

Described Video Best Practices

International Technology
and Persons with Disabilities
Conference
San Diego, CA
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*A Voluntary Initiative led by
Accessible Media Inc. (AMI) and
the Canadian Association of
Broadcasters (CAB)*

INTRODUCTION

- 20 years of making media accessible
- Not-for-profit organization
- CRTC mandated and funded by Canada's cable and satellite operators
- Operate two digital broadcast services and one website www.ami.ca
- 11 local broadcast centres across Canada

OVERVIEW

- Through two world leading services, AMI enriches lives and creates a more accessible Canada



AMI-audio

- The worlds largest broadcast reading service
- Available with basic digital package at no additional cost
- Founded on the belief that all members of society should have equal access to current news and information
- Accessed through basic and digital cable, satellite, IPTV and the internet into 10-million + Canadian homes
- More than 400 Volunteers from across the country read and record full-text, spoken-word versions of current articles from leading newspapers and magazines
- Staff and Volunteers broadcast 70 hours of new programming every week
- Produce and broadcast original content, including 'Pop Talk', 'Contact' and local features from across the country

AMI-tv

- The worlds first and only open described, closed captioned digital TV service
- Available with basic digital package at no additional cost
- Broadcasts popular movies and TV series (Canadian and American) with open description and closed captioning
- Broadcast Simulcast and describe live major events and popular programs such as the Royal Wedding, the Federal election, Remembrance Day, Battle of the Blades; a Canadian reality show, Toronto Blue Jays Baseball and the Paralympics
- Produce and broadcast original content, including 'Accessibility in Action', 'A Whole New Light', 'Sports Access' , 'Canada in Perspective' and 'Milestone of Champions'
- Blind and low vision reporters offering a unique perspective with relevant content through a positive portrayal

MANDATE

AMI DELIVERS ON THE CANADIAN BROADCASTING ACT
MANDATE WHICH STATES:

“

That programming accessible by disabled persons should be provided within the Canadian broadcasting system as resources become available for the purpose.

”

MANDATE

AMI MISSION STATEMENT:

“

To Make All Media Accessible To All Canadians

”

WE CALL IT DESCRIBED VIDEO...

- Described video (DV) is a narrated description of a program's main visual elements, such as settings, costumes, or body language
- Works best for pre-recorded programs, such as dramas and documentaries
- Described video uses a separate audio track
- Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) requires broadcasters to provide at least 4 hours per week of described programming

WE CALL IT DESCRIBED VIDEO...

- Audio description (AD) uses a program host or announcer to provide a basic voice-over, reading text and describing graphics that appear on the screen
- Broadcasters are expected to provide audio description

POST PRODUCTION DV

- Descriptions are added to the program after the show has been produced and packaged
- Involves a scriptwriter, a narrator, an audio mixer and a producer
- Descriptions are added wherever there is room within the dialogue in the program.
- Sometimes it is necessary to speak over the program dialogue to convey essential visual details

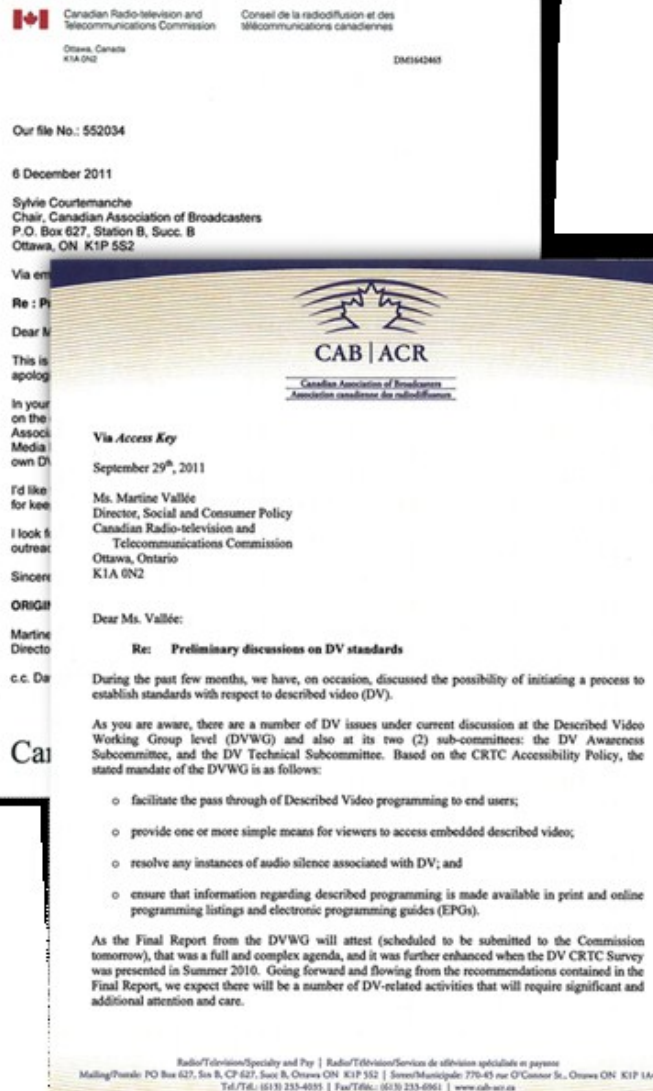
STATE OF DV IN CANADA

- CRTC requires broadcasters to provide at least 4 hours per week of described programming
- AMI-tv available 24/7
- CRTC and Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) Described Video Working Group
- **Technical:** One button solution, DV on HD, EPG display DV
- **Awareness:** DV TV Guide and 1800 number, PSA

