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Captioned Movie Access Advocacy – Update 2006

Due to the efforts of captioned movie providers, the advocacy of consumers and state officials, and the commitment of many movie studio and theater industry representatives, the number of captioned movies being shown has increased in many states, and especially in the Washington DC area, New Jersey, and New York.

The number of movies being released with captions continues to increase every year.¹ Many major movie studios provide film prints with open captions to InSight Cinema² for distribution around the country. Many major movie studios, including Buena Vista, Paramount (which also distributes DreamWorks films), Sony, 20th Century Fox, Universal, Warner Bros., and The Weinstein Company, distribute wide release movies with captions for display using Rear Window[®] Captioning (RWC)³ display systems and/or DTS' Cinema Subtitling System (DTS-CSS)⁴ caption projection systems.

The number of movie theaters that show captioned movies also continues to increase every year. As of early 2006, about 80 theaters show a captioned movie from InSight Cinema every week and about 150 theaters show a captioned movie less frequently. About 270 movie theater screens are equipped with RWC display systems, and about 90 more will become equipped in 2006. About 150 movie theater screens are equipped with DTS-CSS caption projection systems, and about 60 more will become equipped in 2006.⁵ These RWC and DTS-CSS equipped theater screens can show a new movie with captions starting on the first day the movie is released and every time that movie is shown on that caption-equipped screen.

There are captioned movies being shown every day in hundreds of theaters across the United States today. These numbers are positive, but pale by comparison to the number of movie theaters and movie theater screens in the United States: 5,713 movies theaters with 37,092 screens, according to the National Association of Theater Owners.⁶

¹ About 400 new movies are released every year. About 150 of those new movies are distributed nationally by the big movie studios ("wide releases"). The majority of these new wide release movies (about 100 new movies in 2006) are produced and distributed with captions. The other 250 new movies are independent films and/or "limited releases" that are not yet routinely produced with captions.

² For more information, see www.insightcinema.org.

³ For more information, see www.mopix.org.

⁴ For more information, see www.dts.com/cinema/dtsaccess.

⁵ In addition, there are now more than 200 DTS-CSS caption projection systems installed in Europe and a growing number of installations in Australia and New Zealand.

⁶ 2005 statistics viewed at <http://www.natoonline.org/statistics.htm>, on June 16, 2006.

Less than 1% of all of the movies being shown in theaters today are shown with captions. At the current rate movie theaters are installing caption display equipment (RWC and DTS-CSS):

- it will take another 35 years⁷ for every movie theater to have 1 caption display system; and
- it will take another 244 years⁸ for every movie theater screen to have caption display equipment.

Each of the different forms of movie captioning (Insight Cinema, RWC, and DTS-CSS) is valuable. Movie patrons (with or without hearing loss) and the movie industry need exposure to and experience with the different forms of movie captioning to become educated and to develop informed opinions. Considering the scarcity of captioned movie showings, and the pros and cons of each form of movie captioning, there is room for all forms of existing and emerging caption display systems.

Become a Captioned Movie Advocate

You can increase the number of movies being shown with captions in your neighborhood.

Become an educated and experienced consumer. Learn about movie captioning by visiting captioned movie provider websites: www.insightcinema.org; www.mopix.org; and www.dts.com/cinema/dtsaccess. Find movie theaters in your area that are showing captioned movies. Locations are listed on each of these captioned movie provider websites, and additional information about show times is available on most theater chain websites, some online ticketing websites, and through www.fomdi.com.

Go see captioned movies in your area. See movies with captions displayed using different caption display systems.

Write to the movie studio or movie distributor and thank them for captioning the movie you saw. Ask them to caption all of their new movies.

Write to the movie theater manager and/or theater chain headquarters and thank them for making movies accessible through captioning. Ask the theater manager and/or theater chain headquarters to add more captioned movie showings and/or caption display systems to their theaters so you can have a choice of movies to see.

If the movie you want to see was not captioned, write to the movie studio or movie distributor and ask them to caption all of their new movies.

If your neighborhood movie theater does not show movies with captions, give the theater manager information about captioned movies and ask the theater manager and/or theater chain headquarters to provide access to their movies through captioning.

Tell us about your movie access advocacy efforts. Write to MovieAccess@nad.org.

⁷ 5,713 theaters – 420 systems installed = 5,293 theaters / 150 systems installed per year = 35 years.

⁸ 37,092 screens – 420 screens equipped = 36,672 screens / 150 systems installed per year = 244 years.