

All right.

I think it's time to get started.

I am so excited to have

this opportunity to facilitate this session,

to share with you my esteemed partners here in crime.

To be able to have an opportunity to take a look

at what's been taking place from a global perspective.

I'd like to take a moment, my name is Scott Ready, and I'm

the Customer Success and

Accessibility Strategist here at Verbit.

More importantly though, I would like

to introduce my colleagues to you.

First here is Amanda Jackson.

Amanda, would you share a few words of introduction?

Hi, everyone. I'm Amanda Jackson.

I'm a Learning Specialist at

the Disability Resource Center

and I get the privilege to work with

Scott on a regular basis because I

coordinate our captioning and

interpreting services,

and so thank you so much for taking

the time to watch or watch the recording.

I hope you're able to gain some valuable nuggets and

some practical applications that

you can take to your institutions

or to wherever you're located.

We're all in this together, and I'm super excited to be able to talk with you today.

Thank you, Amanda, and next, from Australia, we have Gen. Gen, would you share an introduction with us?

Absolutely, Scott. Thank you.

I'm Genevieve. I'm the Manager of Accessibility Services at Swinburne University.

I look forward to discussing today how everyone across the globe is managing and pivoting in this pandemic.

I think there's lots of learnings that we've all been able to gain through this experience, so I look forward to chatting with you all today.

Fantastic. Thank you so much, Gen.

From across the pond,

Mike, would you share an introduction with us?

Thank you very much, Scott. My name's Mike Joslin,

I'm the Lead Marketing Officer of the National Education Union, which is the largest teaching and support staff union in Europe.

My job is to do a lot of internal and external marketing, including membership engagement for the Union and as part of that,

I lead our Zoom program and other efforts.

We need to make sure that

our Zoom calls and other things are completely accessible to all of our members and the wider public and when necessary, the student.

I'm looking forward to sharing our experiences today.

Thank you very much for inviting me.

Great. Thank you so much, Mike.

Let's touch on the agenda, just so that you can see what we're going to be covering in this session.

We're going to take a look at the perspectives from the three different regions.

Starting off with United States' perspective and Amanda sharing from the University of Florida as well as throughout the region, throughout the United States.

Then from there, we're going to move to Mike and have him share with us from the UK perspective.

After that, Gen's going to be able to share from the Australian perspective as to what's taking place, not just within Swinburne, but also throughout her region.

Then, of course, we're going to always have time for your questions and answers.

I want to encourage you to use the chat feature that is built within Zoom.

As we're discussing things, as we touch on items,

as you have thoughts,
please put them in the chat session so that we can
continue to have that kind of interactivity.
I find that to be an opportunity,
not just to hear from
the experts that we have here on the panel,
but to hear from all of you.
I am sure every one of you that is on this session
has something that you can
contribute to what's being discussed.
That makes it even richer,
even more so than just what the four of us have to share.
With that, let me set the stage just a little bit.
I think what's going to be really fascinating
here is that we're going to
hear some uniquenesses from region to region,
but we're also going to hear a lot of commonalities.
For the first time I think in the history of education,
we have all faced
a situation that has impacted every one of us.
Never before have we had a pandemic that
has so globally impacted education.
How are we reacting to that?
How are we responding to the needs?
How are we able to address
education and continue that learning?
As we look at what the impact has been,

1.6 billion learners globally have been impacted by this.

Ninety one percent of

those total enrolled learners have

had this experience of making the shift from

a face-to-face environment to some type of

a remote learning situation,

throughout the 191 different countries worldwide.

When we think about this,

we think about what are some of

the situations that individuals experience?

When we transition to this remote experience,

we all know that there is

a significant number of students that

don't disclose a disability

to their learning institution.

I know for a statistic here in the United States,

60-80 percent of the students don't disclose.

When you have students that don't disclose,

how does that impact this transition?

Some of the regional differences

but common concerns that we

have identified and discussed,

that we're going to be discussing further today, is

a significant gap in students who have

disabilities and those who report them.

Another is the mental health of

today's students and invisible disability stigmas.

The third, preparing students for the workforce and helping to make for future-ready learners.

All of those are possibly approached in different ways, but they're all common concerns.

With that, as we like to do, let's start off with a poll.

As you can see, we would like to find out, are colleges and universities in your region currently operating: A, fully remote, B, hybrid, C, fully in person, and D, something else?

Then this is another opportunity to include in chat.

If it's something else, something different, please add that in the chat session and share.

We're going to take this poll.

Go ahead and click on the poll that popped up on your window so that you can then and we'll take a look at the results.

Okay.

Wow. We see now the results are showing that 37 percent are operating in fully remote mode in their delivery.

Sixty-three percent are operating in a hybrid mode.

