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## New skill, new technology, will help hard-of-hearing throughout Alberta

Edmonton – The training to translate spoken word into text, verbatim, in real time with 98 percent accuracy, is now being offered through a broadly accessible course led by NAIT, video conferenced at SAIT, and offered online throughout North America.

This new skill, called realtime reporting, is an innovation used by court reporters that also enhances communication for the hearing impaired. Hard of hearing individuals grasp approximately 50 percent of spoken conversations and spend most of their time speech reading, which is exhausting and inhibits them from fully participating at work, school and in other social settings. NAIT's new realtime writing course teaches experienced machine shorthand writers how to achieve speeds exceeding 225 words per minute of instantaneous unedited realtime translation.

“With about 80,000 individuals in the Edmonton area alone considered hard of hearing, realtime technology and captioning is increasing in demand, especially with the growing aging population,” course instructor Sandra German said.

Course delivery is also innovative. The live instructor at NAIT's main campus in Edmonton is linked, through Alberta's advanced Internet called NeteraNet, to SAIT's video classroom in Calgary. The high-speed connection allows faculty expertise from NAIT to be shared with students at SAIT. Course content can also be streamed over the Internet so remote course registrants can fully participate using home computers.

The instructor, Sandra German, is a top educator in the court-reporting field who was recruited to NAIT for her pioneering expertise in realtime technology. She began her research in the field 15 years ago by working with the Edmonton Branch of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association. She has since expanded her efforts to build awareness of realtime technology to students of English as a Second Language, and to organizations aware of the increased comprehension and memory retention that result from presentations combining visuals with audio.

Sharing the expertise of faculty members for specialized courses like this is being realized through NeteraNet, the high-speed optical backbone of Alberta's advanced grid for research and education. Netera Alliance is a not-for-profit organization made up of Alberta's educational institutions, research organizations and private companies building advanced information infrastructure in Alberta.

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