AMI Described Video	
AMI Old House	AMI Diner
AMI Reciter	AMI Overview
DV Guide	Industry PSA

DSECRIBED VIDEO BEST PRACTICES

- Member from 14 organizations (Community Groups, Broadcasters, Producers, Description Houses, Canadian Association of Broadcasters)
- 8 months into a year-long mandate with draft standards, recommendations and techniques under development



SCIENCE AND ART

- **What is the correct interpretation?**
- Bring everyone to the table
- Find common ground in the science
 1. Analyze, prioritize and agree upon the art
 2. Lead the industry to uniformity
 3. Adopt the standard and increase availability
 4. Strive for cultural inclusion

SCIENCE

Common similarities in process, function and meaning

TECHNICAL	
Harmonize your delivery with the content of the show	Observing closely and accurately
Understanding the non-visual perspective	Understanding and appreciating the presentation
Writing (speak) simply, clearly and concisely	Respecting the audio
Disappear	

ART

Analyzing, prioritizing and agreeing upon artistic differences while ensuring that the need for quantity does not affect the quality

QUALITY						
Intelligibility of different description pacing speeds	Subjective interpretation	Political correctness	Expression terminology	Describing race	Credits	Period pieces
Distinguishing ambiguous directions	Cinematography	Identifying titles	Scene Transitions	Subject order	Pauses	Use of profanity
Onscreen Maps	Describing sound effects	Volume levels	Music	Dance		

DESCRIBED VIDEO BEST PRACTICES

Industry adopted Described Video Best Practices
+
Internally developed guidelines based upon the unique experiences
of each producer
=
Consistent and good quality DV in Canada

ACHIEVING CONSISTENCY

Four tenets for achieving consistency

- Industry Best Practices are dominant
- Descriptive content will be created at the discretion of the describer and the content of the program being described
- Relevancy to the program?
- More than just instructions on page

ARTISTIC AND TECHNICAL GUIDELINES

Artistic Guidelines

- a) Individual/Physical Characteristics
- b) Scene Transitions
- c) Non-verbal Sounds/Communications
- d) Titles, subtitles, credits, text on screen, signing
- e) Style and Tone
- f) Role of the Describer

Technical Guidelines

- a) Channels
- b) Loudness & peak levels
- c) Soundtrack vs. DV mix levels
- d) Equalization
- e) Sync
- f) Recording quality
- g) Output parameters

CHARACTERISTICS

Individual Physical Characteristics	Race
	Ethnicity/Ethnic Origin
	Identifying Characters/People by Name/Physical Appearance
	Facial/Physical Expression
	Relationships
	Attire
	Age
	Accent
	Hair
	Clothes
	Height
	Weight
	Sexual orientation and gender
	Avoid character objectification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An identification of characters by race or ethnic origin is not required unless there is relevancy to plot, motivation or background or if meaningful information is being communicated visually and would be otherwise unavailable. Otherwise inappropriate language should never be used unless it is relevant to the development of the plot, motivation or background. • Avoid assumptions and the interpretation of emotion, reactions, character traits, relationships, levels of attractiveness and attire by using descriptive terms to illustrate, but not define relevant individual/physical characteristics. 	

SCENE TRANSITIONS

Scene Transitions	Establishing Place/Setting/Time of Day
	Passage of time
	Transitions and time changes
	Scene changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scene transitions are significant changes to the locale in which the story is taking place. These changes may include, but are not limited to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Establishing Place/Setting/Time of Day○ Passage of time○ Transitions and time changes• Focus group and seeking user feedback is recommended when determining the use of accurate and appropriate terminology.• ex. Scene transition from the present to a scene in a different time<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ “Flashback”, transition to a separate scene in the present, past or future○ “Flash”, transition to a separate scene that has already been shown○ “Reinactment”, transition to the assumed scene of what has taken place○ Other changes in quality, tone, footage, effect, focus or distortion?• Common terminology; later, meanwhile, ‘next day’, ‘that night’, ‘in daytime’.• Specifying when, where and new locations is required only once.• Description of scene transitions should be included where appropriate and should avoid using too many descriptive terms to describe the transitioned scene.• Use specific landmark names as appropriate.	

