# Image Descriptions, T-269 Days – webinar transcript

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<https://daisy.org/news-events/articles/image-description-t-269-w/>

Welcome everyone. My name is Richard Orme and I'm delighted to have you join us today for another webinar hosted by the DAISY consortium. As we count down the days until the European Accessibility Act comes into force. We're bringing you this series of webinars to help you prepare. Today we explore the topic of image descriptions. Our regular attendees will know this is a topic we visited previously, offering practical advice on authoring alt text and extended descriptions. You can find the links to those webinar recordings on our website. Today, by popular demand, we're returning to the topic to do a deeper dive focused on managing the image description authoring process. First up, today we're delighted to be joined by Katy McIntosh from Cambridge University Press, who will be guiding us through implementing alt text in publisher workflows.

Hi, I'm Katy McIntosh and I am Head of Content Operations Delivery for academic books and journals at Cambridge University Press. I'm here to speak to you about implementing alt text into your workflows. I'm going to be speaking about books today because journals are not covered by the European Accessibility Act. That, of course, doesn't mean that we don't want to make journals accessible. But for many of us, the EAA makes getting our books in order the priority. Right now. I'm also mainly going to speak about front list like many publishers, when not as far along with our backlist plans. Hopefully that's reassuring to hear if that's the case for you too. So I'll only touch on that briefly at the end. I'm going to talk through some things you should be thinking about when incorporating alt text into your workflows and different options, you may want to consider. So when it comes to front list, I've broken things down into three areas. One alt text creation, two alt text QA and three the implementation itself. To start alt text creation. First of all, who is going to be creating your alt text? There are generally three options you author third party vendors or you do it in-house. All of these have pros and cons, and of course you want to balance your needs regarding quality, cost, and speed. Authors can be a good option because they know their content best and therefore are arguably best placed to describe their own images. And of course, this option is free, which is always welcome. However, authors are generally not all tech specialists, and there is an art and a skill to writing alt text. So if you are going for this option, I strongly recommend that you provide thorough guidance for authors on how to write alt text and what is best practice. As we all know, not all authors will read or engage with this. But for those who do, it will make their optics much better and it will also be extremely helpful for them. Author resistance is, of course, a risk. We already asked quite a lot for authors and they are generally very busy. For example, in academic publishing, most authors are full time teaching academics and others are practicing doctors and lawyers. You may want to look at incorporating outtakes provision into your author contracts as a requirement of submission. Even then, the book you receive will inevitably vary in quality. So quality control is going to be important, which we'll cover too. Another option is to have a third party vendor create your own text for you. This may be an SME, or you may want to look at using AI or a mixture of both. Huw is speaking in depth on this, so I won't go into detail here, but the benefit here is that any SMEs should be experts in writing alt text. I say should make sure you do your research in your testing first. Many vendors will offer SMEs with specialisms in various subjects, but they still won't have the understanding of the text and the images that the author would. Especially if it's a niche field. And of course, there's cost attached to vendor created alt text, but the quality shouldn't vary as much as it will with authors. The final option is to create your own alt text in-house. Many of us don't have the resources to do this, but if you do, it is good in that you can keep control of the whole process yourself. And as long as you have a good team, it should be high quality. However, you would need a range of subject experts, and the team still would likely need to work very closely with the authors. When deciding which option to go for, you're going to need to think about costs. The level of quality you expect, the time it will take, and the resources you have. Whichever one you go for, you need to ensure you provide guidance and standards, making clear what you expect from alt text and what you see as high quality and good practice. Because it does vary. You should also specify when you expect alt text alone to be sufficient, and when you also want long description for an image long description, which you'll sometimes hear called extended description. It's generally used for more complex images, where a more detailed description is needed. You'll also need a way to mock those images that don't require alt text, for example, because they're purely decorative. Do you trust the author to do that? An editorial assistant or perhaps a vendor? You may, of course, want to have more than one workflow, for example, for different subjects or types of book. Moving on to QA. Once you've created your alt text, I strongly recommend you have a QA process no matter who is creating it. Adding alt text shouldn't just be a box ticking exercise to technically fulfill the requirements of the AI. Hopefully we're all here because we believe in accessibility and truly opening up our products to as many people as possible. Alt text should be effective and useful for those who use it. So how do you ship? First, you need to decide who will be doing the QA, and that will likely be dependent on who created it. Author provided. Alt text should be backed by