



Module 4

Unit 10: Research

Core video transcript

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Transcript

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Hello. This is Elisa Perego from the University of Trieste, Italy, and in this ADLAB PRO video I will describe the interdisciplinary nature of AD for the arts, and help you plan a research project in this engaging yet underexplored field. This is Unit 10 (Research) in Module 4 ((Semi-) live or recorded AD for static arts and environments).

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Doing research is fascinating but demanding, and it requires a great deal of preparation, motivation, precision and organization.

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Although AD does not have a very long academic tradition, we cannot say it is a new discipline. However, some sub-fields of AD are still under-investigated, such as AD for static arts and environments, where there are still several aspects that would benefit from further research.

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Before tackling this sub-field of AD, you should be aware of its interdisciplinary nature, and of the fact that it borrows from various disciplines such as audiovisual and intersemiotic translation; linguistics, psychology and aesthetics; history of art, iconography and iconology;

museum visitor studies...

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... but also art, museums and touch, special didactics, disability studies, and pedagogy for specific learning disabilities, to mention just a few.

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As in all research fields, before you start your project, you should define and articulate a research question based on a thorough analysis of the literature and on the theoretical gaps in the field. Just to give you some examples, systematic audience (or reception) research on the way touch tours, descriptive tours, live or recorded AD are processed and to what extent they are appreciated by people with and without sight loss is still missing.

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Once you are sure of your research question, identify the materials you need and define your methodology. For instance, if you decide to carry out a corpus-based linguistics analysis on a written corpus of museum AD scripts, you'll have to allot some time to retrieve the texts before starting to explore textual data through a software.

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If you prefer to carry out a reception study, make sure you know how to prepare and administer questionnaires, to recruit participants, as well as to collate, gather and analyse data. In general, the APA Publication Manual will be helpful if you need a guide on how to organize your research and publications.

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Further issues needing exploration in this field are the translation of ADs for static art, but also the implementation of descriptive and touch tours in culturally marked contexts – think for instance of how to describe items belonging to ethnographic museums, or very distant forms of art that do not comply with the traditional Western standards.

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If you like this sub-area of AD, I'm sure you will find your way easily. There are so many forms of art that can be described and still need to be approached academically: think of photography, book illustrations, puppetry or doll museums, dress or costume museums – to mention just a few.

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And there's a wide (more or less complex, and more or less stimulating) range of means to make them accessible, depending on how multimodal you want your text to be. Regular audio description (live or pre-recorded) can in fact be successfully paired with further auditory, tactile, and even olfactory supports.

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Now, a good way to start your research work can be to go through all the references that are offered for this unit, but also to search material online and in libraries. Do not forget that searching for references or other sources is part of an active research process. You can look for guidelines produced by different institutions, or have a look at the ARSAD seminar programs to get an

idea of the range of topics that have been dealt with over the years. You will spot those which fascinate you more and need further study.

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Finally, to collect more information and learn how to present your results, you can consider listening to the ADLAB PRO project talks delivered during our Multiplier Events, or you can listen to the audio tracks of the YouTube channel “Audio for All” that we have created. The channel includes a specific section on museum accessibility and a number of museum ADs in different languages. It will certainly offer some food for thought.

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Ultimately, do not forget that research in the realm of AD for static art and environments cannot involve just static library work. Indeed, it can be a very dynamic process. Move, be active, visit museums and heritage sites with and without accessibility facilities. Talk to as many stakeholders as possible, including museum staff but also PSL, whose feedback will be invaluable to guide you in asking yourself (and hopefully answering!) the right research question.

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It is now time for you to try and plan your research project on art AD. Do so trying to choose a topic that really needs to be researched, and trying to offer a real contribution, no matter how small.

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I am sure you will be inspired by the works of Neves, Fryer, Candlin, and

Hutchinson, to mention just a few. But also by the work of VocalEyes, illustrated in their website, and by the results of the EU project COME-IN!. Good luck!

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