What's really interesting and fascinating to me, and I'm looking forward to hearing

our other panelists discuss this,
is how does that hybrid mode work?
How are we being effective in
that, in being able to meet those needs
because we know that less than 50 percent of faculty
actually had taught online prior to this pandemic.
When we look at the pedagogical aspects of teaching,
from face-to-face, to fully online,
to remote, how are we achieving all of
those needs in a sound approach
that our students are able to engage with?
Let's take a look at the next question here.
Which of these are you experiencing?
You can select more than one,
but: A, specific cohorts
of students are having difficulties
engaging online, or B,
I've had to find new ways to engage students who
were not engaging initially, C,
HyFlex models are working well for me, or D,
HyFlex models aren't working as well for me.
Please do expound upon
your answer here in the chat box so that we can get
a little more understanding of what is and what is
not working for you and being able to
share that with everybody that's attending the session.
We'll give it just a moment further

and we'll see what the results are.

The results are in.

Sixty-seven percent say specific cohorts of students are having difficulties engaging online.

Fifty-seven percent say I've had to find new ways to engage students who were not engaging initially.

Then 14 percent say HyFlex models are working well, and then 14 percent say

HyFlex models aren't working well.

Very interesting, and it's

going to be interesting to discuss today

as to what are some of the possibilities?

What do we need to take a look at as to how do we have that engagement that is so critical?

How can we improve that?

One last poll question,

the teacher in me comes out,

one last test question.

One last poll question here:

As a result of COVID-19,

what is the biggest challenge you're running

into to achieve your objectives?

Is it: A, lack of content,

B, lack of innovation,

C, lack of resources and bandwidth,

or D, something else.

Please, if it's something else,

please put it in the chat so that

we can see what that is.

I think we all can take a look at this

and see how we have previously

taught in the face-to-face environment or

even in a blended environment and how

that content or the innovation was so

critical in being able to do that successfully.

Here it is. The results are in.

The number 1 answer is 71 percent,

lack of resources and bandwidth.

Being able to have the resources to effectively

pull off what is expected in

order to be able to teach in

this new HyFlex or new hybrid or new remote,

however you're doing it, situation.

Next is 14 percent.

That's a tie between lack of

innovation and other, excellent.

With that, what I'd really like to do is to turn

this over to Amanda and hear

a little bit about what has been taking place,

some with the University of Florida,

but also what she's hearing from her colleagues and

her peers at other universities

all throughout the United States.

With that, Amanda, take it away.

Thanks, Scott. I think it's very important to start this with having you understand my position.

I work specifically within the Disability Resource Center.

That's a place within the institution that students with disabilities can come to discuss barriers, to attain accommodations, and work with faculty and staff to increase accessibility within the university.

With COVID, there has been a shift, a massive shift within my role, within disability resource centers at large, I would say.

One of the great things, if we can find great things that are going on with this pandemic, is that we're experiencing more campus conversations about inclusion and accessibility.

I have had so many different faculty and staff, campus partners reach out to me and ask questions about alternative texts.

Or ask questions about captioning and Universal Design principles.

These questions, they may have been going on, but they weren't happening so frequently that it feels like there's this massive push and energy within

the institution to drive accessibility practices.

I'm super excited about it because it means that I've met so many different people.

I've had the opportunity to recommend Verbit and schedule Verbit live captioning sessions for different partners on campus with the libraries.

There was even one within a specific department that had high school students, and so there's this opportunity for so much more collaboration.

It was sparked by the fact that digital environments were existing and we had to make them inclusive.

That's just super exciting.

Also specifically at UF, we've had to combat the digital divide.

The reality is not everyone has the technology that they need or the Internet access that they need.

They may even have Internet access, but it may not be strong bandwidth because we're all on Zoom at the same time.

So trying to talk through those measures, one of the things that UF did specifically is, we're a part of this group called eduroam.

Basically, it allows our students to Wi-Fi at other institutions that are part

of eduroam so that they can
access that free Internet connection
at other institutions
because we know now, people can attend their classes in
massively different parts over the country.
They're probably at home with their parents,
or maybe they're lucky and they're
in a cabin, sipping
hot chocolate while they're attending their lecture.
But they need this ability
to have Internet in multiple locations.
One of the great things that we have is eduroam.
Also, I feel like, at least within
the Disability Resource Center
specifically and probably within
student affairs at large,
that we're having more frequent student communication.
I was concerned when we moved to
virtual meetings that I
wasn't going to feel connected to my students anymore.
They weren't going to be walking down
my halls and sitting in my office.
They weren't going to get to laugh at
all the Harry Potter decorations that I had on my walls.
But surprisingly, I feel almost more
connected to my students now than
I did prior to the pandemic.

