Audio Description for libraries

What is audio description?

Audio description offers people who are blind or have low vision an understanding of what is happening visually with a DVD, television, film, museum exhibition, theatre or other arts-related production.

Audio description is an additional narration that paints an image of transition, movements, gestures, props, settings, costumes and scenery woven between dialogue.

Audio Description is often identified using the initials AD, or the black and white AD logo.

Where is audio description available?

DVD

Audio description is currently available on about a quarter of all DVDs released.

Australian films funded through Screen Australia are now required to have an audio description track with a full list available on the Screen Australia website.

The Audio Description Project from the American Council of the Blind maintains a listing of all DVDs with audio description.

Cinema

Audio description is available at major cinemas around Australian, with the four major Australian cinema chains Hoyts, Village Cinemas, Event Cinemas and Reading Cinemas committing to providing around 840 audio-described movie sessions each week across all screens.

The availability of audio description on a particular film is dependent on studios providing audio description.

Television

Since June 2020, the ABC and SBS provide 14 hours of audio-described programming each week.

Vision Australia prepares a fortnightly TV guide listing all audio-described shows across both channels (an example is available here) and also provides instructions for people to enable audio description.

Subscription streaming services including Netflix, Stan and Amazon Prime Video have audio description available on a number of titles.

Theatre and live events

Vision Australia regularly provides audio description for live events including theatre, exhibitions and other performances. Audio-described live events can be searched on the Vision Australia events page.

How can libraries help members access audio description?

Libraries have a role to play in promoting the availability of audio description to members who are blind or have low vision can access information and engage with events in the community.

In building your collection, continue to request audio-described content from suppliers.

Your catalogue should identify the availability of audio description in the language notes of an item record (MARC21 field 546).

You can also promote the accessibility of your organisation's events by employing audio description services.

More information on audio description services offered by Vision Australia is available online.

This document has been prepared by the Vision Australia Library and Information Service which provides the print disability community with reading material in accessible formats. For more information on the service, visit www.visionaustralia.org/services/library.