

An Inside Look: Providing Remote Captioning Accommodations Follow up Questions from October 25, 2007 TeleTraining

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Is there a difference between CART and Court Reporting?

20/20: A CART provider supplies instant speech-to-text translation on a computer monitor or other display for the benefit of an individual consumer or larger group in a number of settings: classrooms; business, government, and educational functions; courtrooms; religious, civic, cultural, recreation, or entertainment events. A CART provider is sensitive to the varying needs of consumers and has had training in conveying a speaker's message, complete with environmental cues. This expertise distinguishes a CART provider from a court reporter in a traditional litigation setting.

A Court Reporter typically creates verbatim transcripts of speeches, conversations, legal proceedings, meetings, and other events when written accounts of spoken words are necessary for correspondence, records, or legal proof. Court reporters play a critical role not only in judicial proceedings, but also at every meeting where the spoken word must be preserved as a written transcript. They are responsible for ensuring a complete, accurate, and secure legal record. In addition to preparing and protecting the legal record, many court reporters assist judges and trial attorneys in a variety of ways, such as organizing and searching for information in the official record or making suggestions to judges and attorneys regarding courtroom administration and procedure. Many CART providers have used their skills in a court reporting setting.

For a lengthy assignment, could a remote captionist tag team with an on-site captionist. If so, how?

Yes. The switch of captioners could be made at a break or other agreed upon time. The remote captioner and the onsite captioner could talk via IM to ensure the switch runs smoothly.

Yes, there could be tag team. The change would take place with how the text is projected on the user end. If it was projected, then they would switch the input at the projector or simply use a different computer as the display unit. The process really could be seamless to the end user.

How do you handle remote captioning of small group settings or classes which involve a lot of class discussion and student involvement?

We encourage the speaker to place the microphone in the center of the discussion group.

Using a specific room mic can pick up much of the audio, but sometimes these situations are just not appropriate for remote CART. ACS tries to assess the room set up and determine the best way to hear what is happening. We have developed microphone combinations that have been helpful too.

How does the student view the captions? Is it only for one student or can it be projected for a group? What are the methods of display? How intrusive is it?

Once a student clicks on the url sent to them by the captioner, the captions begin instantaneously. The captions can be projected for a group or viewed privately by the student. Methods of display are individual or many computers, a projection screen or television screen that has been set up ahead of time.

Students are given a URL. They, or many, can watch it via the internet on any computer. ACS does not have a limit.

I see the captioner prefacing the text with the person's name...sometimes the person is then identifying themselves and other times they are not...How does the captioner know who is speaking?

20/20 will ask for a list of the speakers with e-mail addresses. We then send a meet-and-greet e-mail to the speakers introducing the captioner and what role the captioner will play in their event. In that meet-and-greet we encourage the speakers to ALWAYS identify themselves each and every time they speak.

Participants are encouraged to say, "This is Phil or This is Jeanette" before they begin speaking. That helps. Other times captioners can identify a particular voice with a name based on dialect or pitch. Finally, there are times that the captioner is unable to identify the voice. If the participant is actually in the room with the speakers, the captioner may type in chat, "Who is speaking?" so that the voice can be identified.

Can the student save the script that they see on the website?

Yes and no. We have two different streams we use for Remote CART. Both streams will allow the student to save the transcript, but one of the two streams has a built-in function that the captioner can click ahead of time that will not allow the student to save the script. We have this clarified with our contact person before our first event.

They can, but many companies provide a "cleaned-up" version of the file. ACS provides the file as part of our hourly rate.

Does this service work with screen readers for the Deaf/Blind using Braille? I am running Jaws right now and it is not speaking any of the captioned information. What software is used to allow this to work with a refreshable Braille display?

Both of our streams work successfully with a refreshable Braille display. The captioning output on our test with a consumer was easy to read and follow with refreshable Braille. The streams are also accessible with speech output. Both automatic and non-automatic scrolling modes work well. Our test was conducted with the following technology: Microsoft Windows XP Pro; Internet Explorer 7; JAWS Screen Reader Version 8.0 from Freedom Scientific; A PACMate 40 cell refreshable Braille display. Anyone can download a demo version of the JAWS screen reader to test speech output from <http://www.freedomscientific.com>. Other screen reader/magnification software people use: ZoomTest and WindowEyes. Download demo copies of this software is: <http://www.aisquared.com> or <http://www.gwmicro.com>.

The software does not work with JAWS because of the screen refreshing. Jeanette has more experience in this arena.

What happens if a student in the class wants to ask a question? Is the student expected to voice for him/herself? Will the captioner voice? If so how? Are there other options?

The following scenario is what we have implemented at 20/20: The student types a question to the captioner via chat. The student then raises his/her hand. The speaker calls on the student while at the same time moving closer to the student's computer. Once the captioner "hears" the speaker call on the student, that is the captioner's cue to voice the question. The speaker will "hear" the question through the student's computer speakers. Works great!