someone with good knowledge of alt text. Best practice, whether that's someone in-house or through a third party vendor. And if you're relying on vendors, you may want to also do some QA of that way. For example, spot checks if someone other than your author is writing alt text, I'd recommend having the author do a final check of it to ensure it's correct in terms of the subject and the context within the book, you create the main body text of the book, so you should be doing exactly the same for the alt text. You may also want to decide who ultimately has final responsibility for the accuracy of the alt text. If it's vendor created, is it them? If it's author created, is it them? And make sure your contracts reflect that. So you know now how you going to write and to buy your alt text. But how are you actually going to get it into your books? When it comes to implementation. There are four things I think you need to consider. One, your platforms and systems. Two changes to your workflows. Three disproportionate burden and full price impact. So firstly, you need to think about your own platforms that host your content. So for Cambridge this is our Cambridge Core site and also our HE platform. These will likely need some development to enable both alt text and long description. You'll also need to decide how to link out to your long description. So alt text will be read automatically by screen reader, but long description is not. You need a way to indicate that there's long description, whether that's a line of text under the image or an icon which links out to it. So you need to decide how you want to do that. You need to ensure that your XML is updated, and the alt text is always added in the same consistent way, and the development that you're doing should include built in QA checks. If you use an OPRS system, you may want to make changes to that so the Alt test can be submitted through it. You likely also need to make changes to your publishing systems, adding ways to flag titles with alt text and long description. And don't forget your metadata. It is essential that the book's metadata reflects the title's accessibility features, so new options would likely need to be created in your systems for this. You'll also need to consider your different project types, for example word and LaTeX, and how things will differ between them. In LaTeX, alt text can be added directly into the code, but you need to make sure that your course files are set up for that. And if authors are doing this themselves that they have guidance on how to do it, you should also consider all your different formats, whether that's EPUB, HTML or PDF, and you need to talk to your typesetter about how they will add the alt text into the files during production as alt text isn't visible. You also have to agree a way to output it so it can be quite. So that's your platforms and your systems only. Only all of those things. You'll then need to plan your actual workflow changes. If you authors are creating the alt text, you'll need new submission guidelines for them on how to do this and a clear path through QA. You'll also need pathways for what happens if the alt text provided is not fit for purpose, even with some tweaking, or if the author completely faces to provide it. Likewise, if a vendor's alt text does not meet your standards, you'll need to have a feedback and remediation loop in place. It's vital that your teams have training on the new workflows, but are also educated on why you are doing this. There is a big change management piece here. This may seem like a lot of extra work for people and also a lot of extra cost, so it's important to explain why alt text is important and how it is helping your customers and your business. Next, I would also recommend you have a workflow in place to hand any titles where adding alt text may constitute disproportionate burden. I am not a lawyer and your business should seek legal advice on this. Although it's like unlikely there will be many. You may find that adding alt text to some products, especially very image led titles, may be so expensive that they come under the disproportionate burden clause of the EAA. Obviously, we want to make our projects as accessible as possible, but it is a good idea to have a workflow in place for these scenarios. We should include comparing the cost of implementing the alt text against the projected profit of the title, and again, please seek legal advice through your business on this. Lastly, through all of this, you should estimate the price impact of adding alt text to your titles. If your books involve a lot of images, you are likely to see a significant increase in your production costs going forward. So it's important that budgets and future plans are adjusted, and of course, that your senior teams are prepared. I'll end just with a final note on backlist. Many of the things we've just discussed are also relevant for backlist. The only difference with that list is that you're likely looking at things on obviously a very large scale. So the most important thing is to prioritize. You may want to prioritize by sales by usage. It's up to you, but that's often the most obvious way to do it. You may also want to prioritize some subjects or particular titles, for example, any on accessibility or quality and diversity, and knowing that the backlist will be a quick process. You'll also need to have an effective remediation on request process, where a customer contacts you as a publisher to request in an accessible version of one of your top stories in your backlist. You then turn it around in a reasonable time frame. What that turnaround time is, is up to you, but obviously you want it to be as quick as possible. That is everything for me. Making big changes to your systems and workflows like this can be really challenging. I hope this has been helpful to give a few tips on things to consider, and remember that all publishers are in the same boat and facing the same issues and obstacles, so do make the most of the community around you. Thank you.

