

CANADIAN CAPTIONING DEVELOPMENT AGENCY INC.

COMPANY OVERVIEW

The Canadian Captioning Development Agency Inc. (CCDA) is a non-profit charitable organization established and incorporated in 1981 at the request of the federal Department of Communications to provide captioning (sub-titling of the television audio) for Canadian television programming.

The Agency's principal mandate is to prepare and provide captions to broadcasters and advertisers in a format suitable for broadcast to the homes of deaf and hard-of-hearing people to enable them to understand and enjoy television fully along with their hearing counterparts.

The captions need not be, but normally are, provided in a "closed" format (i.e. invisible without the use of a decoder) so as to not distract the larger, general television audience.

Production centres are in Toronto and Montreal. Total staff numbers approximately 25 persons.

EXPERIENCE

Key customers to date are broadcasters and advertisers.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has contracted with CCDA for the provision of five hours of captioned programming weekly on each of its television networks, French and English. About two hours per week of the Canadian programming schedule of the CTV Television Network is currently captioned by CCDA.

Within the advertising community, approximately 110 companies in Canada have made it corporate policy to closed-caption all their television commercials.

The key application is making television more intelligible and enjoyable for Canada's 1.5 million hearing-impaired people. This entails not only the provision of text but very shortly, graphics. Since CCDA's system is NAPLPS-based, deaf and hard-of-hearing people who have a NAPLPS-type decoder will be able to see on their home TV screens, graphics to denote important off-camera actions, such as the knocking of a door, the barking of a dog, the ringing of a telephone, etc. This graphic material will supplant or reinforce the presentation of captions in alpha-numeric form, to create a more dynamic, colourful and complete communication system for the hearing-impaired.

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Working from a transcript of a given television program, CCDA's editors prepare a "captioned script" which essentially is an edited version appropriate to a required reading level. The captions are then allocated and timed to appear and disappear at the proper place and timed to match the program video. Finally, the captions are digitally put onto a computer magnetic disk ready for encoding by the broadcaster either directly into the vertical blanking interval (which is normally invisible) portion of the television signal or onto a new master videotape for airing.

Commercials are normally captioned in the same manner with the exception that they are prepared verbatim rather than edited, as sponsors are concerned about the exactness of the translation from the spoken to the written message.

In addition to the basic product and service described above, CCDA provides the following services:

- Preparation of program transcripts.
- Subsequent alterations to the positioning or timing of captions.
- Captioning at different language levels.
- Captioning in the alternative official language.
- Duplication of captioning disks.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS/ TARGET MARKETS

CCDA is vitally interested in the development of alternate applications and uses of captions beyond, but not excluding, serving the hearing-impaired.

Examples of such other uses which are currently being investigated include:

- Assisting in the learning of either of Canada's two official languages, by captioning in the language opposite to the program audio.
- Providing written reinforcement in the learning of special skills or tasks (i.e. in-house training).
- Enabling or supporting comprehension of the program audio in public places or at exhibits where distance or a noisy environment make such comprehension difficult or impossible.

- Assisting new Canadians in learning to read and speak either French or English.
- Serving multicultural television programming interests.

New directions include increased use and experimentation of NAPLPS-based graphics to supplant or to reinforce purely textual information, and experimentation with captioning in different colours, character sizes and display formats.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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