



“YouTube Captions: Making the World’s Videos Universally Accessible”

Public Lecture by Ken Harrenstien

Date of Lecture:

- July 30, 2013 at 7pm
- Room 110 in Kane Hall at University of Washington
- Sign language interpreters and real-time captioning will be provided

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Photo of Ken Harrenstien. Credits to Goopilation

Map of UW campus, with Kane Hall circled:

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Videos of the internet have not always been accessible. For a long time, there was no technology available to make it so. With the advent of captioning services and technologies for videos, it was finally possible to accommodate the needs of Deaf people. Taking this a step further, Ken Harrenstien, leading a team at Google, developed a feature called "Automatic Captions", which uses Google's speech recognition technology and attempts to automatically generate captions for every video uploaded to YouTube. The caption generation is not perfect, but can be edited by users of the site to correct them, and is still in development.

Ken Harrenstien is a Senior Software Engineer at Google whose business card says "Caption Jedi". He is the lead developer responsible for the captioning technology in all of Google's video services including YouTube, which serves billions of views daily with captions for millions of videos. Ken was heavily involved with Arpanet/Internet development in the early 1970s after graduating from MIT. He was a member of the Internet Engineering Task Force and has worked in various capacities at Transmeta, Oracle, and SRI International; in the latter incarnation he was instrumental in several projects related to telecommunications for the deaf, notably DEAFNET.

Ken has been totally deaf since age 5 and for too many years had no idea what people were saying on TV. The shows he now has the most trouble resisting are "Futurama", "Mythbusters", and "Big Bang Theory".

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