Thank you Katy. Lots of great information there, and a very useful reminder that no one presenting today is offering legal advice. These webinars are here to share recommendations of best practice, all shared in good faith. I'm sure people have lots of questions already. So do use the Q&A button in zoom to submit them, and we'll cover as many as possible towards the end of the webinar to guide us through the next stage of image descriptions. Looking at the decision making processes and advice for working with vendors, it's over to Huw from Text Box digital.

Thanks so much and very glad to be here. Thank you very much today for the introduction and for the invitation really, to come along and speak to you today about text. my name is Huw Alexander. I am managing director of TextBox and at textbox we really focus on writing image descriptions and alt text, and we work with a range of publishers, and organizations from academic publishers, children's publishers, trade, whatever it may be, just to provide them with alt text services and help them, with that process. So I'm going to be talking today about alt text decision making text box, which started in 2018. So I've had about six years now of working with different, different publishers and organizations. And hopefully we can just provide you with some insights into the process I'm building, a publishing workflow. So let's start off with finding a vendor. So I kind of think about finding vendor in terms of it being an interview process. And that goes both ways as well. So the publisher is interviewing the alt text provider, and the alt text provider is interviewing the publisher, and they're both trying to establish whether they're the right fit. if you're a publisher, I would recommend the following kind of list of items to think about in terms of the interview process. think about the pricing breakdown. Request the pricing breakdown from your alt text vendor so you know exactly how much you could be paying for text and for image to kind of long descriptions or extended descriptions. And also bear in mind that some extended descriptions will be scaled. So they'll be, standard, kind of a simple, fairly simple, hopefully simple, long descriptions and then really much more complex depending on your subject area. So think about that and get the alt text to vendor to provide that break down. Also think about deliverables. now deliverables or things like how how do you actually receive the alt text description. there are various approaches with all the publishers and all translations I work with. It tends to be small tweaks and differences between each one. Can or text provide a align themselves with the deliverables you want, you may want in word format. For instance. You may want it in Excel format. You may request, thumbnails of the images to be included in the Excel. Now work out what you require from users to propose and then explain that to your vendor. think about turnaround times as well. turnaround times will differ in terms of, the complexity of the content, the amount of content. So, for instance, from a children's book with 40 pages up to a textbook with a thousand pages and a thousand different images, it will depend on that complexity and the turnaround times, but have a kind of understanding of the basic, times that you would expect from your vendor. Request a quotation based on your content. So always important to to think about what your content, what type of content you have and what that would cost with that vendor. So provide examples, 510 examples books. that the vendor can go through and provide a quotation based on exact video content. So they have a really good understanding of your content. Also provide I'll ask the vendor to provide, samples based on your content. Again, very important to provide your content so that you can see how they would handle, your types of publications request a list of existing clients, from, from the vendor, so you can actually see who they work with at the moment and whether those publishers align with your publishers. They might be in the same area. They might specialize in academic publishing, for instance, if you require, ask for references, I'm sure that we tried to provide them. Think about their expected expertise and experience. what how how long have they been working with alt text again? Which kind of clients they've worked with. They can provide samples if they work with other clients, if they're allowed. but get a good sense of their expertise and their experience in writing alt text. And also listen to your peers, not the publishers. recommendations are always good, and usually ends up with good results if you recommended, you know, text vendor. Thinking about content vendor alignment. So it's really important because publishing is so varied and there's so many different genres. it's really worth thinking about your content and whether your content aligns with the vendor. So you could be a Stem publisher or a children's publisher should try teaching, illustrators graphic novels or comics guidebooks. All of these have unique, attributes and unique ways of writing all text and, long descriptions. So I really think about your kind of genre, the imprints you published, and what aligns with the, the alt text patterns that are they experienced in that type of text writing? And it also also goes back to the point that there aren't, that many alt text writers in the world. So think about developing a stable of alt text writers so that in kind of crunch times that you have different options to pick from for your alt text. and also you can specialize in kind of specialized or text vendors for your individual content. I'm thinking, in terms of some publishers, a real wide range of content, they might be publishing children's books and trade cookery and have an academic list as well. So you may want a whole text vendor for each of those lists, or at least for the kind of, trade and