I think it's because we're able to relate.

We're all experiencing the pandemic together.

I've met a whole lot of dogs and cats,

and I've been able to reach out to them more frequently.

I feel like they're connecting with

our office, even if it's just for a check in,

saying, "Hey, my final went great,"

or "Oh, I might need to schedule

an appointment because you have this online environment,

it's very difficult for me to focus and

I've never had trouble focusing before".

I would say that we have seen

an increase of students that are reaching

out to us for COVID specific accommodations,

whether they might be

immunocompromised and they need to attend remotely

or it could be because

they're able to focus well in class session,

but when you put them in an online environment,

whenever they're able to play

online games in front of their Zoom session,

it makes focusing really difficult.

So we've been having to be real innovative within

our communication that we've given to students

to help them manage this online environment.

I would say also, we've had

more increased faculty consultations,

mostly within our testing office.

That's because typically in

the Disability Resource Center,

we would facilitate some accommodated testing.

If a student had additional time

or they needed a different environment,

for distraction purposes, they could take their exams in

the Disability Resource Center,

and it was working great. I loved it.

I got to see the students very frequently.

But in this online environment,

more faculty now are facilitating

their students' accommodations because they're

proctoring their exams through

their learning management system.

So it gives them

that control of facilitating the accommodations,

but it also requires them to

know how to put in those accommodations.

We've had this ability to partner with faculty about

increasing digital accessibility within

their learning management systems,

but also within their testing.

Now, more of the faculty are

able to facilitate their accommodations.

It's just given the faculty

a different perspective of our office,

and so that's been really great.

Then whenever I talk about disability services at large within the US, most of the conversations that I've been having with colleagues are around three main things.

One of them is online testing security.

I think testing security is always probably something that we will talk about because it's very important to maintain academic integrity.

But given that online platform, we were put in this place of like, how do we facilitate accommodations in an online environment?

A student needs a scribe.

Well, how do we do that remotely?

Or a student needs paper based exams, but all their exams are supposed to be on the computer.

So I felt like more Disability Resource Center colleagues were connecting to other institutions.

What are you doing to facilitate these accommodations? How has it worked?

How has it not worked? Because the reality is it doesn't always work the very first time, even though we wish it would.

Being open and being transparent with the fact that we need each other, and so online testing security.

We've also been discussing this increased demand for consultation, whether there's an influx of a need within the Disability Resource Center to serve on more committees because we're being asked to be at the table, which is absolutely fabulous because more people are interested and want their environments to be inclusive, so we're being asked to be a part of these things.

But how do we maintain our current work role and then the increased demand for consultation?

Not that we are definitely over the stars and moon that people want us at the table and we want to push those narratives and push those initiatives, but how do we maintain that and our student contact in supporting our students and faculty in the manner that we know that they need and they deserve?

Then the last one is specialized accommodations concerns, which rolls back to where I was talking about online security, how do we facilitate a scribe or paper based exams?

There's some accommodations are very specialized and how do we facilitate those?

For example, especially with live captioning

purposes, prior to COVID and online learning, our students would take a microphone to their class with their laptop and they had all this responsibility of making sure that they were able to facilitate their accommodations. The faculty mainly just needed to wear a microphone. Well now in this online environment, I'm working more closely with our faculty because they need to adjust Zoom settings, and I need to have their Zoom meeting links and their passwords because we need to make sure there's no Zoom bombing. But all of those things just added this different layer of how to facilitate accommodations in an online environment. I think we've grown a lot professionally because we've been able to see accessibility in different places. But it's also challenged us to really think outside the box and realize that we need each other in this pandemic. That's why I'm super excited to be able to be on this panel because we're having these conversations in US. I'm sure they're having conversations in other places and, of course, we can learn from different places all around

the world as to how we're supporting students.

We have similar questions,

but how that actually looks can be completely different.

That's the beauty of this session.

You get to hear from different perspectives

as to what's going on.

All right. Thanks, Scott.

Thank you so much, Amanda.

Next, let's go to the UK and hear from Mike.

Thanks, Scott. Thank you to

Verbit for inviting me to this call

and to the people who are listening.

I will have a slightly different perspective

to some of the other panelists in the sense that

what I do is represent the people doing

the teaching rather than doing teaching themselves.

But I'm going to cover two things

briefly in my presentation,

one being our experience

of accessibility around the new demands around COVID,

particularly in communicating and mobilizing our members,

but second of all is their experiences around

teaching and the challenges that COVID

has brought up, quite unexpectedly in some cases,

in other cases, accentuated

existing divides and made them far worse.

So I'm going to go through that.

