Accessible Media Department Promo

3:58

ANNE ZBITNEW: My name's Anne Zbitnew, and I'm a full-time professor in the Faculty of Media and Creative Arts, in the Media Foundation program. I'm white. I have curly white hair to my shoulders. I am wearing black, kind of cat-eye-shaped glasses. I have red lipstick and a black turtleneck.

MICHAEL WRIGHT: My name is Michael Wright. I am the director of technical services for the Faculty of Media and Creative Arts at Humber College. I'm currently wearing a blue shirt, black tie. I have short hair, and I have glasses.

ZBITNEW: Summer, 2015, we found out that we had a student who's deaf, and he requested that all video be captioned. I know how to caption. Some other faculty know how to caption. Most people don't know how to caption. So I decided to go around Humber and find out who's in charge of captioning here. I talked to a number of different people, and different departments would do captioning or send it out, but it would take six, seven, eight, nine weeks to have a video captioned. And if you want to show something in your class tomorrow, you can't wait eight weeks. So, it just made me think, if there was someone really nearby that could help us caption our own work, we would have accessible media for people who needed to use captioning.

WRIGHT: Is there a way for us to build a small department to create closed captions for faculty so that, whenever a student needed closed captioning in the classroom, they weren't stuck wishing they had it. What we did is we hired two part-time staff, and we created a department that then brought in students and gave students part-time work. And then we ended up with a small department that can handle the requests. It's pretty expensive when you're sending audiotapes out to be transcribed, and then captioning to be done, so a department like ours is required.

ZBITNEW: We started with the idea of captioning and captioning video, and also transcribing audio. Those two things seemed to be the most urgent and the most wide-reaching in terms of who would want to access them. And, moving forward, there's other things that the department will be doing as well. But that's sort of where we started with. It's working really well. I know lots of faculty are sending their media down there to be captioned. Also, it's inspiring people to learn more about captioning on their own, which is also really exciting. And captioning's just one thing. There's writing alt text, there's writing image description, there's doing live captioning. So there's many ways that we can make our media accessible.  
So I found out about a grant, Broadcasting Accessibility Fund, applied and was successful, and we created, over the course of a year, the course which is called "Making Accessible Media: Accessible Design in Digital Media." And there's six modules currently -- although we're updating that to eight modules -- that teach students and faculty at Humber how to make their media inclusive and accessible. It is open access, available to anybody. There's also a Blackboard version for Humber students. It's up to date, it's got really interesting material, and there's nothing like that out there. As an add-on, accessibility is way more expensive. You haven't planned for it. There's so many reasons not to do it that it doesn't get done.

WRIGHT: It's part of that process. It's not, "Oh, by the way, we have to do this afterwards." We think about captioning as we're building.

ZBITNEW: And you can also make it beautiful that way. You don't have to just wait until the last minute. So, I think having a captioning department models for the Faculty of Media and Creative Arts, but also models for all of Humber.

WRIGHT: People shouldn't be excluded from the opportunity to either read, learn, or take part in a presentation.

ZBITNEW: People, of course, want their media to be accessible. Why wouldn't you? As a media maker, if your media is accessible, your audience is bigger. So, you're impacting yourself as well as the greater audience that you're making your media for.

WRIGHT: This is a requirement. This is the right thing to do, and we should be doing it now, not later.

Transcript provided by

The FMCA Accessible Media Department

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