academic side, so that it's kind of marries up well together. Now, content prioritization is a kind of hot topic at the moment. the European Accessibility Act is, coming fast down the track, in June 2025. so publishers are really thinking about how to prioritize their content to, for the provision of all text. So think about things like your front list, how you can handle your front list going forward, and then think about your back list in terms of your shallow back list, 1 to 2 years backlist or your deep backlist. Some publishers go back decades, so that's a huge amount of content to think about. And that would be different approaches in terms of providing, or sourcing alt text from the vendors to to handle that content. Also, in terms of prioritization, think of your imprints. If you've got, a wide range of imprints, some higher priority than others. think about a high profile authors. for instance, if you've got a bestselling author, you might want to prioritize them in your list, bestselling titles again. So going back into that backlist and picking out the cherry picking which bestselling titles from over the years, but it may require higher priority than all the titles on your list. journals are not included in the European Accessibility Act, but, I would recommend having a think about journal content. and a way of prioritizing that content is through, journal metrics such as impact factor and citations. so you can actually, really kind of filter out the high performing, content on your list. Another aspect to think about is marketing. Some publishers align or assign a various kind of marketing budgets to the content. So Triple-A, Double-A, A, whatever it might be in your publisher, silver. Bronze, so Triple-A content might be more important for you. So it might have a higher prioritization in your, alt text dependance list. and then think about that content in, in the kind of deep black list, the kind of lower prioritization content, and develop kind of an on demand approach to that. How can you handle that if you get requests from, your customers for that kind of content? Make sure that you can you have the pathway for that to be, remediated by alt text defenders. Now let's think about improving alt text outcomes. that talk about quality control. We're going to talk about legal aspects. And finally we'll talk about logistics. Now quality control. I can't emphasize enough the importance of the alt text style guide. now this will be a guide that aligns with your authored guidelines for, for submissions, and provides a really good framework in terms of what you expect from your vendors, in terms of alt text and long descriptions. So I would recommend reviewing your content and lists and imprints, and selecting 10 or 12 of the most popular image types. It could be something like line charts, pie charts, infographics, and then provide samples and walkthroughs of those images, with descriptions. Now your guide will evolve over time and maybe guides as well. So you might have different guides for different genres or imprints. but it will have a follow up over time. also you want to establish institutional knowledge. So that guide will be evolving. And there'll be, if people leave from the company, new people join, they'll be able to use that, old style guide as a reference guide. align that alt text guide with your mission statement for your publisher. so you can say why you're actually providing this whole text. The benefits of all text. I mean, it's a really good, kind of corporate social responsibility statement and also include, the fact that you're providing alt text, in, in, in your accessibility statement, your accessibility statement is a really important marketing tool, for your customers. So you can explain that we're writing alt text for all of our content. and we're working on the backlist, for instance. Next up in quality control is the testing process. So make sure that you're all text vendors are really testing and checking the quality of the text. So make sure it's consistent and accurate. So in terms of proofing, make sure that the spell check is happening. Make sure they're using the correct language. I work with a variety of publishers and I write in, British and American English. So make sure that the language is correct and appropriate for the project. But also think about grammar and punctuation. alt text in particular is very, very basic. A lot of punctuation will not work correctly, with screen reader. So make sure that they're actually, creating alt text that works, properly with the screen reader. So avoid things like bulleted list or numbered lists being included in an alt text, and it just won't work. So keep it nice and simple. A long description, for instance, like will, provide you with a bit more leeway, for creating a bit more complex content tables, lists and and such like. But keep your text nice and basic. for the publisher point of view, make sure you're spot testing for accuracy. my recommendation on this is always to take a blank piece of paper. and take the description and try and draft out that image from the description and make look at the image. just use the description and it'll give you an indication of the accuracy of, of that, of that content. Really. It doesn't have to be done for every, every description or alt text. but a spot testing basis is really, really useful. things to think about when you're testing, full text and long descriptions. Is the structure in particular, does the description enable visualization? When I talk about structure, I mean things like for graph you've got the x and the y axis, the number of data points. So having that structural element really helps with that visualization process. context. Does the description relate to the actual text surrounding the image? what's the purpose of the image? Does the description convey that information? And finally audience, this description tailored to that audience. So