In terms of who I am,
I come from a campaign background.
I've worked for a number of politicians around the world,
including strangely for a British person,
President Obama in 2007,
for the Iowa Caucus, and lots
of high-profile British politicians.
The NEU, The National Education Union,
as I've said before,
is the largest teaching union in Europe,
and we've had an unprecedented challenge
of dealing with the crisis on behalf of our members.
As I'm sure a lot of
people in the call educated themselves,
you'll understand the challenges.
There's so many different issues for
different groups in different sectors,
and we've had to manage that.
The question of how we manage that and making
that accessible to everybody
because lots and lots of our members
have needs that require a special software and
we need to make sure that
everyone is able to access everything,
and everyone has different needs.
Some people wanted one thing,
some people wanted another, and I'm going to explain that.

Dealing with first point on the slide, in terms of the start or the onset of the crisis, we had to work out how we were going to virtually engage with our members, and there was a huge demand for it.

At the start, we were using Telephone Town Hall, and we've been using that for over a year.

But the mobile phone network was overwhelmed during coronavirus, and at the start of COVID even, and it didn't work.

We had to migrate to Zoom, and we had hundreds of thousands of teachers needing detailed assistance, including those who were clinically extremely vulnerable, supply teachers who lost work as a result of not being able to teach, and so on.

We use Zoom, but then we started to receive complaints to our executive and to staff members because they weren't able to access the calls because it's not something that we'd experienced before or thought of in that way because we hadn't used Zoom for mass engagement, and we started getting significant number of peoples on our calls.

This year, we've had 150,000 people on our Zoom calls.

We have 450,000 members.

That's a significant amount of our membership, almost half.

We've provided Zoom calls sector by sector.

For teachers and lecturers,

we had one Zoom call,

which at the time was a world record that

had 20,000 people on it

and received significant publicity.

This is strange for me because I'm used to being

the person behind the scenes,

not the person doing the speaking,

and I've done hundreds of these calls this year,

so this is one of the few that I've actually spoken on.

Since March, we've run a campaign

on providing help to our members,

and then dealing with

their experiences around issues such as the exams,

the digital divide, and so on, which I'll come on to.

We've built our own technology and

we have data lead strategy.

We won't cover that today,

but if anyone is interested in that,

please do contact me.

We have the challenge of inclusion.

Then we started receiving complaints

under disability law in the UK.

We had to make these events accessible,
and we spent a significant amount of
time on trying to deal with
lots of people's different needs.

We have to find that suitable solution.

Not everyone wanted British Sign Language.

Some people wanted transcripts,
some people wanted other things.

Lots of people had
different suggestions and different needs.

We needed to make sure that we had a holistic solution.

We do provide BSL on all of our calls.

But we also provide the Verbit transcript software.

They're not paying me to say this, obviously,
we pay them, but I think
that it's a very positive product.

I think it's much needed,
and I very much enjoy working with the Verbit team,
which I will explain shortly.

But that was the point.

We needed to find the right people to work with.

We had a problem with our Union leader,
Mary Bousted, being called a rude
word by YouTube and one of Verbit's competitors, Otter.

It causes me personally a very serious problem.

It caused me personal reputation harm,

caused the Union problems.

It was noticed by the media and others.

I think that it's important to find a provider you can

trust because providing

accessibility is extremely important.

But in doing so,

we need to make sure it doesn't

present reputational challenges,

as I'm sure you

will note to those listening to this call.

We looked into using Otter for some of our small events.

We do use it a little bit,

but not once have I received

any engagement from any person there.

To me, customer service and product reliability matters.

It matters because you have to be able to rely on it.

It's your reputation, but it's also

the people who need the service.

They need to be able

to access vital and crucial information,

so you need to be able to rely

on the people who are providing the service.

We came across Verbit right from the start.

I was impressed with their customer service.

Straight away, it was clear, the best product,

most reliable, most accurate.

It's become ingrained in the Union.

We've now had to double our allowance for the year.

We've done significant polling and focus

group work over the last year on a number of things.

But one of the things we looked at was our Zoom program,

and that was a part when the UK's [inaudible 00:28:02] .

We've conducted focus groups and polling of our members.

We've got explicitly asked about

Verbit that scored extremely highly.

That's a condensed version

of what we've been doing over the year.

We've had very high-profile calls.

We had a call with Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London,

and over 3,500 teachers,

lecturers, and support staff

that had the Verbit software on it.

It was highly heavily used.

We had to make sure that call

was accessible to all because it was

a high-profile call that was covered in the media

and the Verbit software assisted us in doing that.

In terms of the second point,

I wanted to say a few things

about experiences that our members have had of teaching

that I'm sure many of you have

experienced in your own country.

Actually, some of the polling questions

were very interesting because they completely

tally with my knowledge and
experience on what's happened
in education in the last year.

