

The newsletter of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Albuquerque Chapter

WIRED FOR SOUND

Speech-to-Text Apps – a Game Changer!

Mary Clark, HLAA Albuquerque

Who knew that your smart phone could become one of the most valuable assistive listening devices you have? Originally the speech-to-text applications were designed for language translations. Some of those programs can still offer a similar experience as the actual “speech-to-text” apps that you can download to your phone.

So what is a speech-to-text app? They use the microphone on your phone to “listen” to a person speaking and then display what they are saying in the form of text on your screen. When masks became common, those of us who are die-hard lip-readers were forced to face our hearing loss in ways we hadn’t anticipated before. This made the development of more, newer, better apps more lucrative for the software companies. All of them use automated speech recognition (ASR) tools, which vary in accuracy.

There are some apps that work better on Android phones, and others that work better on apple phones. Some are free for a limited number of minutes per month, and others charge at the time the app is downloaded. Some allow you to include video display so you can see the other person speaking, some will let you record the transcription, and some will translate the speech if it’s in another language. Some can be synched with other programs that don’t normally offer captions, so you can get some basic captioning. I will only be focusing on speech-to-text in this article, but most of these apps offer additional features as well.

Downloading an app starts with finding the app you want in either the “App Store” (on an Apple)



or on “Google Play” on an Android device. When you use the App Store, you will need to log in using your Apple ID and password. If you are an old timer like me, it might be your old iTunes ID and password—they are the same. If you are using Google Play, you will log in using your Google account ID and password. This is not the same as your gmail ID and password, but the one that lets you log into Google.

In either case, you can use the search function to look either by category (speech-to-text) or by the name of the app.

Live Transcribe:

One of the earlier apps that was widely successful was Live Transcribe. It was originally only available on Android phones, but as of last year, there is a version that was designed specifically for iOS or Apple products. These two versions are actually considered separate apps, but they function the same way. Usually a microphone icon appears, and if you tap the image, the app will start transcribing what is being said in the vicinity. iOS Live Transcribe offers a 7 day free trial, and renews at \$49.99 a year.

AVA

AVA was one of the first speech-to-text apps I used. It will allow multiple parties to join the conversation, but it’s a little clunky to add others. For

WIRED FOR SOUND

is published by the
HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER
Providing support and advocacy for
people with hearing loss

P. O. Box 36792,
Albuquerque, NM 87176
(505)219-1962

HLAAAbq@gmail.com

Home page: hearinglossabq.org

 **Hearing Loss Association of America – Albuquerque chapter**

Mention of goods or services in articles or advertisements or meetings does not mean endorsement by Hearing Loss Association of America, Albuquerque Chapter, nor does exclusion suggest disapproval.

ABQ Chapter Board:

President:
vacant

Treasurer: Bobbi Rodríguez
TreasurerHLAAAbq@gmail.com

Editor: A. E. "Rod" Rodríguez
EditorHLAAAbq@gmail.com

Membership & Web Master: Jim Dillow
catchJimmy@comcast.net

VP Programs: Victoria Rivera
vrivera@unm.edu

Publicity Chair:
vacant

Hospitality Chair: Jim Twohig
JKTwohig@gmail.com

Professional Advisor: Dr. Carol Clifford
CClifford@abqhearing.com

Special Programs: Courtney McBride
Courtney.A.McBride@gmail.com

Past Pres./Advisor: Mary Clark
Mary@mandgclark.com

The Albuquerque HLAA Chapter is
affiliated with the



www.hearingloss.org
7910 Woodmont Ave, Suite 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814
phone: (301)657-2248

18 Sep Meeting 10:00 AM - Noon On **Zoom**

Given the restrictions due to the delta variant surge, we will forgo an in-person meeting in September. Our Web Page (HearingLossAbq.org) will have the link to join the Zoom meeting.

Advocacy: How to be involved at the federal, state and local level

Lise Hamlin will be presenting on Advocacy at the state, federal and local level. She will be giving an update on what's happening nationally in regards to hearing devices. She will tell how members can be involved in policy and in advocacy.

Lise Hamlin joined the Hearing Loss Association of America's (HLAA) national staff as director of public policy in April 2008. Ms. Hamlin, who has a hearing loss herself, has worked as an advocate for people with hearing loss for over 25 years.

She currently represents HLAA on federal advisory committees such as the FCC's Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) and TSA's Disability and Multicultural Coalition, industry advisory groups, including AT&T's Advisory Panel on Access and Aging (AAPAA) and LG's Accessibility Advisory Board, and is co-chair of the Hearing Aid Compatibility Task Force.

