



Google Announces Automatic Captions on YouTube

Every minute of every day, 20 hours of videos are uploaded to YouTube. It's hard to imagine so much *uncaptioned* video all in one place.

On November 19, 2009, Brenda Battat, executive director of Hearing Loss Association of America®, and Lise Hamlin, director of public policy and state development were invited to attend the official announcement by Google and YouTube of the launching of innovative software that will make more captioning available.

Thanks to this new software, whenever a video is uploaded to YouTube, the video owner now has an option to easily add captions. The software automatically creates time-coded captions for the text of the audio quickly, easily and for free. Those captions add value to videos: videos with captions are searchable by text. That's good not just for people with hearing loss, it's good for anyone who wants their video to be found on Internet.

Google has also found a way for viewers to get captions on videos already uploaded to YouTube. A viewer will be able to click on a key that says "transcribe audio." That command will add captions to videos they want to see when they want to see it. It's all done by machine. It uses voice recognition technology to automatically caption, or "auto-caption" the video.

Google and YouTube are in the "beta testing" phase with 13 educational partners. Because viewer-added captioning relies on speech recognition technology, the captions are not yet perfect. In fact, Google admitted to a 20 percent error rate, far below the 2 percent error rate we have come to expect from good caption writers on broadcast television. YouTube videos

that have music or noise or environmental sounds in the background will be even more problematic for accurate automatic captions.

Still, it's a huge leap forward for captioning on the Internet. According to Brenda Battat, "This is unprecedented because of the scale, it's been done without mandates, and it's free."

The passion of the Google team was evident at the event in Washington, D.C., on November 13, 2009. Ken Harrenstien, the software engineer who helped develop the automatic captioning system and who is deaf, indicated the technology has never been applied on such a large scale. "This is something that I have dreamt of for many years," Harrenstien said at the event.

Someday, we hope to see voice recognition software create more accurate captions. When the next *American Idol* video goes viral, we'd love to see the captioned version right from the start. In the meantime, the fact that Google and YouTube have put their weight behind captioning is a terrific development. We expect to see more and more video creators and producers understanding the value of searchable text captions that we can all enjoy.

— Contributed by Lise Hamlin

HLAA Member Wins Oticon's Focus on People Award

Congratulations to HLAA Member from Seattle, Paige Stringer, founder and executive director of the Global Foundation for Children with Hearing Loss, for being honored with the 2009 Oticon Focus-on-People Award for her advocacy efforts. This award recognizes successful individuals with hearing loss who are helping to eliminate negative stereotypes of what it means to have a hearing loss. Paige started the Global Foundation for Children with Hearing

Loss to provide children with hearing loss in developing countries access to at least some of the resources and education that she was fortunate to have. We'll feature her work in an upcoming issue of *Hearing Loss Magazine*.



Paige Stringer and Oticon
President Peer Lauritsen

Enjoy Captioned Movies

Many movie theaters have FM or infrared assistive listening devices. Please be sure to ask for them and use them. However, if you prefer captioned movies, check out www.captionfish.com. Here you will find theaters, schedules and movie titles that are captioned playing across the country.

There are two forms of captioning used for films nationally:

Open Captioning: The captioning appears on the screen for all to see. Theaters schedule special times and days to show the captioning on their screens.

Rear Window Captioning™: Ask for the device when buying your ticket and insert it into the holder at your seat. In this method you are the only one able to see the captions. Because other patrons cannot see the captions, you can go at any time to any film if the theater provides Rear Window™. IMAX theaters usually have it available. 