But tackling the digital divide,
I think, is a big issue to ensure quality of
access to teaching and learning during COVID and beyond.

There's a problem where those who don't have
the financial ability to have the best software,
they're losing out from education.

That is accentuating poverty in many places.

There's challenges for our members
in this environment that
massively commit to teaching and their students.

But there's also vis-à-vis
their own safety and with issues like digital divide,
which is a big issue in the UK,

it's something that we're campaigning
on as a union because it's something that
our members are saying to is one of
the biggest issues facing them as teachers and lecturers,
that they want to make sure equality, equity
of education to everyone who they teach.

The workload is the highest it's ever been.

The significant contact out of hours,
far more than there's ever been.

That is a significant issue for education,
and that's UK.

Part of the thing what digital is doing.

We're running a national campaign on those kind of issues.

I hope that that was useful

and explains our approach to accessibility,

some of our experiences of our members,

frankly, why I think that Verbit is a great software,

why I very much enjoy working with the team.

These issues are so important.

Making sure that people have access is so important,

and as such, you needed people that you can rely on.

My opinion is that Verbit

is the best people to be able to do that.

They didn't ask me to say that.

I've just said that anyway.

So thank you very much.

Fantastic. Thank you again, Mike.

I really enjoy hearing how things are

evolving and developing in the UK region.

Now, let's transition to Australia. Gen?

Thanks, Scott. I'd like to start by discussing the

constant wins that COVID has brought for our sector.

It truly has been nothing but short of a revolution.

Danielle, if we can pop to the next slide, please.

I'd like to explain that

Swinburne is a dual-sector university.

We have students that come from pathway courses all

the way to post-graduate courses at Swinburne.

As the manager of an accessibility service,
I'd like to focus on the
operational learnings that we had
and the challenges that we've faced.

The online medium.

We were very fortunate that our team of
accessibly advisers had
supported students online previously.

We had some confidence,
but we learned that we were no
longer required to be site-bound,
which was massive for us.

We all took our PCs home and worked out the IT issues and
ironed out all the flaws that we
needed to be able to deliver
really robust service in the online medium.

The other thing that we learned
was that education access workers,
as Amanda had mentioned, had primarily
been in the classroom with students.

How are we going to translate
this support in the online medium?

It did break our brains for a few minutes.

But we worked out that education access workers
could have shared access to
the student learning platforms.

This created a resounding improvement in the work that

education access workers could do that
never had access to the learning content before.
They'd been blind in class
by just having to support the student as much
as the education material was available to them in class.
But now, they can access it
before they support the student,
make sure that they're aware of what
the priorities are for that learning.

This is something that we're definitely going to
bring forward in the future.

Alternative assessments to exams.

Now, I'm sure many of you out there would have
the same joy in the fact that
we've learned that we can have non-invigilated exams.

This has made such a huge difference
to the lives of students
and something that certainly is going
to be rolled out in the future.

The mental health challenge too.

We noticed an increased presentation
of distressed students.

One thing that I learned from a previous role in
the online support program was that unfortunately,
people through the depersonalization
of the online medium,
they do present with bad behavior that wouldn't

occur in the face-to-face medium,
and that's something that we've had
to consider in the way that we work.

The challenges that we're
facing at the moment in the sector.

We have challenges with consistency for learning design.

Everyone, all our teachers,
were scrambling to work out how to
teach remotely, and everyone was just
as resourceful, as teachers are.

They were using what was available to them,
but it wasn't necessarily
the same across the board or consistent.

So our fantastic learning transformation team
are working on consistency for learning design
for our hybrid model for continual study.

Engaging students with complex needs.

Now, this is something that has been really difficult.

We've had a lot of students that have opted out of
their courses this year in the hope that
everything will go back to normal in 2021,
and we know that's not the case.

We know we're going to have a hybrid model of learning.

How do we support
students to reengage in blended learning,
and how do we bridge the gap in
the digital divide so students do not miss out?

The other thing that we've noticed,
and this is not something that is unique to Australia,
is that the mental health crisis is emerging.

It was already there,
our highest cohort of
students registered with our service,
those with mental health difficulties.

We know that young people are suffering,
and this is only going to increase
in the next six months.

I think as a sector,
we need to ensure that frontline staff have
the capability to support
students when they're in distress.

It's not an ominous warning. It's just,
let's get this right and make sure everyone has
the capability to support students.

I look forward to hearing from you all about how
you face some of these challenges.

Thank you very much.

Thank you so much, Gen.

Aren't you able to relate to parts and pieces of
each one of the regions that
discussed what's taking place there?

I think it's fascinating when we take a look at that.