Ms. Hamlin also works on consumer coalitions such as the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHH-CAN) and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Alliance (DHHA).

**Upcoming programs:**

Look for upcoming programs in the next *Wired for Sound* newsletter or on our Home page: HearingLossAbq.com.

The HLAA ABQ Chapter is still looking for volunteers. You can man a special project. You can help us out for a few months, or consider a longer-term commitment. "Try us out" for a month or two. We will provide orientation for working on a nonprofit board, share our chapter's mission and goals, and discuss topics we can use your help with. If interested, contact any board member (contact info at left), or use the chapter email hlaabq@gmail.com.

everyday use as a speech-to-text app, it works fine, but it does not separate the transcription for multiple speakers. For example, if I ask “how are you today?” and the other person says “oh, I’m not doing so great”, the text will appear as all one transcription. I like the automated version of the text from AVA better than some others, so I will choose to use that one when I need the accuracy. Normally, I can hear parts of what I’m trying to listen to, so the app helps me fill in the blanks.

Otter Ai

Otter ai offers more than just the audio and text transcription of the speech. You can also turn on the video and see each other, much like Facetime, or Skype. What I like about Otter is that each speaker is separated on the display, so you can see two voices speaking instead of having all of the text running together like in AVA. Otter is free for 600 minutes per month. There is a tiered cost for more features. I’ve never exceeded the 600 minutes per month since I don’t get out so much during the pandemic.

Speechy

Speechy is using the IBM Watson service, and their accuracy in the translation from speech to text is slightly better. It has many other features, but for plain speech-to-text, it is free for the first 500 min-

utes per month. Speechy also offers many other features that you could explore if you need a transcript from another app, for example.

One more option to improve the speed and accuracy when using a speech-to-text app with masks is to add a directional microphone to your cell phone to hold closer to the speaker. This would be valuable when talking to a doctor for example, or if you are involved in a discussion about legal matters where the details are important to get right.

I use my speech-to-text app when visiting the doctor, and at the store when I can’t understand the clerk. One friend mentioned that she used to watch some pretty interesting changes in facial expressions (before the days of masks) when she would explain to the clerk at a store that “this app helps me understand you because I have a hearing loss” and then the attitude went from frustration, to “this is a cool old lady who is using apps on her phone!”

I am by no means an expert, but here are some resources to look at for more details than I have provided here:

<https://www.hearinglikeme.com/speech-to-text-apps-for-the-deaf-community/>

<https://abilitynet.org.uk/news-blogs/9-useful-apps-people-who-are-deaf-or-have-hearing-loss>

<http://connect-hear.com/knowledge-base/overview/>

Have fun exploring!

Loop People, Loop Places

Ginevra Ralph

Personal Loops

I’ve missed all of you, but I had a great time seeing Bobbi Rodriguez in July when she visited family up here in Eugene. But just when we thought in-person communication might be getting a little easier, at least up here, we are back to mask mandates. I also doubt that Plexiglas barriers will disappear any time soon.

When HLAAAbq granted newsletter space for this monthly mini-column to focus on hearing loops, I planned to include short vignettes both on looping different types of places (mostly smaller

Do you have a personal experience relating to hearing loss that would benefit your fellow HoH readers? It could be something practical or a warning of something to avoid or even something humorous. If you don’t mind sharing a short note, send it by email to:

EditorHLAAAbq@gmail.com

ones, rather than churches or concert halls), as well as on peoples' personal experiences as they en-

But first, let's review the idea of "personal loops". Thanks to people like Steven Frazer, the ABQ chapter has had much more experience than most communities with the idea of looping your homes or personal work spaces. Adding a portable loop to one's personal tool bag to improve hearing and comprehension in as many places as possible can make a noticeable difference for some people.

counter or "impose" loops on their daily lives. It's time for some of those personal stories!

The ABQ chapter now owns a couple of portable loops that you can borrow and try out in your own spaces – professional appointments, meetings, at home, social gatherings, the car, etc. – to see if this device can make a difference for you. As promised, next month I will start to share some stories from around the country as friends have been working with these loops.

Smith's Community Rewards Shop at Smith's with their Rewards card, and Smith's will make a donation to HLAA Albuquerque chapter. You get your usual rewards points.

Call 1-866-4141 to sign up or re-enroll.
The HLAAbq NPO number for Smith's is 14881.

Amazon Smile You can donate to the Albuquerque Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America every time you make a purchase of most of the products from Amazon.

