

Number 19, Friday 8 December, 2023

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PD events

On Demand PL

All of our professional learning workshops are now available on demand where participants can access all the videos and resources at a time that suits them. You can find links through the [On Demand page](#), under Professional Learning, on our website.

Message from the Managers

Source: SVRC

As 2023 draws to a close, we here at SVRC look back with appreciation for the loyalty and shared commitment from you all, to ensure our students across the state of Victoria and beyond receive the absolute best opportunities to engage in their education and achieve better learning outcomes. Make sure you look out for SVRC's suite of on-demand professional learning as well as dates for our Visiting Teacher – Vision Community of Practice in 2024. We look forward with excitement and inspiration to a new year of more fabulous work together. We wish you and yours a wonderful festive season and happy and safe school holidays.

SVRC's 2024 Professional Learning Calendar

Source: SVRC

We have responded to feedback that teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to set aside a day for PL and have made our usual Term 1 PL opportunities available **online** and **on demand**. This means that one can register and view recorded sessions in your own time. These will be available throughout 2024 on the following topics:

- Inclusion of students who are blind
- Inclusion of students who have low vision
- Inclusion of students who have vision impairments and additional disabilities
- Preparing your school for a student who reads braille

In Term 2, we will have our hands-on PL days at SVRC in Donvale:

- May 7 – Braille music with Jordie Howell and Sarah Kelly
- June 18 – Inclusion of students with VI in maths with Charlie Roberts

We are yet to confirm our PE day and will not be providing an Art PL day, but have the 2023 Art4VIKids recordings available on demand.

SVRC's Support Skills Program

Source: SVRC, SSP, Marion Blaze and Di Bennett

The Support Skills Program (SSP) is run from SVRC for students in all school sectors from years 4-10. Students either come in to SVRC or attend online on a Friday with a similar age grouping, either once or twice a term. Students who attend the online sessions are able to attend from home or school with adult supervision. The program creates an individualised timetable based on student needs and preferences and covers areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) such as assistive technology, Orientation and Mobility, Daily Living Skills, social skills, careers, access to maths and science, and sports for vision impaired. Students attend for the whole day, having the opportunity to connect with other students and adults who have a vision impairment.

This year we had 60 students from across Victoria in all sectors of education participate in the program, of these students 23 were students who use braille as their primary literacy medium and 37 students who have low vision and use a combination of audio and large print. For 2024 we currently have 67 students registered in the program with 27 braille users and 40 large print and audio users.

If you would like to register your child for Support Skills visit the SSP page on the [SVRC website](#).

Here is a thank you from a parent of a braille-reading student on the program:

"I wanted to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for the incredible work you all do at support skills. I commend your patience and dedication in creating engaging lesson plans each and every time. Your creative teaching methods have made the learning process enjoyable and stimulating. Your passion for Braille and your genuine care for your students shine through in every interaction. Thank you!"

Q+A: Teaching Forces

Source: SVRC

Q: Do you have any resources for teaching about forces, including gravity, to a student who uses braille?

A: Forces are essentially invisible to everyone, so models need to be used to explain these concepts to all students. Here are some suggestions that will work for the whole class, including students who are tactual readers.

Newton's laws of motion: The [Perkins School for the Blind](#) has some excellent resources on this topic, including a [free excerpt from a book called Making Science Accessible](#). Hands on examples that students can test out themselves will provide great opportunities for concept development.

Friction: You can model this physically by rubbing your hands together. Use different surfaces (smooth floor, carpet, tiles) and compare the effort involved to move an object. Walking involves friction so you can compare the soles of shoes along with different surfaces that you walk on. Why is wet ground more slippery?

Gravity: Make gravity wells using a stretchy fabric attached around a hoop. Adding a 'mass' to the centre stretches the fabric, giving an example of how a large body changes the gravity around it. Give time for the tactual learner to feel the model. [This document from Stem Library Lab](#) has some suggestions.

These measurement tools may be helpful in this topic

- Tactile Ruler
- Talking Tape Measure
- Talking Scales
- If you have a Newton/spring balance where the reading part is open and can be felt, add tactile markings to the scale using hot glue or Wikki Sticks.

SVRC receives Variety Club grant for innovative new technology

Source: SVRC

We have just received the news that we were successful in our grant application to the Variety Club. SVRC will receive a "TactPlus" braille and tactile graphics embosser (and paper) to make more detailed and accessible tactile graphics for our students.



Library Catalogue Updated for Holiday Reading

Source: SVRC, Transcription

The Transcription Team have been busy stocktaking the library of electronic texts we hold on file and making updates to the SVRC Library Catalogue. OK, to be honest, it is not finished ... but it is well on its way!

We are adding ISBNs where available.

We are noting the number of braille volumes – to assist in your selection of titles in braille/large print or etext ... Do you want to read 21 volumes of Harry Potter in hard-copy braille or would you prefer the etext to read on your device?

Other useful inclusions (though not new) are:

- the name of the series
- PSB/P/S – "Picture Story Book", "Primary" or "Secondary"
- the Premiers' Reading Challenge levels if available
- etext that includes illustrations (with Alt text)

With over 5000 titles to choose from – there is bound to be a something for everyone!

