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BSI Standards Publication

Information technology — User interface component accessibility

Part 21: Guidance on audio descriptions

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National foreword

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work. In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee, ISO/IEC JTC 1.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: Foreword - Supplementary information

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, SC 35, *User interfaces*.

ISO/IEC 20071 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Information technology — User interface component accessibility*:

— *Part 11: Guidance for alternative text for images* [Technical Specification]

— *Part 21: Guidance on audio description* [Technical Specification]

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Introduction

This part of ISO/IEC 20071 provides audio description developers and practitioners with guidance in creating effective content describing audiovisual material in an auditory-only modality, the style or manner in which audio description is delivered, the audio description script and script time cues, in relation to the original content. The circumstances to which audio description applies include recorded video, broadcast and broadband television, cinema, live or recorded drama, museum and art gallery exhibits, heritage tours, news, and comedies. Some of this content is static and unchanging, some is dynamic, some is expressed in a visual modality alone, and some in a combination of visual and auditory modalities.

An example of mainstream use of audio description techniques can be found in sports commentary. It can be enjoyed by diverse audiences and uses personalities, emotional expression, and reaction to content to express qualities of the original content.

Audiovisual material is produced for people who can see and hear. It is also typically produced in a specific language for a particular audience. Translations of the original auditory content and associated audio description can be provided in different languages. Providing audio description and translating into other languages can be beneficial to diverse users in diverse contexts, including persons who are blind or persons with low vision, persons with learning difficulties or cognitive impairments and, in the case of translation, persons who need the content to be in another language. Translating subtitles and other on-screen text and providing those in auditory form can also be beneficial.

Producing audio description can be thought of in a similar way to language translation in that it involves several kinds of subjective decisions, for example, the use of vocabulary, tone, speed, intonation, and expression. The accuracy and quality that audio describers or script writers can achieve is determined by matching the factors above with the requirements of the original content.

The creation and delivery of audio description based on the guidance in this part of ISO/IEC 20071 is not intended to interfere with or change the meaning of the original content, or the freedom of speech, expression, or opinion of rights holders.

A further benefit of providing audio description can be the raising of awareness of barriers experienced by blind persons and persons with low vision and other beneficiaries in accessing audiovisual content. The use of this part of ISO/IEC 20071 can also help embed universal and inclusive designed media content production practices in educational programmes (such as film, theatre performances, museum and art gallery exhibits, and other media).

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Information technology — User interface component accessibility —

Part 21: Guidance on audio descriptions

1 Scope

This part of ISO/IEC 20071 provides recommendations for describing audiovisual content in an auditory modality for use in recorded video presentations, broadcast television, cinema, live or recorded drama, museum and art gallery exhibits, heritage tours, news, and comedies, regardless of the language and technology being used to transmit and present the recorded or live audiovisual content.

NOTE 1 There are many secondary users of audio description, but the primary and intended users of audio description are blind persons or persons with low vision and their friends and family.

This part of ISO/IEC 20071 provides guidance on the subjective nature of creating audio description.

It also provides guidance for audio description developers (script writers, voice narrators, and organizations or groups responsible for delivering audio description) in faithfully and accurately representing audiovisual content.

NOTE 2 It might not always be possible to provide an equivalent experience due to limitations in the amount of time available for audio description depending on the content being described.

This part of ISO/IEC 20071 applies to describing audiovisual content and does not consider the devices or transmission mechanisms used to deliver the content or the audio description. These devices include, but are not limited to, televisions, computers, wireless devices, projection equipment, DVD and home cinema equipment and other forms of user interface technology. Therefore, this part of ISO/IEC 20071 does not consider transcoding files for the various video outputs.

NOTE 3 Technical matters of transmission and distribution are covered by other International Standards (e.g. MPEG standards and other technical international standards such as IEC 62731).

This part of ISO/IEC 20071 provides guidance on how to approach user preferences, available styles and flexibility in approaches to audio description.

It does not apply to static images contained in electronic documents (see ISO/IEC 20071–11 for guidance on text alternatives for images).

It applies to auditory presentations intended to be transmitted or delivered simultaneously to the original audiovisual content.

NOTE 4 Limitations experienced by broadcasters or people in synchronous environments might be reduced online or in asynchronous environments.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

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2.1 General terms

2.1.1
audiovisual content
<audio description> visual and/or auditory element of recorded video presentations, live performances, or static or dynamic events to which audio description applies

Note 1 to entry: This generic term is used where only the visual modality might apply, for example, in art gallery or museum exhibits.

Note 2 to entry: The range of circumstances to which this term applies includes recorded video presentations, broadcast and broadband television, cinema, live or recorded drama, museum and art gallery exhibits, heritage tours, news, and comedies.

2.1.2
video (recorded)
<audio description> combination of auditory and visual content intended to be presented together in a synchronized manner

2.1.3
programme
<audio description> complete unit of a recorded or live video broadcast

2.1.4
programme category
<audio description> classification of programmes

Note 1 to entry: Some programme categories include documentary, news and information, and drama.

Note 2 to entry: Programme categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

2.1.5
genre
<audio description> classification of a film, programme, drama or an event from an artistic perspective

Note 1 to entry: Genres include, but are not limited to, history, action, horror, romance, and comedy.

Note 2 to entry: Programme genres are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

2.1.6
creative
<audio description> creation and addition of new original content to existing content

2.1.7
harmony
<audio description> natural fit between the audio description script and its delivery and the original content

2.2 Audio-specific terms

2.2.1
audio track
auditory components of a video other than audio description components

2.2.2
audio description
descriptive audio

Note 1 to entry: Audiovisual content is described in an auditory modality.

Note 2 to entry: Audio description can be used to describe sound not easily identified or sound coming from an unknown source or location.

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Note 3 to entry: Audio description can also be used to describe locations, directions, and objects.

2.2.3
basic audio description
audio description provided along with the original audiovisual content without lengthening the time of presentation.

2.2.4
extended audio description
audio description provided with the original audiovisual content that lengthens the total time of the presentation or event

2.2.5
audio introduction
complementary auditory content included before the original audiovisual content begins

2.3 Language of presentation terms

2.3.1
original language
native language in which audiovisual content is produced

2.3.2
re-voicing
dubbing
voice-over
secondary audio version of a film or video produced by voice talent, translators, and dialogue writers in a language other than the original language of the film or video

Note 1 to entry: When dubbing, this is timed to match the voicing or mouth movements of animated characters or the original actors.

2.3.3
subtitles
transcription or translation of the dialogue, suitable for when the sound is available but not understood

Note 1 to entry: Specific guidance on delivering subtitles, on-screen text, and embedded text will be provided in a forthcoming addition to ISO/IEC 20071.

2.3.4
spoken subtitles
audio subtitles
spoken captions
subtitles on audiovisual content that are read aloud and spoken over the audio in subtitled audiovisual content

2.3.5
spoken subtitles with audio description
audiovisual content which is both subtitled and audio described through the narrator reading the translation after stating that a subtitle appears

Note 1 to entry: Subtitles can also be identified through alternative voicing, synthetic speech, or sound indicator.

Note 2 to entry: Spoken subtitles often use a different voice to the voice of the audio describer to avoid confusion between the dialogue and the description.

Note 3 to entry: Spoken subtitles and audio description can be available to users separately or together.

Note 4 to entry: Spoken subtitles are synchronized with the text on screen.

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