One of the results of the poll question,
the question was, what was some of

the challenge that you've experienced, and the answer was, I've had to find new ways to engage students who were not engaged initially, and that was the leading answer.

How are we finding the right technology, the right tools to foster that type of engagement?

It's interesting, when we take a look at how Verbit really caters to different needs to provide that accessibility to global partners.

You heard from Mike as to some of the ways that he's been able to partner with Verbit in providing that service to the National Education Union, and it's a way to meet the different needs, to be able to provide a more personalized way of engaging individuals with the different types of events.

Have it be a classroom event, have it be a presidential presentation from the university, have it be a town hall meeting.

I think the one thing that we can see throughout all of this is that there is a cultural shift taking place.

Amanda touched on it also in talking about that cultural shift that was taking place within her institution.

How individuals are starting to come together and want to be more consultative as to how are we able to really meet the needs of the variety of individuals that are needing to engage in different ways.

This isn't something that's new, but it's something that's been brought to the forefront.

I think that's a common thread that we can see in what everyone has said thus far.

When we look at the University of Florida here on this slide,

one of the things that I appreciate that Amanda shared was that it was easy, fast, efficient.

The scheduling was able to be allowed for short-term notices.

We know things are changing quickly here and evolving, and you need to have that flexibility,

that things are fast

and that the captioning is fast and accurate,

and that customer service is quick and personable.

Gen also shared that there has been

a great value for the money that

has been spent on providing this accommodation.

It's quite interesting because oftentimes in

this industry, we will hear

about how expensive captioning is.

But do you know that on the average,
to braille a textbook,
it can be in the upwards of \$20,000 a textbook?

That's just typically for a onetime use.

When we look at how we're providing an accommodation or
creating inclusivity throughout
the entire institution or organization,
there are so many individuals that use captioning.

But let's take it to the next level.

How can we not only provide captioning,
but how can we meet the needs that's coming in 2021?

I think we all would agree that we have
used captioning in one way or another.

Danielle, if you would advance to
the next slide? Thank you.

Captioning now is not
just being provided for
individuals that are deaf or hard of hearing.

But we see that captioning is everywhere.

We turn on captioning at
home when we're watching a movie.

My grandson that's 12 years old prefers
to have captioning on.

When we walk into the airport or
the restaurant, captioning is available.

Eighty-five percent of the videos
on Facebook are viewed silently,

which means that captioning is needed in order for engagement to take place.

When we take a look at what's actually happening here, captioning is becoming part of the mainstream, much like what we would think of 20 years ago as ramps in order to enter a building. Ramps are just commonplace now.

Thank goodness because when I'm toting my suitcase or pushing a cart or a stroller, I'm very thankful that that ramp is there so that I can then navigate.

But there's also some other things that's taking place here that are on the rise and on the increase, and one of those is audio description.

Making sure that what is visible, taking place in the video, or the movie that is being used to bring out a pedagogical point in that course is also being described for those that might not be able to see that important point.

Then, we are such a blend of languages throughout the world now.

We are so transient that languages are being spoken all over the world that are not just native to their region, but that individuals have moved in.

So translation now becomes very important.

How are we able to provide
a subtitle in various languages
so that people can engage?

We're all talking about engagement here.

We're excited to be saying,
take a look at what's going to be coming here for
2021 because I think it's going to be pretty remarkable.

This shift has really forced a lot of individuals,
a lot of organizations,
a lot of companies to take a look at how can we meet
needs in a different way
than they have been met in the past.

As I said in the beginning,
we always want to make sure that we've
got time for questions.

As we're getting ready for that,
please add some questions into
the chat that you would love to ask these individuals.

Ask questions about their region,
about how things are being conducted,
or just a question in general that you'd like to
hear some support or response to.

One of the questions that came in is,
what has been your biggest success during this time?

Gen, would you like to answer that one?

I don't know if I can pin it down to just one success.

Look, I think, as Amanda mentioned,
it's having the concept
of Universal Design as a hot topic.

Everyone's having to talk about it now,
academics, [inaudible 00:44:06] , everybody.

It means that we're just moving so quickly in this space
and it's just been fantastic because
this technology has been available to us for years,
but no one's really wanted to know how to maximize it.

This is a fantastic opportunity for our sector.

Isn't it amazing how those in your roles and working
within institutions and organizations were hitting
their head against a brick wall trying to make progress,
trying to make an inroad in becoming more inclusive,
more universally designed.

Now, the floodgates have been opened,
and all of that work
that you have been pouring into is, now,
you're starting to see the results of
that cultural shift and they know where to go to.

Amanda, did you have
something that you would like to add to that?

I was just going to echo what Gen said.

I think the fact that we are having these conversations
and we're being asked to come to
the table when we've been trying,
and there will be pockets.