for instance, I work with publishers, the publisher for five six year olds and also, for adults. So are you, really kind of tailoring your language of that description to your audience, for instance, that I work with, with one publisher I work with, it really needs to be tailored to the Oxford 3000 and Oxford 5000 lists, which provide lists of words which are appropriate for that age group. So think about all the using the right kind of language for your audience. maintain consistency throughout and make sure that that that will text level is a high quality. throughout the book and throughout across the books in your list. and make sure to embed an approval process, so that you can actually, taste that content that's coming through the whole text that's coming through, and make sure that you approve that. and if not, you have a idea mechanism for that to be corrected. Now, contracts and statements of work and service level agreements very important for all text, integrating all text into the workflow, contracts and statements. Make sure they really kind of clarify your requirements. I'm really useful for, for text vendors. Perhaps I can see what you actually require for them. vendors should have professional indemnity insurance. for, for textbooks, we insured up to 5 million pounds. and this covers you for any errors that might actually happen in the old text. Just think about, if, a recipe for instances that has been completely incorrectly described in an alt text, the issues that might arise from that. So, make sure that your vendors are insured. think about copyright. I've had a number of publishers come to me and say, who actually owns the copyright in the alt text? All the work that I do is on a work for hire basis. So make sure that the copyright is addressed in your contract and that the publisher that you as the publisher, own the copyright and that the work is being done as a kind of work for hire basis. have details of the deliverables that you require. So we require a word document or an Excel document and make sure that's listed out in the policies of the contract, the approval process. if if they don't approve the content that comes through, is there a clause that specifies that that should be corrected by the vendor? very important, for, for making sure that your content is exactly what you want. a termination caused sometimes, the termination of a contract is required to make sure that that that's included and things like the use of AI, are now cropping up in contracts that I'm seeing some publishers are embracing AI with respect to alt text and some, kind of a little bit more cautious. So from my point of view, I don't use AI, in, text writing. but some publishers, do like it, but I have seen in recent contracts that publishers are introducing, you will not use AI in in the production of alt text. So have a think about AI and make sure that's included within your contract. Now logistics and deliverables. so for deliverables specify the format of your deliverables. Align the reference with your work files. So that make it easier for you to integrate that all text into your into your books and epub and required proofing. Make sure all the spelling and grammar checks are in place. for schedules, provide estimated publication schedules, establish turnaround time. by the way, with publication schedules, and clearly understand that publications can shift. But if you can provide, details of the schedule for publication in advance, six months in advance would be wonderful to understand if that's not possible. But it really helps with, kind of making sure that the schedule for the all text fits with your, with your publication program. So the alt text vendor has time to provide it, for your deadlines. again, establish turnaround times. Think about the content format. Are you supplying the manuscript in word to the alt text vendor? Are you providing proof copy in PDF format, or is a post pub project and you're working from pubs? and request realistic delivery times? I'd really, recommend not sending your, projects on Friday afternoon at 5:00 and expecting them to be ready for you on Monday. realistic times and working with your vendors to to make sure the deadlines are kind of realistic and feasible really does help push now all of this together. Hopefully we create a seamless and effective workflow. So what we want to build is consistent and efficient. we want those vendors to be aligned with your content. So you've chosen vendors that are experienced in working with academic or trade, whatever it might be. Content. make sure those customer descriptions are customer focused. That is the main thing about this. At the end of the day, you want your customers to have a really great user experience and really kind of enjoy that rich immersive alt text. and make sure that you tell your accessibility story through your content, through your alt text, through your metadata and accessibility information, within that metadata and through your accessibility statement, which, again, is really a really important marketing tool for for making sure that your customers are aware of the work that you are investing in in your publishing program. So I'll leave it there. thank you so much. please do reach out if you do have any questions. I'm happy to help make sure that the that everyone gets to enjoy your books.

Thank you, Huw, for once again providing a mountain of useful information to guide people on their path to working with vendors. If you have questions for Huw or Katy, please use the Q&A button and we'll get to those shortly. But first, as part of this countdown to EAA series, we've been hearing from people across the EU about the impact of the legislation, some of the challenges in implementation, and the recommendations for action, this time foreshadowing our next webinar, which is focused on reading system accessibility developments. We're hearing from Lars Terra and Simon.

