

Captioning Agency Telephone Survey Results: April 2004



A telephone survey was conducted by Cindy Camp of Jacksonville State University in April 2004. Twenty captioning agencies were randomly selected from readily available information on several Web sites, and agency representatives were asked to respond to several questions. These questions included the pricing for captioning of a 30-minute video, turn-around time, additional fees or discounts, requirements for copyright permissions, if customer proofing/changes to the captioning were part of the pricing structure, and if the agency could provide Internet captioning.

Important results included:

- There is a wide range of captioning cost among the agencies polled. This range is between \$8 and \$28 per minute for a 30-minute video. Many of the agencies add charges for creating a transcript, a lab fee, or for making customer suggested changes to the captions. Some agencies offered discounts for a large volume of work or for a customer provided transcript. (Note by surveyor: The per-minute cost of a 30-minute video is usually more than the per-minute cost of a 60- or 90-minute video. This is due to the need to access the same equipment, make the same phone calls, involve the same personnel, create the same business files, and use the same supplies, regardless of the length of a video.)
- Fifteen of the twenty agencies charge an additional fee for a proof copy. (Note by surveyor: Requestors are strongly urged to proof captions to ensure quality. The need for this proof is evidenced by the following comments from two agencies surveyed: (1) "Educational videos do not need to be works of art. You just need words on the screen." (2) "We don't check spellings for anything. For proper names we spell phonetically, as best we can. After all, if a hearing kid hears the name of a foreign river, they don't know how it is spelled either.")
- The time needed for a captioning vendor to complete the captioning of a video ranged from 1-2 days to 1 week.
- Fifteen of the twenty agencies are able to create captioning for Internet transmission.
- Only six of the agencies require proof of copyright clearance for the captioning of copyrighted material. (Note by surveyor: While copyright clearance is not required by many captioning agencies, the requestor for service should consult available legal counsel concerning the copyright law.)