

The Bulletin

Number 21, Friday 19th December 2014

**Hope to see you at the SPEVI Conference in Melbourne
Monday 12th to Thursday 15th January 2015**

Professional Development Activities for 2015

Fliers for the SVRC Professional Learning programs are available from the SVRC website:
www.svrc.vic.edu.au/PL.shtml

Please note: the SVRC encourages attendance in person or via video link – please be in touch if you’d like to “virtually” attend any of these sessions.

Join SVRC on Facebook ... and let’s stay in touch over the summer break!

Stay up to date via Facebook! Join the SVRC Statewide Vision Resource Centre group to read or add content relevant to students with vision impairments and their families.

It’s a closed group so you’ll need to ask to join. Topics that have been discussed in the group lately include:

- Blind Cricket
- Blind dancer using Google Glasses
- Blind newsreader at Triple J
- Grandparent’s day performance
- Guided walk at the Botanic Gardens
- Judo
- Letters to Santa in braille
- Pacific School Games in 2015 in Adelaide will include Goalball
- RealSAM
- Sensory Christmas activities
- Space Camp 2014
- SPEVI Conference 2015
- Swish state championships
- VI swimming for juniors

Please join and please upload information! Let’s all share what we know!

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RealSAM

Source: LiveWire4Education November 2014

RealSAM is a mobile device with an interactive spoken interface that allows users to search and navigate a wide range of media, and have articles read to them. It provides unparalleled access to content – just click the (single) button and speak!

Up-to-date news and information and other online content can be very difficult to access for people with a print disability, and RealSAM successfully breaks down these barriers. RealSAM is also truly portable and can be used on the go, or while doing other tasks.

RealSAM can be used anywhere there is a Wi-Fi or mobile network. Currently you can access:

- Newspapers and news feeds
- Podcasts – over 50,000 episodes of more than 1,500 podcasts
- Weather – current weather and forecasts for anywhere around the world
- Location – tells you where you are and points of interest nearby



And there are some exciting new developments in the pipeline which will really open the doors to simple ‘one-button’ access to a huge range of accessible content. Watch this space!

Check out a video demonstration by Graeme Innes: http://youtu.be/ulvgQhM_txs

Audio Books to New Wireless Victor Reader

The new Victor Reader Stratus and Victor Reader Stream offer wireless internet connectivity. Audio bookworms are able to download DAISY audiobooks directly on their Victor Reader without having to use a computer or wait for a CD in the mail.

From the website: “Victor Reader extends its talking book, document, and music playback features, to the wireless world where downloaded books and newspapers, streaming radio stations, and online Wikipedia reference tools become part of Victor Reader’s increasing access to digital content. And best of all, users continue to navigate the new online content through the player’s popular and simple to use bookshelf interface.”

For more information visit: <http://www.humanware.com/microsite/victor/>

PSD – Assessment Service Referrals

Source: DEECD S43602914

From the 5th January 2015, assessments for PSD will be undertaken by Assessment Australia. Tel: 9663 6622 / Email: psd-as@assessments.com.au

Microsoft Help Desk for People with Disabilities

The Australian number that puts you through to the Microsoft Helpdesk in the US for people with disabilities is 1800 280 300.

Help Your Child Beat the Brain Slump These Holidays

Source: eduGate, 9 December 2014

Most children are pleased to have a break from the rigours of school work over the summer holidays, but many will not open a book again until the beginning of the next school year. Not only does this make it difficult to get back into the swing of study when the time arises, it also means a valuable opportunity is missed. And that is the opportunity to discover the joy of reading for pleasure. Reading for pleasure is a wonderful way for your child to escape and unwind. It's also a great way to keep their brain active.

Studies have shown that children who stop reading over the school holidays experience something American researchers call the "summer slide" - a term used to refer to students' learning losses over the summer break. Researchers used the analogy of a 'tap' to provide some insight into their findings, saying that while children are at school there is a flow of information, and all children have the same opportunities to learn. When they are not at school, however, that 'tap' is turned off, unless there is some active engagement with books or other resources. Children whose 'tap' stays on throughout the summer holidays return to school with an advantage over those whose 'tap' may have been turned off for the past two months. Over time, that advantage accumulates, and becomes a reason why some children are more successful at school than others.

Success aside, there is a world of enjoyment waiting to be discovered inside the pages of picture books and novels. Books are perfect for the sofa, the back lawn and the beach – all the places your child is most likely to be lounging these school holidays.

The Department has even compiled book lists for children of different ages – making it easy to find something for your pre-schooler, Preppy, eight-year-old or teenager. The book lists, which are refreshed every year by reading experts to include popular new releases, form part of the Premiers' Reading Challenge – an annual event that inspires young people of all ages to read more books.