I'm Lars Wallin. I'm the co-founder, the product manager and the accessibility lead at Colibrio Software in Gothenburg, Sweden. Hi everyone. My name is Terra Masiel and I'm from Amazon's Worldwide Stores accessibility team. Hello, I'm Simon Kitchen. I'm from Dolphin and we developed the Easy Reader app. At Colibrio Software we developed the Calibrio Reader framework, which is a fundamental technology platform for organizations that build, inclusive reading experiences such as libraries, schools, and also retail apps. Some of the really important accessibility features that we support are, text to speech. we support visual adjustments, of course. So that students and other types of readers have, a comfortable reading experience. And one of the more difficult things that we, put a lot of effort into is focus management for, reading systems. So that a reader can navigate comfortably, with a screen reader, for example, through the content of the publication, in an ergonomic way. Here at Amazon, we believe that access to books is crucial and that all readers, regardless of disability, deserve an accessible reading experience. We've been iteratively improving the Kindle reading experience for customers with disabilities for more than ten years, beginning with the first e-ink device with built in screen reading technology for blind and low vision readers, to recent innovations such as reading ruler and the Assistive Reader to support people with dyslexia and ADHD. So while the EAA is creating an inflection point within the industry and prompting innovation in both content and reading system accessibility, it's not significant. Shifting our priorities at Amazon, we're continuing to obsess about our customers with disabilities, and we hope and believe that the EAA will foster this growing momentum in digital publishing and reading experiences and inspire new innovations for accessible reading. So at Dolphin, we're really excited about the European Accessibility Act. Easy Reader app is all about making reading accessible for people with dyslexia or vision impairments or other print based disabilities so that they can find the book that they want and read it on a device that they want in a way that's accessible for them. so our hopes of the, European Accessibility Act is that we come to a future where there's even more digital content that's accessible so that everybody can read in a way that's accessible for them. At Colibrio We, now, in preparation for the, the EEA, we are preparing a lot of, helpful demo applications and demo implementations of things like focus management, etc. to make it easier for our customers to actually meet the requirements of the EAA. We also focus more on, detail focus management. So it's going to be even easier for readers to navigate to more precise locations when they are using screen readers and Braille keyboards. And, we are also going to add more options when it comes to reading a book without turning pages using a screen reader. So, continuously scrolling content. At Amazon, we will continue to deliver improvements for readers, authors, and shoppers with disabilities. Our ongoing investments in research, tooling, features and continuous updates to our devices, reading apps, bookstore, and publishing workflows help to ensure we are meeting EAA requirements. But these investments also support our longer term vision for accessibility, which brings books and reading to more and more customers every year during these next 12 months. We will partner closely with industry stakeholders to deliver accessible e-book experiences that raise the bar and delight our customers. So at dolphin, we partner with accessible library services around the world. and they have excellent relationships with publishers in order to make publish content accessible. So in the future, we'd like to see even more collaboration between accessible library services and publishers and assistive technology providers, with a particular focus on content which historically hasn't been accessible, whether that's because it's an image based format or because it's protected by digital rights management and is more challenging, for people with disabilities to access.

