

Vizling: Accessibility Through Visual Language

Journey Smith*, Jaryd Porter, Kalie Dudeck, Alexander Hurla, Randi McCowan

Faculty: Darren DeFrain

Department of English, Fairmount College of College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Vizling is an app created by Darren DeFrain and Aaron Rodriguez, meant to make comics and graphic novels accessible to individuals who are blind and low-vision. This is accomplished via haptic feedback and audio playback, with plans to hire more voice actors as content is added. Vizling uses Comic Book Markup Language (CBML), a Text-Encoded Initiative (TEI)-based XML vocabulary and is a means for encoding graphic narratives. We use CBML to annotate the graphic narrative, dialogue, bibliographic information, character details, and much more in a text-based form. The software distinguishes between dialogue, narration, scene description, etcetera and utilizes an organization code to decipher which content to assess as per user input. We have been working on translating graphic narratives into three different styles: global narrative mode, panel-to-panel mode, and free exploration mode. We've also been working with different aspects of translation, including domesticating (in which some aspects are changed for fluidity) and foreignizing (aspects remain the same, but the distance between the audience and author is more apparent). Making these translation decisions requires much thought as to the goal of our translations. The rise of new technology presents new opportunities for the humanities as a whole. Vizling will have options for comic creators to add their own work into the software, adding the potential for a larger collection of works. Furthermore, the entire collection will be available for free to readers. Accessibility should be free, and Vizling uses all the resources at its disposal to make that happen.