman who is a park ranger or describe them as a police officer rather than a women police officer. It's not relevant.

We are getting along in time. Are there any final questions before we start wrapping up?

Sarah says I can absolutely see why AD is considered an art form. It definitely has some very easy to follow guidelines. So on that note I will go ahead and bring up my resources page here. There are two primary resources I want to point out. The DCMP description key. This is a website you can learn all about some well researched, well explored guidelines and style guide for writing description. It is one of the foundational pieces I think personally of writing audio description. And then the Listening is Learning website. One thing I didn't mention is that audio description is for everyone. Even if you are not blind or low vision, accessing audio description can help you with information retention. It can help you with language learning if English is not your first language. It's so useful and nice sometimes even if you don't have a disability. The Listening is Learning website goes into how audio description has helped school age children retain information. I know I use audio description when watching Netflix because people like to make dark television shows and audio description me that information in an audio format. So it doesn't matter if I can't see what's happening. So that is helpful. Then I have links to the CIDI website in case you want to reach out to me. And then the LEAD conference and training. The LEAD conference is held every year. I hope they are still doing that since the pandemic. They do a wonderful training program which goes in‑depth about how to describe. Specifically they do a lot of theater. They also do film description as well.

That is it for my presentation. Thank you all so much for attending and for participating. I really do appreciate it. I hope you all took something from it. And you can go now and describe your own presentations or describe your own home films if you like.

>> Johan Rempel: Excellent. Thank you, Chris, for a very crystal-clear presentation on some very, very complex topics. This is being recorded. So once again you will be receiving the archived recording, transcript and accessible PowerPoint saved as a PDF through Allie McDougall. So great presentation, Chris. Thank you so much. And thank you for the interaction from the attendees. I know Chris appreciated the input. With that we will close it out unless there are any other questions in the chat. I will give people a few more seconds for comments you would like to make.

Okay. Thank you so much.

Enjoy the rest of you day.