1. Students can type the question in the chat and the captioner can voice the questions.
2. Students can type the question and raise their hand and have the professor come over and read it.
3. Students can type the question and have the student sitting next to them voice it.

Can your text be manipulated by the student as far as size and color? Can it also be saved?

Yes, the text can be manipulated by the student. The student will need to reset the display to their favorite settings each time they click on the url to connect to the stream.

Yes, the text font, size, color is all adjustable by the student. Further, the entire text box is dynamic and can be adjusted depending on need. Students can multi-task or view other on screen documents if needed.

How does the audio get to the service provider? Is it VoIP or through a phone line?

Audio gets to the captioner by VoIP or a phone line.

Audio can be sent via phone line or VoIP. ACS creates solutions based on the technology that is available to us at your school or location.

I've used remote services quite a bit and sorry but they are always replete with tech issues. Some students have specifically requested live service providers. What is your tech success rate and process for dealing with tech issues?

First, don't hesitate to ask for references from your CART provider and follow-up with those references to see what their experience has been. Phil and I have been in business long enough to know what works and what doesn't. If we don't know the answer we will tell you, we don't know, but we will find out.

Quality companies provide tech support at no cost. Alternative Communication Services has developed solutions to most of the technical issues. When you're buying services shop around and see who can handle the job.

Can captions be provided for other languages? What about foreign language classes? What if the deaf individual is Hispanic and would like to read the transcript in Spanish even though the speaker is English? Can it be changed to another language via technology?

Spanish and English.

Spanish and English are the two languages typically provided. ACS is looking into French right now, but typically Spanish and English are the two used

If a program was being conducted in Spanish for example will CART provide the Spanish?

Yes, a CART provider who speaks Spanish will provide the script.

CART always matches the spoken language.

When a student is viewing the captions from a laptop is it better to be hardwired into the Internet? If the student is using a wireless connection are there any problems or issues to be aware of?

We encourage all our clients to hardwire. A wireless connection at times will "hiccup" and could bump the student offline. Wireless is an option but hardwire is our first choice.

Hardwire is always more reliable and it depends on the type of audio connection you establish. Wireless will work much of the time, but VoIP can require substantial bandwidth. ACS evaluates the school situation to determine the best method for you.

Do you find that CART services are often paired with interpreting in a small classroom setting? I know at big conferences they are usually paired so that it is very accessible.

We do not have a client using Remote CART paired with interpreting. I have been told this “paired service” is being utilized successfully with an onsite CART provider and an onsite interpreter.

Experience has shown that it is rare to have a CART writer and interpreter in classrooms, but I have seen it. Support services are all driven on the need of the student and what the most appropriate accommodation might be.

How do you educate the students and professor so they can fully benefit from this service?

Four weeks before service is to begin 20/20 will send an implementation plan to the first-in-line contact for the student. Two weeks before service is to begin we offer a demo to students and professors to educate them on Remote CART. After the demo we send out “The Golden Rules of Remote CART “ for their use.

ACS provides a training manual and personal training as necessary.

Does your delivery screen allow students to scroll up to previous text? Allow them to adjust speed of delivery?

The student can scroll up or down at any time. The student cannot adjust the speed of delivery.

Yes, they can scroll and reader variability is taken into account by giving students a full screen of text.

Do you charge more if there are multiple students in the one classroom? Or for Universal Access in the room where you would be projected?

We do not charge more. Our rates remain the same.

No, there are no additional charges. If the entire room can benefit, that would be great!

Do you use only CART or do you use voice recognition software to generate captions?

We use only stenographic machine writers.

ACS only uses machine writers at this time.

What is the cost per hour for remote CART?

Remote CART rates can vary from \$75 to \$250 p/h. Always ask your Remote CART provider what services are included in their rate; i.e. prep, rough edit, script, onsite versus Remote CART.

It varies geographically and by experience. Costs range from \$75/hour to \$200/hour. Check experience and ability! Low hourly rates typically mean minimal experience and service. A deal isn't always a deal!

Are there classes that are just not accessible via captioning I.E. math, algebra or chemistry?

We currently cover all the above.

There are some classes that are easier to cover than other classes, but we have been able to cover everything tossed at us. We will talk with the student to determine the best way to meet his/her needs on certain subjects, if there are symbols or something to that effect.

What type of microphone is best to use? What brand and why type such as lapel or room system?

Every environment and computer is different. We do not make a recommendation for a microphone until we know the make and model of the student's computer as well as their operating system.

You can check the ACS website (www.acscaptions.com) for a room mic. Other good brands include SHURE and NADY.

