Customer Spotlight:

George Brown College

In a Nutshell

George Brown College is viewed as a pioneer in the higher education realm for its innovative model on how accessibility and inclusion can be successful at an institution. AST and its integration with George Brown College and Blackboard is the backbone that powers the college's Accessible Media Policy, which stipulates that all media must be captioned. AST's guaranteed accuracy and dedicated support have been integral to the success of George Brown's efforts to provide inclusive and equitable access.

The Challenges

In addition to meeting the legislative requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, George Brown College was intrinsically motivated to become a leader in accessibility. With the increased need to learn and work in a virtual environment due to the pandemic and replicate in-person services that provided real-time access, the college needed effective tools that offered true accuracy and equity for both students and staff. To adapt to the demands and needs of remote learning and working, George Brown saw its 10-year vision plan being realized in a condensed timeframe.

The Solution

George Brown College enlisted AST and its integration with Blackboard as the trusted captioning and transcription solution for not only its hybrid courses, but a variety of college-wide use cases:

- Marketing materials on websites and social media platforms
- Classroom lectures and instructional materials
- Program information sessions for prospective students
- Town Halls and Divisional meetings
- All college events and webinars

The partnership is providing students and staff equitable access to courses and college events. AST's resources and integration with George Brown College and Blackboard have created an

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> Working with AST has been a very positive experience. The scope of their services has allowed us to enhance accessibility to our students by virtue of remote course delivery. AST's resources can facilitate same day turn-around times for transcription and captioning and the fulfillment of live captioning requests has been exceptional."
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> **Anne Villahermosa**, Accessible Media Co-ordinator, George Brown College

The George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology was founded as a community college in 1967 and has expanded to three main campuses in downtown Toronto. The college has more than 30,000 full-time students and offers 171 full-time programs, including the American Sign Language and Deaf Studies program which is unique to Ontario as well as the Intervenor for Deafblind Persons program, the only one of its kind in Canada. The college is the only institution in the country to have an Accessible Media policy since 2006.

opportunity for the college to benefit from a seamless process to handle transcription and captioning of its live and recorded lectures and events. The college is seen as a leader with a proven model for ensuring communication access needs are met, while also utilizing Universal Design for Learning principles for the creation of inclusive content and events.

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> The quality of service is of a very high standard. I really appreciate the skill level that is required to provide quality live captioning. There are many platforms available that offer auto-generated captioning but nothing compares to the training, experience and knowledge of their service providers. AST provides real-time, accurate communication so that students and staff can actively participate in discussions which is essential for inclusion."
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> **Anne Villahermosa**, Accessible Media Co-ordinator, George Brown College

The Results

Modelling ideal accessibility
"We have been regularly contacted by other post-secondary institutions over the years asking how we created & implemented our Accessible Media policy as well as how it's being sustained. We're really proud of our leadership role and are dedicated to continuing to foster an accessible and inclusive learning and working environment. We are always willing to provide guidance to other institutions on how they can implement our model and adapt it to suit their own needs."

Investing in student success with reliable services
"High quality service is part of the foundation of student success. George Brown College supports students' academic careers in many ways, one of which is the long-term funding commitment to accessibility. Students require equitable access to course lectures and materials and auto-generated captioning doesn't provide this. It is imperative that resources are properly allocated so that students can achieve their full potential."

Offering a seamless, worry-free experience with AST
"Our objective is to make the accommodation process for students as seamless as possible. With even greater collaboration in a virtual environment, we have been able to create a more proactive and streamlined approach. This alleviates the pressure from faculty and student by allowing them to focus on teaching and learning, knowing that the necessary supports have been put into place."

Enlisting a UDL perspective to benefit all students
"Students can now view recordings of their lectures with closed captioning. The recordings are made available to all students in the course which is in keeping with the principles of Universal Design for Learning. It creates a level of awareness for all students that everyone can benefit, regardless of learning style."

Making captioning standard practice
"We provide live captioning for all college-wide events. It has become routine and expected that the service will be available so it eliminates the need to make a request. It's part of our checklist that is a priority item and makes the event accessible."