Well, thank you to Lars, to Terra and Simon for those perspectives. More about the upcoming session on reading Apps and Devices at the end of this webinar. So our presenters have covered a lot of ground. Katy has guided us on a wonderfully rich tour of implementing alt text in publisher workflows, and who provides advice on selecting and working with vendors and prioritizing alt text production. I see we've already got 1213 questions already queued up. We're going to cover as many as possible. so Katy and Huw, we're going to look for short answers, and we kind of try and do these as a quick fire. so coming to you first, Katy, you spoke about authors as subject experts being the best to provide alt text. Is this something that you're now adding to contracts moving forwards, or are you still taking a kind of flexible approach, depending on the kind of sector you're working in? So we are adding it to contracts. Yes. to make sure that it's a requirement of submission going forward. but there may be some circumstances where we agreed that it's not the right fit for that author. we obviously all of authors are very busy and they have different circumstances. So the ideal is that the author will do it and it will be a contractual obligation. Yeah. Great. Thank you. we got some questions relating to the backlist. Katy, coming to you first. Thank you for sharing that. The backlist is still a work in progress for you. so do you have an impression about how concerned publishers are generally about European Accessibility Act and where they are in their alt text journey from the interactions you have with peers in the publishing industry? Yeah, I think most conversations I've had a lot of publishers in the same boat as we are, which is that we're not that far ahead with our backlist plans. we're more in the planning stage, so we're looking at how we want to prioritize and we we technically have a remediation request process at the moment, but we want to make it better or we want to make it quicker. and I think a lot of people are in that exact same boat. And I think the act, you know, a lot of it is about showing that you have a plan, even if you haven't done anything. So most important thing is to get get sorted exactly what it is that you're going to do, even if you haven't quite started working on your backlist quite yet. Great. Thank you for that, Katy. Turning to you now, Huw. Patrick asks. some European countries have signaled there's a delay or a grace period for the backlist. How might the grace period impact on publishers who want to sell their books from their backlist, into Europe? And they haven't done all the alt text and image descriptions? I think it's quite a risky business, or kind of depending on those grace periods, because the grace periods are only in certain countries. I think France is one. if you're kind of taking that approach, then you'll only be able to sell into those countries with a grace period. So the other countries will be kind of missing out. So it looks like this kind of trying to maintain those kind of systems in the workplace, like, oh, we can sell it to this country or something to that. it can obviously go wrong. in terms of distribution. So I've been very, very careful about, taking a kind of, a selected approach, or the kind of recommend really going for trying to. It's a kind of holistic approach. and building in, aspects with kind of on demand, kind of titles for, for backlist. So, yeah, I think it would be a complex approach if you're trying to sell into into selected countries. Thank you. Who more for you in a moment. But just bouncing back to you, Katy, you mentioned about having a workflow in place where you've made a decision not to do the image descriptions right there. What what could that workflow look like? Could you maybe give us a little, illustration of what that would look like? yeah. So was this around kind of if disproportionate burden might apply? Those are the words. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. so, you know, as I've said, anything with disproportionate burden do speak to your legal team. but there might be some scenarios where it doesn't make sense to do it right away, but I would recommend monitoring that. Try to seeing what the demand for it is like. and then gauging when it perhaps would be appropriate to do it. So I think we, for example, have some, like Atlas project products, which are very visual. the cost of doing alt text for all the images would be a lot, especially if we're not sure you know what the profits are going to be for that kind of book yet. again, take legal advice before you do anything around disproportionate burden. but yeah, I think my biggest advice would be to monitor it because if it does, you know, turn out actually to be a book where there is a lot of demand, then you want to revisit that decision. Thank you. Katy. turning to you again, you talked about publishers forming a stable of alt text writers so that they can call, upon them for different types of content. with this kind of big push to produce, content, both for the front list and the list. Are there enough alt text writers in the world to complete the task in time? I actually very much down the road, to be honest. and that's kind of pessimistic, but, I saw Text Box six years ago and there wasn't very many text vendors at all then. I think, production companies got much more involved. Typesetting got much more involved. So that's ramped up the number. But, if you're thinking about the number of books, the number of publishers, that really, is a kind of a, not quite enough all text, vendors to go round. So that's why I kind of recommend, having a stable working with a variety of and especially if you've got different types of content and imprints, they might specialize in different types of content. but yes, if it comes down to it and you, you're, you're kind of, got deadlines coming through and an alt text vendor is, is, got a lot of work on a lot of projects with another publisher. it's good to have a backup plan. So, I'd recommend getting in early. Now, the the next year is going to be, really hectic because as, as as Katy was saying, people are trying to address their backlist. So it's, it's going to be interesting times. I think maybe, like the last question, make sure you have a plan B there in