So while their textbooks may be closed for the summer, their brains certainly shouldn't be. Make sure your children have a ready supply of books that appeal to their age and interests these school holidays, and help them discover the joy of reading for fun. To download a copy of the Premiers' Reading Challenge booklists, visit: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/events/prc/Pages/booklist.aspx

AND/OR check out **BorrowBox** at your local library – for information visit your library webpage or: www.bolindalibrary.com/uk/digitaldownloads.aspx **OR** Audible.com

MiniRoos School Holiday Clinic

Source: Blind Sports Victoria December 2014 Newsletter

The Vision Impaired MiniRoos School Holiday clinic, presented by Blind Sports Victoria, Medibank Community Fund and Melbourne City FC, will provide the opportunity for children with vision impairments to learn the skills of football (soccer) in a fun, supportive and inclusive clinic. And, if you are lucky you might even get to meet a Melbourne City FC coach or player.

Who: Boys and girls who have a vision-impairment between the ages of 5-12, brothers and sisters are welcome to register. Wear general sports attire, new players are welcome.

Cost: Free (including free food and drink at the end of the session)

Registration: To register, email info@blindsports.org.au, with name, age and dietary requirements. Further information will be provided upon registration.

Registrations close Friday 9th January 2015 and places are limited.

New Accessible Games

Spoonbill Software recently has three new accessible games in the Blind Gamers series. There is rather a large collection of accessible games already available under the following headings:

- Card games
- Word games
- Logic games
- Board games
- Miscellaneous games

New games include:

- BG 2048 - A tile-sliding game
- BG Word Yahtzee - A cross between Boggle and Yahtzee where you make words instead of rolling dice
- BG Simon - Repeat the ever-increasing note sequence without making a mistake

You can browse descriptions of these games by visiting the Spoonbill Software blind gamers site at: www.spoonbillsoftware.com.au/blindgamers.htm

The games are all free of charge. To order, email Ian Humphreys with your full name and country of residence; and the full name of each game you want to order; for instance BG Cribbage 2.1. The BG in front of the game name indicates that you want the blind accessible version of the game: games@spoonbillsoftware.com.au

Load2Learn: The Impacts and Benefits of Blind Accessible Education Resources

Source: Media Access website

In most countries, blind and vision impaired students attend mainstream schools and are provided with varying levels of support. One of these is accessible resources, particularly textbooks and other materials. The Royal National Institute of Blind People runs a resources program called Load2Learn which will be launched internationally this year. Media Access Australia CEO, Alex Varley, discusses the upcoming initiative and existing research and development from the field, alongside potential benefits and impacts of the Load2Learn program in Australia.

Listen to the MP3 file: www.mediaaccess.org.au/sites/default/files/media/20141130_AV.mp3

National Partnership Equipment: Friendly Reminder

From Lyn Robinson:

If one of your students is moving to a different school next year could you please ask the new school to fill in a form so we can keep track of where the equipment is. If your student is on a list for returned equipment could you also please distribute forms to the school and the family. Equipment will be reassigned as soon as the forms are in and the equipment becomes available in term 1. There are blank forms which you can use on the SVRC website – just fill in the name the equipment and the student's details on the form: www.svrc.vic.edu.au/Anational_partnership.shtml

Finally, if you have any equipment students are no longer using, could you please return to the SVRC so we can reassign to another student.

SPEVI Bear Out & About

SPEVI Bear spent the weekend with Jackie riding horses and generally catching up on some Vitamin D. Here he is enjoying some time with Jackie's horse, Willow.

SPEVI Bear can't wait to catch up at the SPEVI Conference – coming soon!



VCE Results

- **Odette's** student **Darren** achieved a TER of 91.2 which will allow him to study his first choice – a Bachelor of Science.
- **Sophie's** student **Abbey** achieved the following results for her two VCE subjects: Literature 41 and Legal Studies 50!! Great effort!!

Vale Stella Young

As you may have heard by now, Stella Young, a prominent comedian, disability, feminist and LGBTI activist, and all-round shining example of humanity, passed away on Saturday. She spent most of her 32 years educating about disability and advocating for the rights of others using one of the best mediums possible – humour – through her dry wit and acute sense of the absurd. She loved a raucous dance, an intelligent conversation, a challenging knitting pattern and the company of good people.

I was privileged to know Stella professionally and personally, and we shared a love of coffee, dancing and shoes, as well as deep discussions around disability pride, education, and how to change the world in general. She challenged my understandings of disability, and I am a better teacher and person because of her. We had planned projects together, always thinking that when we both had a bit more time, we'd set them in motion. I cannot believe she is so suddenly gone.

I am sure she would hope that other young disabled people (and I use that term deliberately, as she did), including those with vision impairments, would continue in her vocal, passionate and eloquent ways to finish the work that she now cannot. She'd hate me for saying this, but it is my hope that her passing will inspire others to do what we can towards her life's work: an inclusive society where being disabled is no longer an impediment but an identity.

Emily White

Finally

Have a wonderful school break and excellent festive season!

Deb Lewis would like to thank everyone for their contribution to this issue of The Bulletin, and in particular Ann Crowley and Garry Stinchcombe.