There's pockets of people that were promoting inclusion,
but now it's like, it's an initiative,
and it's being discussed everywhere,
and it's changing education.

It's so exciting to be a part of that and to
be able to work alongside people that you may have
never been able to work with before the pandemic.

So I would say that,
agreed, totally, biggest success.

My other one would be
the way that I've been able to relate to my students.

There's just been this humanized connection through
a virtual platform that I did not expect and
I'm pleasantly surprised because I feel like
some students are able to reach out that
may have never wanted to reach out
because of the stigma of
coming to the Disability Resource Center,
or being seen in a physical location.

Now, they don't have to be seen in a physical location.

They're able to receive those services
without the fear of the stigma
that, as much as we would like to squash,
and not be a reality,
it's a reality still.

I would say that just
that human connection has been remarkable.

Amanda, I love that.

One thing that I've been hearing a lot from the faculty, because this has been a huge transition for our faculty to start teaching remotely, is that they're starting to experience the same positive results of how they're able to connect with their students in a different way than just in the classroom.

Being able to really engage with those students and provide a more facilitated learning in this remote experience.

So those faculty members that may have resisted wanting to try and teach remotely, now they're starting to embrace it.

But again, going back to what Gen had said earlier, it's that consistency of learning design that is becoming so critical so that we can then support the faculty and make sure that that consistency is there.

Excellent. Mike, did you have something that you would like to add on that one?

Yeah. I'd say our biggest success has been engaging with our members on a massive scale to help them through the COVID crisis, but crucially, to help them with helping their students through the COVID crisis.

I think our Zoom program has been a massive part of

that, and how we've
made it accessible has been another part of that.

But I think that something I didn't
mention in my speech that I wanted to add,
I think two of the unexpected things
have come out really as
a result of us making our courses
as accessible as we can through Verbit,
BSL, and other things
that we do to make the course accessible.

Those two things, for me,
are number 1, the amount of
people who use this captioning software
who don't actually have accessibility needs.

There's a significant amount of people who request
a transcript and the subtitles both,
for all of our calls.

That's really surprised me.

But I think that it is actually,
as Scott said, the future.

People do expect those things
now and when we don't have them, people complain.
People without needs, not just people with needs.

I think that's an interesting experience.

The second point I wanted to say was,
I think it's also had an unexpected consequence
of raising awareness of

those who have accessibility needs.

The fact that all of our calls are made

accessible through BSL and Verbit

has raised the awareness of the fact

that there's people who do have these access issues.

I think the last thing, I

have special education needs myself.

I have dyspraxia and dyslexia, in terms of that issue.

But I think there's so many people who don't realize

that there are accessibility issues

to a lot of these things,

and I think that it's had the unexpected

consequence of making that clearer.

Excellent point, Mike.

I think that if anybody's received an email from me,

they see my line and

my signatures is that captioning

is no longer an accommodation feature,

but it's a learning feature.

It's really something now, as you said, Mike,

that many individuals are

requesting and preferring, which is excellent.

We have a question here

from one of the participants that said,

speech recognition transcription can

never be 100 percent accurate.

So how can human checking or editing be affordable?

Since September the 23rd in the UK and Europe,
all recordings have to have human-checked,
accurate captions or transcriptions by law.

So Mike, in the UK,

since this has been passed,

how are organizations discussing

and approaching the affordability of this?

To answer that question truthfully,

I actually didn't know that until it's been on here.

For me, it's not necessarily about affordability though.

This is my own personal perspective.

But I think that obviously,

it's a vital service that has to be correct,

and I think you need to pay the right price for that.

We've invested heavily in Verbit,

and I think that is something that

our members will be very pleased that we have done,

because of the success of the product,

the popularity of it, and the amount that it's used.

Obviously, this isn't true for small organizations,

but for larger organizations, educational institutions,

membership organizations,

it should be just what you're doing,

and that requires it to be the most accurate.

As I actually said during my presentation before,

I knew that it was the law.

We use Verbit for the reason that

it's human-checked, and it is accurate.

We had a massive reputational issue to do with the Otter service and

YouTube getting the name of our leader wrong, and that wasn't right.

Personally, I don't think it comes down to cost, for me personally, but that's my own personal view.

Excellent. Thank you, Mike.

Amanda and Gen, are

there ways that you all are addressing

the cost and the increase

of this that has hit since the pandemic?

It's definitely been a change.

Are there ways that you all have or other colleagues in your regions have identified

and been able to figure out how to meet that?

Absolutely. Amanda, do you want to start or?

You can go first.

Okay, no worries.

This is a really interesting concept.

My understanding is that there's

no such thing as 100 percent accurate transcription, even at the human level.