So get your requests for holiday reading in and we'll attend to them for you!

A link to the Catalogue can be found on the [SVRC Alternative Format Catalogues page](#) and the request form can be found on the [Request page](#).

New to the Library

Just in case you need some inspiration, here are some titles (in no particular order) we have recently transcribed into accessible formats:

- Bad Guys Episode 1, 2 and 3 – this graphic novel has been transcribed as for a play – so lends itself to reading via refreshable braille display
- Alice-Miranda – several from the series
- The Goat Who Sailed the World by Jackie French
- Boy vs Beast – Flamatoreq and Air Beast
- Beach Shack Café (Pippa's Island #1) by Belinda Murrell
- All the little Tricky Things by Karys McEwen
- The Garden of Empress Cassia by Gabrielle Wang
- Escape from the Carnival of Horrors (Goosebumps) by R.L. Stine
- How Hedly Hopkins Did a Dare, Robbed a Grave, Made a New Friend Who Might Not Have Really Been There At All and While He Was At It Committed a Terrible Sin Which Everyone Was Doing Even Though He Didn't Know It by Paul Jennings

Happy holidays to all from the Transcription Team!

Studying Maus?

Source: SVRC

Is your student studying "The Complete Maus" by Art Spiegelman?

This graphic novel has proved to be an interesting, though tricky option for students with vision impairments ... It is possible that an audio version is out there somewhere ... though at the time of writing, we had not located it. If you find an audio version that is available for download or purchase, please let us know!

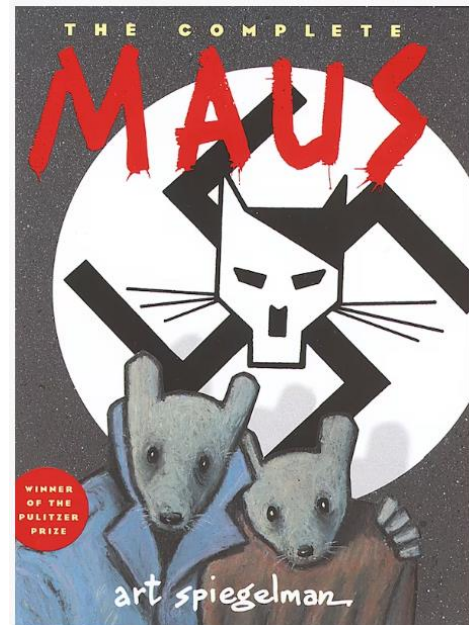
As part of the Alternative Format Library, we have the following:

- a scanned copy of "The Complete Maus" that may be useful for students with low vision who are proficient in the use of enlargement/zoom-in-and-zoom-out. This version can be viewed, on laptop or iPad – but as the book is scanned as images, the reader is not able to have the text read aloud using synthetic speech.
- an adapted text-based version that has been transcribed as for a play. This version has no images, but it may be relevant for students who access their learning materials via refreshable braille display and/or synthetic speech.

One of our Visiting Teachers, who has been researching accessible versions of this book, has located an interesting YouTube video that features two reviewers discussing the book ... historical context, narrative, visual imagery and symbolism, use of shading and darkness, relationships, themes etc. You may wish to skip the 2-minute self-promotion bizzo at the beginning and perhaps the information about historical Holocaust cartoon-development that may be less relevant (up to about the 11-minute mark).

Visit: [Art Spiegelman's MAUS – Pulitzer Prize Winning graphic novel about the Holocaust – YouTube](#)

Thanks to Sandra and Aiko for their input.



"Nothing Brings me More joy than experiencing art" Olivia Muscat's ABC Article

Source: ABC

Support Skills very own Olivia Muscat has recently had an article published on the ABC website about working as a blind critic.

Here is an excerpt from her article *Seeing the story – just another day working as a blind critic*

"There are many things that boggle people's minds when it comes to my existence as a blind woman. No one ever hesitates to ask me how my eyes got the way they are. Why my phone talks at me so quickly. Or how I've mastered a flawless smoky eye look without a mirror.

Perhaps the thing that perplexes people the most is how I can be a theatre critic if I can't see what is happening on stage. ... I love storytelling of any kind. I'm a writer and performer. Nothing brings me more joy and excitement than experiencing art, then talking about why I loved or hated it. So, being a critic feels like a natural fit."

You can read the rest of the article on the [ABC News website](#).

International Day of People with Disability

Source: IDPwD

Sunday December 3 was International Day of People with Disability. This is a United Nations day that is observed internationally. It aims to promote community awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability.

The theme for IDPwD 2023 is "United in action to rescue and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for, with and by persons with disabilities." The theme talks about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are 17 things countries want to work on by the year 2030 to make the world better and fairer for everyone. It is important that people with disability are part of this work and have a big say in what happens.

To find out more information visit the [IDPwD website](#).

And Finally ...

Did you know that there is a condition called Christmas Eye? It is thought to be caused by the orthoperus beetle that is found predominantly in parts of eastern Australia. The beetles contain a blistering agent in their blood supply, which cause severe pain when it gets in the eye.