Go to <http://www.hlaabq.com/amazonsmile.html> for more information and detailed instructions on how to designate HLAA-ABQ Chapter as your charity of choice when you make amazon.com purchases.

Once you have set it up, always log into smile.amazon.com to purchase from amazon. 0.5% of the purchase price is automatically donated to HLAA Albuquerque Chapter—at no cost to you.

COVID-19 and Hearing Loss¹

Joy Victory, managing editor, Healthy Hearing

We do know that many different types of viral and bacterial infections can cause sudden hearing loss. But older coronaviruses that triggered epidemics, such as SARS and MERS, did not appear to cause hearing problems. What about [SARS-CoV-2](#), the coronavirus that triggered the 2020 global pandemic?

Based on published case reports, it appears that sudden hearing loss is rarely a symptom of coronavirus onset.

Note: [Sudden hearing loss is a medical emergency](#). Seek medical attention if you experience sudden hearing loss in one ear. The faster you get treatment, the more likely you'll get your hearing back.

What does appear to be a little more common (though still rare) is developing hearing loss, tinnitus or dizziness later in the infection process, meaning these issues are not part of the initial onset of symptoms but develop days to weeks later.

However, the researchers emphasize that there is a lack of "high-quality studies" on this topic. A large comprehensive research effort is needed.

More research is needed before we fully understand how the coronavirus affects hearing and balance. We still don't know to what extent the coronavirus causes hearing loss, tinnitus or balance problems.

Some coronavirus patients have reported prolonged illnesses and atypical symptoms, dubbed "covid long-haulers." In a survey of nearly 650 long-haulers, about one-third experienced earaches and two-thirds had [dizziness and vertigo](#). Only one patient reported hearing loss. There seemed to be "no predictable pattern" as to when or why someone might experience these symptoms, notes the [research summary](#) on the topic.

¹ See the full article at <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/53127-Coronavirus-hearing-loss-tinnitus-covid>

Thanks to those listed below for their generous donations.

Platinum \$400+

Albuquerque Hearing
and Balance
Rosaline Cohen
Donald Thurn
Adelaide Zabriskie

Gold \$200 - \$399

Ginevra Ralph
Jim & Karen Twohig

Silver \$100 - \$199

Ben Curret
Gloria Inlow
Mike & Barbara Langner

Bronze \$50 - \$99

Barbara Armstrong
Carol Emerson
Kim Granzow
Bette Jean Ingui
James & Sharen Koch
Michael & Karen
Lieberman
Paul Merritt
Fran Neil
Ira J. Rimson
Rod & Bobbi Rodríguez

Friends - up to \$49

Gail S. Anastasia
Hal Behl
Rees & Marilyn Bevan
Norm Dawson
Don Degasper

Carol Emerson
Barbara Fix
Shirley Furen
Andrew "Bo" Gamboa
Sophie Garvanian
Gene & Sondra Golden
Patricia Gonzáles
Linnea Hendrickson
Don Johnson
Roy & Helen Johnson
Richard Johnson
Barbara Kerr
Richard & Pushpa
Knottenbelt
Dirk Knowles
Richard Kutscher
Victoria L. Magown
Deanna & Bob McMain
James Ogle

Barbara Pierce
Mary J. Raje
Linda Sue Romero
Harriet S. Smith
Steve Smith
Ronald Syler
Richard Tuschhoff
Mary Tyler
Marge Weitzel
Sandra Williams

Special

Smith's Community
Rewards
Amazon Smiles
Frontstream
Ginevra Ralph: Two
portable loop

NM HLAA chapters are 501(c)3 nonprofits and all donations are tax deductible.

Support the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). Become a member TODAY!

The Hearing Loss Association of America is a volunteer association of Hard of Hearing people, their relatives and friends. It is a non-profit, non-sectarian educational organization devoted to the welfare and interest of those who cannot hear well. Membership in the national organization is by annual dues, which are separate from the annual Chapter fee paid to your local chapter. National membership includes a subscription to the bi-monthly publication Hearing Life.



Albuquerque Chapter Membership

☐ New
☐ Renew

Name:

Date:

Address: ☐ Please mail Newsletter rather than email.

City:

State:

Zip:

Email:

Phone(s):

voice? text? VP? caption?

Mail to: HLAAAbq Treasurer, P. O. Box36792, Albuquerque, NM 87176

Payment: Membership amount: \$..... Donation: \$.....

Total: \$.....

Dues: \$15 per household per calendar year (Includes newsletter subscription)

Online: <https://www.hearinglossabq.org/electronic-pay>



P.O.Box 36792, Albuquerque, NM 87176

