

## **UNIT 4. THE PROFESSION**

### **ELEMENT 1. PERSONAL SKILLS**

#### **INTERVIEWS WITH PROFESSIONALS: AUDIO DESCRIPTION, PART 1**

##### **Other Video Transcript**

#### **THE NARRATOR**

Welcome to Unit 4: The profession, Element 1:  
Personal skills.

This video brings you Interviews with  
professionals: Audio description, part 1.

It was produced by University of Trieste in  
cooperation with Zavod RISA.

This video includes excerpts from the interviews  
with esteemed experts in the field of audio  
description - Bernd Benecke, Louise Fryer, Joel  
Snyder and Christopher Taylor.

The interviews were conducted by University of  
Trieste.

The experts were asked the following questions:

1. What are the main challenges in your  
profession? and
  2. What skills are most needed in the profession?
- Here are their answers.

What are the main challenges in your profession?



BERND BENECKE

Well, of course, doing audio description that you have to put all the information that is, for example, in a scene of a film, into the small gaps in between the dialogues and therefore you have to observe and you have to edit and you have to think where to put your description and how do you write this. So this is a question of which words to use and how to adapt the language maybe, that is used in the film. These are, I would say, the main challenges in our profession.

LOUISE FRYER

The main challenge is the tension between quality and quantity - meaning the speed at which an AD is created may not allow sufficient time for the best AD to be created. The other challenge is having to produce a one size fits all description when we know that the audience is very diverse.

JOEL SNYDER

I think the number one challenge right now with respect to audio description is visibility. You should excuse the expression. We've been around 40 years but we haven't really made enough of a mark... We haven't really penetrated, let alone the general public, even the audience of people that can benefit from audio description, for whom audio description was intended to begin with - people who are blind. We need to do a better job of creating PSAs, of becoming more visible... Captioning, of course, is dealing with a population of people who are deaf, that are twice the size of people who are blind, but captioning, you see...



the general public sees the captions on television. You can easily turn them on and off. You see them in a bar on the television screen in a gym... Description - no. You have to know how to turn it on and oftentimes that's a process which only recently has become more shaped to be more accessible to a person who's blind as opposed to being on a visual menu. The program has description but how do you turn it on? I think we're getting better at that. But that visibility in general, I think will result in increased understanding of description and advancements for the field.

CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR The main challenge is probably training enough people, given the growth in the industry. The ADLAB PRO project led the way in some ways in suggesting how this can be achieved. With media giants like Netflix and Sky churning out thousands of video products 24 hours a day and the growing awareness within these companies of the need for accessibility, Netflix in particular, it'll be necessary to find professionals able to deal with the immense demand for screen AD. In terms of museum and art gallery AD, again, you should see a greater increase in institutions recognizing the need for audio description and to be delivered in some form. So, you have trained museum staff, freelance describers, service providers, such as VocalEyes in London, who specialize in museum AD, online



ADs... but again, this can only happen if reliable describers can be trained and employed.

THE NARRATOR

What skills are most needed in the profession?

BERND BENECKE

Of course - good observing. You have to really have the ability to see things and to describe things, find the right words.

You need good writing abilities to put what you see into words.

You have to work on the time pressure sometimes, you should be able to do this.

And it helps, when you work for films, that you have some knowledge of films, if you work for theater that you have some knowledge in theater so that you can understand what happens there and put this into words.

LOUISE FRYER

What skills are most needed in this profession? It depends on context – you need a huge general knowledge or the ability to know when you don't know enough and need to do research. Use of language is key, as is understanding how images, words and sound work together to convey meaning. I think the other important thing is passion for doing it well.

JOEL SNYDER

When I think of the profession of audio description, I first think of the writers. They are the describers. Many people listen to audio description and then they hear a voice and they're: 'Oh yeah, that guy, that guy is the describer.' Well, probably not. 9 times out of 10, in



media certainly, the person voicing the description had nothing to do with the writing of it. Although there is a symbiotic relationship, or should be, between the written description and the voicing of the description.

The voicer can... this goes back to a previous question... the voicer can do things that will relate to what happens later in the script, making meaning with the voice, you know... So, those kinds of skills on the voicing end, but on the describing end, the writing end, it's important to have a solid grasp of the language being used, a solid vocabulary, awareness of how similes, vivid verbs, synonyms can be used to make the description more listenable and more effective, more able to create that vivid image in the mind's eye. I think that's all a part of it and is much needed in the profession.

Then, of course, the audio editing is the third realm of things and there are real key elements there related to listening and to the facility with the technical aspects of audio recording that are absolutely critical.

I hasten to add, too, that people who are blind, the people for whom description is principally intended, can be excellent description consultants. Perhaps they don't create the description from scratch which involves obviously looking at an image but they can be experts in language and can consult on how the description is



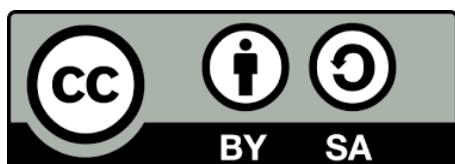
structured. They certainly can be voice talents, reading from braille, perhaps, or of refreshable braille display, or some other kind of display that allows them to view the text and some of the best audio editors I know are people who are totally blind. So, I think that's important. 'Nothing about us without us.' I think that is important to remember.

CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR Well, the usual skills of concision, knowing exactly what to describe, what not to describe and if you're the voice talent, how to say it in the most pleasing and acceptable way. And working together with other people, the question of teamwork, especially in terms of direct inclusion.

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