NON-VERBAL SOUNDS

Non-verbal Sounds /Communications	Identifying sounds and sound effects and the appropriate placement of descriptions
	Identifying relevant objects, information, circumstances, locations, time and action
	Working with music and respecting the soundtrack
	Objectively describing dancing and choreography
	Objectively describing colour
	Foreshadowing
	Real versus Non-real
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what you can't hear. • Allow music, sound effects and ambient sound to tell the story. • Common well known sounds usually do not require identification unless the sound is out of context or is coming from an unknown source. • Describe the source of unidentified sounds and speech. Identify new speakers. • Where sound effects may not be clearly distinguishable to a visually impaired audience, the action resulting in said sound effect is described where time permits. 	

TEXT ON SCREEN

Titles, Subtitles, Credits, Text on Screen, Signing	Titles
	Subtitles
	Credits
	Signing
	Any text on screen
	Signage including logos
	Captions/Captioning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Titles, logos and bumpers should be fully described while as a result of length and content, only standard credits and those which are relevant to the course of the show should be included within the description track.• Captions and subtitles are used to visually display information on the screen that may not be available in the original audio track, such as the translation of a foreign language, the passage of time or otherwise quiet dialogue. Other requirements may exist for the proper pronunciation of a foreign language. The inclusion of the description of these elements should be evaluated based upon the composition of the original audio track, the relevancy of the content and whether it develops the material as a whole.• Sign language communication and content may be provided through captions that would be otherwise described, however if they are not then description of the content should be provided. In the case of on-screen signing, the original audio track is being provided and therefore no description is required unless it is relevant.	

STYLE AND TONE

Style and tone	Point of view and tense
	Descriptive verbs, types of language (ex. jargon, narration, slang) and changes in sentence structure
	Definite versus indefinite articles
	Visual versus non-visual perspective
	Repetition
	Description of a foreign languages
	Profanity, sexual interaction, nudity or pornography
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe the point of view when appropriate. It is important for the audience members to know when they are being addressed (as opposed to an on-screen character). One way to accomplish this is to refer to the audience as “you.”• Narration should be in the third person active voice using the present, continuous present or present participle tenses.• A describer needs to speak from a neutral objective point of view and should not include or reference themselves in narration.• When possible, use descriptive verbs to reduce repetition and enhance the experience.	

ROLE OF THE DESCRIBER

Role of the Describer	Based upon the program, use discretion in the placement and level of description used
	Place images in the minds of viewers
	Provide a consistent style and flow while maintaining neutrality by avoiding redundancy, step-by-step wording and repetition
	Understand that wall-to-wall is not required, however stepping over dialogue or sounds or adding description after an action takes place may be required
	Do not describe what is not on the screen and do not exceed the visual perspective
	Describe the program as it occurs
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Primary descriptions – Descriptions that are absolutely crucial to the understanding of story development.2. Secondary descriptions – Descriptions that are defined as being important but not absolutely essential to the understanding of story development.3. Tertiary descriptions – Stylistic descriptions that are encouraged when time allows for them. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain objectivity.• Understand where subjectivity may be required.• The story is not that of the describer to tell.	

TECHNICAL GUIDELINES

Channels
Loudness & peak levels
Soundtrack vs. DV mix levels
Equalization
Sync
Recording quality
Output parameters

THREE LEVELS OF DESCRIPTION

Three levels of description

- Primary descriptions – Descriptions that are absolutely crucial to the understanding of story development.
- Secondary descriptions – Descriptions that are defined as being important but not absolutely essential to the understanding of story development.
- Tertiary descriptions – Stylistic descriptions that are encouraged when time allows for them.

MORE/EXTRA DV

Enhancing the viewer experience

- Building upon what is already available in a broadcast description track
- Producers providing “enhanced” description for any work that they produce upon their own initiative
- Questions:
 - Analysis of viability
 - Financial feasibility requiring service fees?
 - Requirement / audience for proposed service?
 - Regulation of the content produced for the service?
- Thoughts?

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

AMI Research Panel

- *“Help Improve Accessible Media in Canada”*
- *“If you are blind or partially sighted, AMI invites you to help shape accessible media in Canada.”*
- As of February 2013:
 - 748 members
 - Nationwide representation
 - 76% low vision; 24% blind
- Beat testing, Mobile needs assessment, programming insights

SHAREPOINT ACCESSIBILITY

Accessible Media Inc. (AMI) launches it's new website in February 2013 on SharePoint Enterprise with;

100% W3C WCAG 2.0 AA compliancy

<http://validator.w3.org>

CASE STUDY; CANADA

- **Canada is unique within an environment of governmental, industry and community support**
 - The establishment of AMI
 - Focus on Canadian culture
 - Building a collaborative base upon which to build a standard
- With a similar intent Canada could be considered a model for media accessibility accommodations in any country

STAYING IN TOUCH

- <http://www.ami.ca>
- Twitter: @a11ymedia
- Facebook: Accessible Media Inc.
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/accessiblemedia/>

THANK YOU!