DPAN.TV, The Sign Language Channel

How DPAN.TV uses MacCaption to create closed captioning in-house for original programming produced for the deaf and hard of hearing community

> "We live in a world where video is all around us, on broadcast television, online services, social media and in public places. It's time that we make all of this content fully accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing community. That is what DPAN.TV is endeavoring to do."
>
> **- Sean Forbes, Co-Founder of DPAN.TV (The Deaf Professional Artists Network), The Sign Language Channel, in Detroit, MI.**

Having grown up in a musical family, it's no surprise that Sean Forbes is a hip-hop artist, singer/songwriter and drummer. After producing his first music video featuring one of his own original songs, one of the first people to watch it was Eminem. He's also a successful entrepreneur, running an innovative online broadcast service. And oh, by the way, he's deaf.

While Sean's been profoundly deaf since he was one, it hasn't stopped him from fully expressing his artistic voice and vision through music, music video performances, dance, and his online passion: DPAN.TV, The Sign Language Channel.

Overview

DPAN.TV is a non-profit company co-founded by Sean Forbes and his business partner Joel Martin 10 years ago. It produces a high-volume of shows, including original video series, such as *DTV News, Tru Biz entertainment news, Between the Lines public affairs, ASL Music Videos* and *Today in History*–all specifically for the deaf and hard of hearing community.

DPAN.TV cannot deliver anything less than the highest-quality closed captioning for its viewers. Fresh content streams live daily, while the network's on-demand media archive continually grows. And all of DPAN.TV's non-live content includes closed captioning that viewers can turn on or off with a click. These captions can be created quickly in-house, and encoded right into the video file, using Telestream's Mac-based closed captioning software, MacCaption.

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MacCaption allows even non-tech-savvy users to:

- Author and create closed captions and subtitles that comply with legal mandates and quality rules
- Import a transcript of the video from a plain text file or teleprompter copy
- Synchronize the captions with the video automatically
- Edit or correct existing captions as easily as making changes in a word processor
- Create caption and subtitle files compatible with video editing systems
- Encode the captions and subtitles into TV and Internet video formats like MP4, MOV, and MXF
- Use industry standard captioning and subtitling sidecar file formats like SCC, MCC, TTML, WebVTT, and SRT

The Challenges

"A hearing person can listen to the radio in the car, or fully understand what is being said on any TV show, but a deaf person doesn't have that same luxury. Even when closed captioning is provided, there are times when it doesn't accurately reflect what is actually being said, and some content, like music videos, lack captions altogether. Our ASL Music Videos feature people using ASL to interpret the lyrics of popular songs as they're being sung, so the deaf and hard of hearing can connect on an emotional level and experience music like never before." –Sean Forbes

One of the biggest operational challenges facing DPAN.TV is the labor and cost associated with adding captions to a large amount of non-live video. Their tight budget doesn't allow for video files to be sent out to third-party captioning companies. This service can be costly, especially if a quick turnaround is required for time-sensitive content, like news stories.

The Solution

With a staff of just 30 people–many of whom are deaf or hard of hearing–DPAN.TV is able to handle its own closed captioning and subtitling needs in-house on a single Mac running MacCaption software.

Since adding this user-friendly, do-it-yourself solution in February 2016, DPAN.TV now captions two to three hours worth of fresh content weekly using the following end-to-end workflow for non-live shows:

- The process starts with a script of what the on-camera anchors will convey
- The script goes through an English to ASL translation process
- The voice-over audio is recorded
- Captions are created using an industry standard 2-line, pop-on style format that is compliant with accessibility standards
- Last-minute changes are made on the fly to ensure that the captions accurately reflect what is said on the voice-over track
- The resulting .SRT captions file is then uploaded along with the source video file to the web
- The video file is uploaded to the site, which is hosted on the Amazon public cloud

Live content, such as breaking news, isn't generally closed captioned when it streams live. The in- and out-points are marked while the media is streaming in, and as soon as possible, the video is edited, captions are added to it, and it's streamed back out again.

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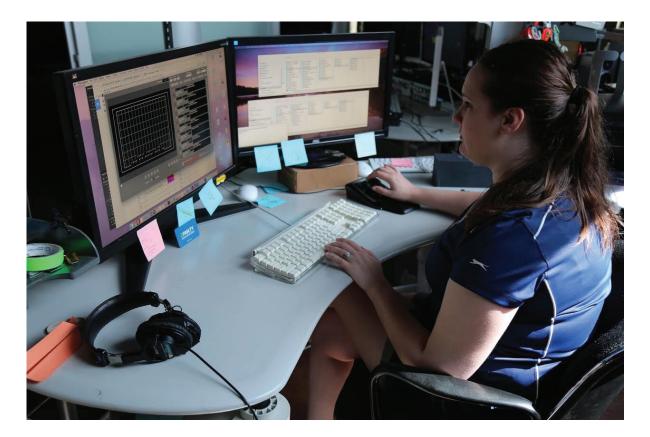
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Results/Benefits

"Captioning video properly is an art form. With MacCaption, we have all the professional tools we need to caption and subtitle video in-house. This enables us to save significant amounts of money, labor and time, and most importantly, control the quality of the captions we produce."

Find out more by visiting:

- DPAN.TV (The Deaf Professional Artists Network), The Sign Language Channel, in Detroit, MI at http://www.dpan.tv
- Telestream MacCaption: http://www.telestream.net/captioning/overview.htm

"DPAN.TV is about making news and entertainment fully accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing, a community that has long been underserved by traditional media. We engage deaf and hard of hearing viewers by using both ASL (American Sign Language) and high quality closed captions so they can choose the way they prefer to consume the media. We also provide program audio so that hearing individuals can also enjoy our channel."

–Sean Forbes

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