Using human transcription services

Transcription of data from audio recordings of interviews and focus groups is an important part of qualitative research. While many researchers transcribe their own data there are occasions where a professional human transcription service can be helpful. However, there can be security and privacy issues. For this reason, only MCRI approved services may be used. This fact sheet is designed to highlight some practical issues with using human transcription services to minimise security and privacy issues.

Types of transcription services

There are three key types of third-party transcription services.

1. Professional human transcription services.
2. Transcription services through web conferencing platforms.
3. App based services using Artificial Intelligence (AI)

There are strengths and challenges to using different services which need to be considered when deciding on your approach. Apart from security risks these include cost, accuracy and time to transcript delivery.

Which services can be used at MCRI?

MCRI has approved 3 services that may be used:

Web conferencing platforms

These must be the MCRI instances of these platforms so that all data remains within MCRI.

1. MS Teams recording transcription service (preferred)

2. Zoom audio recording text (no Apps should be used)

Professional human transcription services

3. Outscribe

App based services that use AI *are not permitted. This includes the transcription function that can be accessed through NVivo.*

Several App based services which use AI to produce a transcription from an audio recording have been reviewed. As there are insufficient privacy and data security protections as well as a lack of flexibility in contract arrangements these services are not allowed to be used.

A Fact sheet with details on the use of audio recordings from web conferencing platforms is available here

Risks with transcription services

There are risks when data is not transferred securely after recording. Data recorded on Dictaphones and other approved devices must be transferred securely and quickly to MCRI One drive or other institutional password protected approved system (see for Using Dictaphones securely here[link to be inserted]).

One of the key risks with external transcription is the capacity for data breach. Therefore, only companies where data is held on servers located in Australia and subject to Australian privacy laws are approved.

All transcriptions must be manually reviewed to ensure any Personally Identifiable information (PII) is removed.

Any consent must specify the use of the medium of recordings (audio and/or video).

In addition, transcription companies must delete files after completion or have the provision that the researcher can delete the original files from their files as soon as the transcription is made available.

How do I arrange a professional transcription service?

All projects that use human transcription services will need a contractor agreement to cover each project. Contact qual.research@mcri.edu.au to discuss and

arrange a Work Order to join a project to the Master Agreement that MCRI has with Outscribe and then contact MCRI legal to finalise the Agreement.

More information

Contact MCRI Legal for legal issues legal@mcri.edu.au

General enquires to qual.research@mcri.edu.au

Professional human transcription services can provide valuable support if researchers are unable to transcribe their own data. However, there are important privacy and security issues that need to be considered.

All projects that use human transcription services must have a contractor agreement in place which can be arranged by MCRI Legal.

Find out about other qualitative research resources

Review the ⬀ CRDO Launching Pad,

Please contact Kate Paton, Qualitative Research Lead, CRDO kate.paton@mcri.edu.au.