place. Katy, coming back to you. Bella morelli, asks if a publisher creates alt text with the help of a third party vendor. should the author or someone else be reviewing the alt text during the proofing cycle? I would recommend. So, yes, I think, especially prosper, an academic publisher. So a lot of our stuff is quite niche, high level content. The author is the one who knows it best. so yeah, I would recommend they have the final look over it and check that everything reflects, the content of the book. what it, what it is meant to, the author is the, you know, the expert in their subject. Thank you. and then, kind of inevitably, we've got a little crop of, questions that, reference AI now. So we'll start with the one. maybe this can come to you again. Katy. So lots of buzz around AI, the ability to generate alt text for you. Does this have currently a role in providing a practical solution? I think it's not something we're using currently. it is something that we have looked at. I'm a keeping an eye on. I will say, I think we looked at it probably a year ago and it, it wasn't fit for purpose tool. And now it has improved a lot. So I think it's worth keeping an eye on. I will say though, if you are going to use AI for anything, make sure it's still shaped by human. We know I mix things up. It hallucinates, and also you're going to have to think about things like copyright, about author's perception of that as well. We know a lot of authors are not happy about, their work going through AI programs, even if it is secure and closed. so I think there are further things you need to think about. if you're going to consider. Thank you. Now, I suspect this is one for a later webinar, but Jim asked that, he says that many people have made custom GPT in chat GPT for creating alt text for images. How do people find out which ones are giving the best results? Do either of you have any recommendations of where to look? there, I think you you said you're not using AI at the moment. So just checking whether or not you've got anything for Jim on this webinar, or maybe it's a topic we return to later in the series. Looks like it. Yeah. I haven't seen anything. I'm really good at the moment in terms of just a quick answer, so it might be worth coming back to that one. Things are already improving with AI, but it's not quite there yet. Great. Well, I know that you can help on these next two questions. These are kind of clarification questions, about the content of image descriptions. So one question is how long characters should alt text be. And then the second is what's the character limit to be considered alt text. And at what point does it become a long description? Could you help with that? Here? Sure. it's it's the kind of conundrum. It's always a question that always comes up. And there's no definitive answer to this. that that there is the kind of school of thought that should be 125 characters or 140 characters or 50 characters. And that seems to have come from Jules, cutting off at some point. but then it does actually start up again. So my recommendation generally is, something brief text. So 1 or 2 sentences. the other thing to think about is the humans don't think in terms of characters unless you've got a character field number that's coming up. we we tend to not think, oh, I just written 125 characters. That's perfect. so 1 to 2 sentences, three at most. is my kind of, go to figure for that. for long descriptions, there is no limit. brilliant. You can go crazy. You can put tables in the can at least. So brilliant. I did a description of, the problem areas of the brain, and it was five pages long because it was so complicated and so detailed. so there is no limit. there's a lot of flexibility with long descriptions. So, just go wild in there and just make it as immersive and brilliant, as possible and so that the readers can enjoy it. Great.

Thank you. Well, we can't go wild on these questions. I'm afraid we're coming to the top of the hour. So thank you again to Katy, Huw, Lars, Terra, and Simon for your excellent contributions on this webinar. And to remind you that in the treasure trove that is the DAISY Webinar Archive, you will find more than 30 hours of video articles and links to resources including, alt text and extended descriptions, all related to accessible publishing and reading. This webinar is the fourth event in our Countdown Series, our 12 month program exploring all aspects of accessible publishing and reading, facilitating knowledge sharing and helping all involved to understand and prepare for the European Accessibility Act. I can share the next two scheduled topics with you.

On October the 23rd, with 241 days to go. The webinar will focus on reading solutions, ensuring people can read accessible ebooks across a variety of different platforms, customizing the presentation of the content and supporting the use of a diverse range of assistive technology is far from a simple task. In this webinar, we'll hear from leading reading systems developers, including representatives from Amazon, EDR lab, and Kobo, to learn about the innovations that they're making to support accessible reading and their ongoing work to improve the reading experience for everyone.

And on November 27th, with 206 days to go, join us for accessibility in practice. This webinar, designed to coincide with the European Day for people with disabilities, will share messages from people across Europe, will learn how people read with assistive technology, what different, often small considerations in e-book creation can make, and the impact already being experienced of recent accessible innovations in digital publishing. We'll be answering the questions what does accessibility really mean in practice? How do people with print disabilities read e-books with assistive technology? And how, with the European Accessibility Act impact the lives of individuals?

You can find out more information at daisy.org/webinars, where you can also sign up to the webinar announcements mailing list to learn about new topics as we add them. If you'd like to be, in the position of suggesting a subject, or if you'd like to share your perspective on the forthcoming European accessibility Act, then please email us at webinars@daisy.org Thank you for coming today. I'll hope you'll join us again next time. Goodbye.