The way that we approach things at Swinburne,

and I can only speak for our university,

is that we have to ensure as great accuracy as

possible for those who are profoundly

deaf or hard of hearing, and that's where Verbit comes in.

We can use other services that have automatic speech recognition where the accuracy is not going to be as great.

That's how we manage the cost.

We make sure that for those that need the greatest accuracy, they get it, and for those that it's a blended learning model, we use automatic speech recognition.

The more we use this, the more accurate it will become.

We also have benefited from a massive savings of in-person support.

For us, it's a swap and spend, really.

The cost isn't something that is as big an issue as just ensuring that our students have the right access to their learning material. [inaudible 00:54:14]

I would agree with Gen.

We go on that same tiered model at UF.

Our students who need it for access purposes are going to have that level of accuracy because they need it in order to equally engage.

If it's a learning tool and something that helps them and we see a benefit in it.

But in order to handle the cost associated with it,

we do similar things.

I think also one of the things that we've seen is providing resources to faculty about how they can learn this process themselves, whether that's captioning or that's alt text, or that's heading structures and all those different things that there needs to be for digital accessibility.

I think UF has been putting out a lot of resources and trainings for faculty to be able to have that ownership, and it's driven their professional development, but it's also helped to share the workload and the cost, if that makes sense.

Excellent. We are coming close to the top of the hour here, and I want to give our panelists an opportunity, if there is a final word that you feel like, "Oh, I haven't been able to mention this yet," and you want to make sure that you mention it.

I would like to give the three of our panelists the opportunity to say so, and then I will wrap it up.

Is there any final words that you feel like you'd be amiss if you didn't say?

I actually want to add something, Scott.

I figured.

Of course, I'm going to add.

Nick asked me a question in our chat, and he asked,

"How are we going to handle

things whenever people want to go back to the new normal?"

I think that's all about education.

It's about the faculty

experiencing the shift in

how it supports their students.

They see the change in

their students' grades and in their students' learning.

It humanizes it, and they experience for themselves

what a shift and

what a change it's done for their students,

but it's almost like you can't.

You just can't go back to the way things were

because that's just not equal engagement,

that's not allowing for

Universal Design and all of those things.

Will there probably be a little shift?

Of course, there's always going to be a little shift,

but more often than not,

that silver lining is going to continue

because we're educating people and we're

changing their understanding of what to do,

how to do it, and why to do it,

and so it's going to leave for a long-term change.

Thanks, Amanda. My last comment is everyone's got different digital literacy levels.

We're not always going to get it right, and that's okay. Let's just give it a go.

I think those that are more familiar with digital literacy be supportive and accepting of those that aren't and help carry them along and bring them along to this journey.

Yeah. I think that's my last resounding comment.

Awesome. Mike, any final comments?

Yeah. I just wanted to say something about the points that were being made in the chat by Mike.

I think two things about it.

Number 1, we use Verbit because it is human captioning based on AI, so it is the most accurate.

He's made a point about the cost of it to universities in the UK being millions of pounds, potentially.

I think that is actually an interesting, wider societal point in the sense that, I don't know about you, but before March, I didn't use Zoom.

I think that most people in this call probably didn't really use Zoom too much.

I don't know about America,

but in the UK, not many people used it at all.

Now, everybody uses it.

I get Zoom fatigue.

I do 10 plus video meetings a day,
every day, with people all around the world.

It has put an interesting take on it in the sense
that the way it was before

March wasn't nearly set up that way, in terms of
budgeting and the amount of
money that's put forward to different things.

There's now more emphasis and
more resource on different things
by people act and behave in different ways.

Obviously, most people in the UK are
working from home at the moment.

It's just a completely
different normal from what it was before March.

The interesting question for me is,
will it go back to how it was before March,
or will things like video meetings and Zoom
continue and home working for the foreseeable future?

That, of course, has a necessary accessibility impact.

I also think that something
that hasn't necessarily been
mentioned too much in
this call so far is about mental health as well.

I think that's going to be a really big issue

for students

and for teachers and lecturers.

Excellent point, Mike.

I do want to share with everybody

that we will have this session available after,

to be able to connect to after today, on our website.

Please go there and be

able to refer your friends and colleagues there.

We also have a whole list of other resources available

at verbit.ai. Thank you, guys.

Thank you, Mike, Amanda, Gen,

for taking the time out to join us, to share

a global perspective of what's taking place,

the uniquenesses, the commonalities.

I look forward to us getting back together again and

being able to really see how this is progressing.

What's actually taking place now that

we are looking into 2021?

Participants, thank you for joining,

and we look forward

to coming up on the holidays. Have a great holiday.

Thank you to everybody.

Thanks, folks.