CaptionMaker

MacCaption

Closed Captioning Specialist Karen Franco

How Telestream's user-friendly, affordable CaptionMaker and MacCaption desktop closed captioning software benefits captioners at colleges and universities

"Many colleges and universities share the need to put closed captioning on the large and growing media libraries their faculty wants to use in the curriculum. While this service truly benefits deaf and hard of hearing students, closed captioning can be a very tedious, labor-intensive process. A few years ago, my search for a way to streamline the workflow and boost productivity led me to Telestream's affordable desktop software–CaptionMaker for the PC and MacCaption for the Mac–which enables me to caption far more digital media than would otherwise be possible."

Karen Franco, Professional Offline Captioner, Digital Media and Copyrights Specialist, in Pacifica, CA.

Overview

Colleges and universities increasingly want to present A/V media–such as videos from YouTube, Vimeo, iTunes and other IP platforms, video tutorials, DVDs and movies–to support and reinforce learning in the classroom and online.

But for deaf or hard of hearing students, this digital media poses a challenge if they cannot hear what is being said. That's why there's a fast-growing awareness on today's college campuses about the importance of having closed captions on all digital video to be shown to students.

Leveraging her court reporting and stenography skills, Karen Franco first discovered her passion for closed captioning when a local community college hired her for offline captioning of their voluminous digital video and media resources. She has since parlayed the specialized skills, knowledge and expertise she acquired on the job–largely through her own initiative–into a freelance closed captioning service, based in Pacifica, California.

The Initiative

Besides providing offline closed captioning services to local colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area, Franco is also a consultant to colleges that want to launch their own in-house closed captioning departments. She also mentors college graduates that want to pursue careers in closed captioning for education, and other non-broadcast applications.

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The Background

CaptionMaker and MacCaption both offer many user-friendly tools for authoring, editing, modifying and exporting industry-standard closed captions. They automate many of the steps in an otherwise daunting workload, and make it easier for users to work with leading digital video formats and closed caption file formats.

Since colleges and universities are among the institutions that advocacy groups scrutinize to ensure accessibility for the deaf and hard of hearing community, users of CaptionMaker and MacCaption can rest assured that the captions they create comply with Federal and State disability laws. Franco is knowledgeable about Federal and California state laws and regulations pertaining to making media accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing including:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Federal law

- Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, Federal law

- Section 508 of The Rehabilitation, a Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC), which ensures equal access by people with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities

- California Bill AB 386, which allows colleges and universities to proceed with captioning audiovisual materials if the publisher doesn't respond to a written request within two weeks

- The TEACH Act (Technology, Education, Copyright Harmonization Act), passed by Congress to allow educators to use copyrighted materials in classroom settings

Franco is also a Certified Copyright Specialist, with extensive experience calling on publishers and content creators for permission to caption their digital content for academic use. Since digital video content doesn't always have closed captioning, Franco spends a fair amount of time arranging for permission to caption copyrighted media. She obtained the copyright certification upon completing an online course on the complex subject of copyright protection.

The Challenges

While it's possible to hire outside closed captioning vendors to take care of on-going closed captioning needs, Franco says that it is more convenient, and often more cost-effective, to have staff members do the work in-house.

Since limited budgets are one of the biggest challenges facing colleges and universities, Franco said that it pays to own affordable, comprehensive software, such as Telestream's CaptionMaker and MacCaption software, rather than incurring the on-going expense of a third-party captioning service.

Franco advises schools to check into the availability of Federal or State grant programs designed to help them defray the cost of operating and equipping their own in-house captioning services. While demand for this grant money often depletes the funds, they're often replenished the following fiscal year.

Another key challenge facing colleges and universities is locating and hiring qualified, experienced captioners, and finding money in the annual budget to cover their salaries. Without new hires to handle closed captioning, these responsibilities could fall on established staff members, like the librarian or media resource manager.

Skills and expertise required for offline captioning include:

- Creating text-based transcripts of A/V content

- Digitizing tape-based video and DVDs

- Creating, converting and exporting digital video and caption files

- Working with IP-based videos like YouTube videos and QuickTime files

- Non-linear video editing

- Using closed captioning desktop software, including CaptionMaker on the PC and MacCaption to add captions to digital video

- Knowledge of closed caption quality guidelines and quality rules

- Understanding legal regulations and protocols

"It's also vital to establish policies and procedures that require closed captioning on all digital videos and media, even when there are no deaf or hard of hearing students currently enrolled. Knowledge and awareness are key. So, beginning with employee orientations, new faculty members must be told about the importance of having closed captioning on all digital media presentations without exception."

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"Having CaptionMaker and MacCaption really saves captioners time and effort. It's both efficient and sufficient. This promotes better time management. More importantly, it's user-friendly and easy to learn, and Telestream's technical support is fabulous. Any question I've ever had about captioning with their software has always been answered in a helpful and timely manner."

The Solution

Telestream's closed captioning software lowers costs by boosting efficiency and productivity, and keeping the workload in-house. In addition, staff members can rely on Telestream's dedicated support team to learn and understand the captioning process in a file-based workflow.

It also saves time by eliminating manual steps. For example, a feature called Automatic Time Stamp–found in both CaptionMaker and MacCaption–automates the process of syncing each caption display with the video. Without it, the operator must hit a single key, such as F5, over and over again for every caption displayed throughout the program.

The Set-up

When working as an offline captioner on college campuses, Karen Franco's office typically consists of the following software and gear:

- CaptionMaker software from Telestream
- A desktop PC
- MacCaption software from Telestream
- An Apple Macintosh laptop, such as MacBook
- Monitors
- DVD players, tape machines
- Adobe Premiere Pro® Adobe Premiere nonlinear editing software
- Adobe Creative Suite® software tools, including digitizing and encoding
- Black Magic Design encoders

The Results

"In the past, it would take me two to three hours to put in a transcript, and sync and edit the captions on an hour of video. Now with either MacCaption or Caption-Maker, an hour of video takes me roughly 45 minutes. Being able to work so much faster, and with such accuracy, means accomplishing so much more with the available budget and resources."

"I'm confident that Telestream will always be in the forefront of providing the latest closed captioning tools and capabilities, as well as highly responsive customer support. This is the most feature-rich, user-friendly, affordable software I have found for putting closed captions on digital media to make it fully accessible to students, and everyone in the deaf and hard of hearing community."

To learn more

To get more information about Telestream or products mentioned, call 1-530-470-1300, or visit www.telestream.net/captioning/overview.htm

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