# Bloomsbury Learning Exchange (BLE), Online Accessibility Forum meeting

Wednesday 9th June 2021, 11 am to 12.30pm

Aimed at anyone involved in supporting education (academic staff and support, learning technologists, learning support, librarians, etc), the informal session will offer an opportunity for BLE colleagues to share good, accessible academic practice.

We will talk about what we have done since the accessibility regulations were introduced in 2019, how our practice and support has changed, and what we need to do next. The meeting will be a safe space to share, but also to seek mutual advice and help.

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# Insights from a student-run caption correction pilot

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These notes accompany the recording of the session which also had a PowerPoint presentation of these notes in slide form as there were no extra images or graphics the notes have been prepared as a word document and slightly elaborated to provide some context. The session was recorded.

## About the pilot

The pilot ran from September to December 2020 and was based in the Learning Enhancement and Development (LEaD) department. Making multimedia accessible is one strand of our Digital Accessibility project a 3-year project running from 2020.

There were 8 student captioners in the team and members of staff from LEaD and IT Services looked after rights, administration, prioritisation, quality checking and closing the requests. Students were recruited from the Unitemps agency which is based at the University.

Over that time 17 Staff submitted 157 recordings which were between 10 and 50 mins long. Most recordings were of screencasts (where academics talk over their presentation slides) and were created for online independent study.

The pilot was evaluated from the aspects of the student caption team, academics using the pilot and the staff team who managed it. Recommendations were then made to the project working group, this presentation is a brief version of that report and shares some of its insights and recommendations.

## What did we learn about?

* Accessibility features of media players
* Automated speech recognition (ASR)
* Browser based editing tools
* Caption correction of ASR
* Interactive Transcripts for learning
* Transcripts use in subject areas
* Managing a captioning team and service
* Learning from screencast design
* Staff requirements of a transcription service
* Student requirements of videos for flipped learning
* The Disability and Neurodiversity support teams requirements

## Interactive Transcript feature

One discovery or rather observation was that our media server player was missing some player features that were common to other platforms, such as an interactive transcript and options to change size and colour and contrast of captions. After investigation it was discovered that these were available but were not activated in our platform.

The interactive transcript feature is particularly useful for learning from screencasts as it provides a highlight that follows the speaker through the text, a searchable text that corresponds to the video timeline and a downloadable transcript that is situated in the player which removes the need for a transcript to be extracted and moved into Moodle. When investing in human corrected captions (the pilot) the use of an interactive transcript was noted to have potential to add value for learning and so was requested to activated.

## Questions we thought the pilot might answer

**How accurate or usable for learning are the free automated captions in our media platform?**

100% inaccurate as all caption files for the screencasts had errors running through them even where the audio was clear and therefore all needed to be checked and corrected by a human. The number of corrections needed did not vary considerably between different speakers e.g., those with speakers with accents, but there was a higher demand from staff and students for those to be corrected to aid understanding.

**How long does it take and therefore how much does student captioning cost?**

* Our average was 4 mins to correct per 1 minute
* We paid students £15 per hour
* We averaged a 4-day turnaround once the team was established, however we slowed down at exam time (we extended the service January 2020– June 2021)
* Of note the staff time to manage is not includes in this costing

**What is the difference in cost, speed and accuracy between students and an external company?**

After researching suppliers, we noted that, speed can be bought e.g., 24 hours to 4 days turnaround time the cost differs. The cost estimates per minute are similar but include the management and suppliers offer discount for bulk orders.

Suppliers use quality checks that are caried out by humans checking to assuring accuracy, they also use custom libraries, and some have developed specialist services for medicine and law. We found that the suppliers are expanding into the HE markets after being set up to serve accessibility, translation or document creation needs for a range of sectors.

## What features or settings can enhance learning from video and multimedia

The student caption team and academic staff fed back on qualities for learning from screencasts, a few are listed below.

* Audio quality
* Well-paced presentations
* Screencasts need to be broken into 10 – 20 mins
* Important terminology to be emphasised in voice and shown on slide
* A transcript is equally as important as captions
* Interactive Transcripts transform the learning experience and are expected by students when studying online

## What 11 fun things did the student captioners learn about ASR?

1. All recordings were indicated to have issues with words
2. All recordings were indicated to have issues with grammar
3. All recordings were indicated to have issues with punctuation
4. Speech can be very clear, but the ASR still gets it all wrong even common words
5. ASR adds extra punctuation which can change the context e.g. adds full stops
6. ASR adds extra words where there are pauses e.g. adds an or and
7. ASR makes mistakes on slight mispronunciations
8. ASR can take a frequent word by same speaker in the same recording and change it to more than one different word making it hard to use find and replace in the editor
9. ASR does not pick up all words or names, can skip some of them
10. ASR can capitalise randomly
11. ASR cannot recognise or learn subject area terms e.g. Shipping Law

## What we recommended in Spring 2021

1. To investigate caption correction services via external company for comparison
2. To continue the student service to address staff requests
3. To investigate adding ASR and caption correction to out lecture capture system

## What to expect for September 2021

We will provide services that be combined to produce various levels of accuracy across all platforms and for reasonable adjustments. Pilots of further services and combinations of tools to meet needs and standards will also take place. Potential for a tender for longer term services Spring 2022, based on review of the new services and pilots

* An allocation of funds for Human Caption correction via an external company to be allocated based on priority areas
* A follow the student service to include AR and human caption correction, to be allocated by the Disability Team for reasonable adjustment needs
* An allocation of funding for ASR in Lecture Capture

## Any questions, please email?

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