Both agencies emphasis the use of laptops; however, is it possible to use a desktop computer which is already set in the classroom?

Yes, a desktop with internet capability will work.

Absolutely, provided it has access to the internet.

Has anyone had an experience where the professor refuses captioning/transcription services due to 'copyright' issues? The professor wishes to keep his material confidential.

We did have that happen. We had to sign a confidentiality agreement and promise to delete our files at the end of the semester.

ACS has. The professor simply refused. It was sorta silly, but the professor refused and the student did not want to push the issue.

Do you require a syllabus from the course for the specific jargon that will be used? I am interpreting a religious experience class, and many of the terms used are very specific to that class. (Different tribe names and their religion, etc)

Yes, we do. We place the syllabi for all events as well as any word banks and past scripts into our online library for all of our staff to utilize.

Require is a strong word, but we do highly request one. Sometimes we request textbooks as well. We Google subject matters, look for glossaries and ask professors for prep too!

The speaker mentioned that the font could be changed from all uppercase to both upper and lowercase. How is that done on the website that the student logs into? How does the student change other settings such as font size and color?

The Remote CART provider controls upper/lower case. This preference should be noted before an event begins. Changing the font and color is not technical. Our younger clients (junior high) do it with ease.

Upper and lowercase is determined by the captioner. Font choices and colors are selected at the text window (where the text is seen).

Can you share the tip sheet that we would use to set up a service?

We do not have a "tip sheet" per se. Once we know what equipment our client will be using we then make suggestions regarding setup. We work closely with our client's IT department as they transition to Remote CART.

ACS has some directions at our website which should be helpful to you. We will also gladly speak with you about your situation.

Is there a tipsheet you can share for the student?

20/20 provides our clients and students with "The Golden Rules of Remote Cart" two weeks before we begin service.

**Do you feel you could participate in an open bidding process with our University?
How would you enter your bid? In a range?**

If requested, we would participate in a Request for Bid.

ACS would provide a proposal to any school for services that requested a proposal.

Is there any way to compare pricing between CART and on-site interpreters or remote interpreters?

It could be done if you had the time to call different providers to ask for their rates.

There are many variables here. I don't think that you can really compare these services. The bottom line is that you need to provide the needed service to the consumer.

Can the remote captionist communicate with the speaker for clarification?

The only contact we have with a speaker is in a special situation where the program used for audio has been downloaded onto the speaker's computer. We will not verbally communicate with the speaker but will send an instant message to let them know we have audio and are ready to go.

The remote CART writer may send a note to the student asking for clarification. We try to empower the student to ask for clarification. We have also asked professors and disability coordinators for assistance at a time other than the class session.

If a professor makes many vague references to "this" and "that" and "here" and "there" referencing things in the classroom – how would a captionist handle not being able to see what's being referenced?

We would try our best to write (indicating).

The captioner will put up a parenthetical (referencing object) or (pointing on board) or sometimes they may send the message (not sure what is being referenced.)

For the follow up document: I am getting a warning message after a period of "idle" time on the websites.

"WARNING: Unresponsive Script

A script on this page may be busy, or it may have stopped responding. You can stop the script now, or you can continue to see if the script will complete.

**Stop Script* *Continue* "*

What does this mean and how can you disable it?

I have never seen this error so I am unable to respond. Be sure to notify your Remote CART provider immediately if this happens so it can be researched.

I am not familiar with this problem, but it could easily be researched.

Do you ever use voice writers?

No, we do not.

ACS does not use voice writers.

Are CART reporters required to obtain CEUs to maintain their certification?

If you are a member of the National Court Reporters Association you are required to obtain CEUs to maintain your certification.

All court reporters are required to earn CEUs to maintain their certificates. It is important to note that keeping their certification does not require a skills test. Someone could be certified, but may have not written for some time. Check quality and references.

Are they insured? What kind of insurance should we expect a captioner/CART service provider to have?

20/20 carries 1 million in professional and personal liability which is pretty standard.

As an independent contractor, they handle all their own insurance needs. Some places require liability insurance if the CART writers work onsite, but it is rare, given the nature of work.

I'm curious how long can one individual captionist caption before a break? How many has it taken to caption this one hour and ½?

Writing word-for-word takes mental gymnastics and skill. A 5-10 minute break every 2 hours would be a gift.

ACS used one captioner for the presentation. ACS will go for a maximum of 3 hours with no break, but prefers a maximum of 2 hours. It also may vary slightly depending on content.

I think that there may be in-complete info regarding VGC (voice generated captions). Dragon is a tool to type papers. There are voice generated captioning equipment used by huge national captioning companies. At our state legislative TV network, they have trained VGC captioned providing captions. They have 98% accuracy or better.

I personally have not met a voice writer but have not doubt there are some who can achieve what is stated.

There are some very good voice captioners.