

The Bulletin

Number 18, Friday 20th November 2015

SVRC Christmas Morning Tea

You are all invited to the event-of-the-year – the SVRC Christmas Morning Tea.

It's a chance for us to thank you for your efforts and support to students with vision impairments in Victorian schools. It's a great opportunity to mingle with members of our community – and to eat yummy food!

Professional Development 2016

- **Educational Support for Blind Students** for class and subject teachers, integration teachers and aides, therapists, parents/care-givers and visiting teachers who support students who use braille; also offered via video conference with local staff in Footscray – Monday 8 February
- **Skill Power Workshops** – Wednesday 17 February
- **Educational Support for Students with Low Vision** for class and subject teachers, integration teachers and aides, therapists, parents/care-givers and VTs who support students who have low vision (max onsite participants: 60; also offered via video conference with local staff in Footscray on 23 February) – Monday 22 February OR Tuesday 23 February
- **New Visiting Teacher Orientation Day** from 9.30am – Monday 29 February
- **Skill Power Workshops** – Tuesday 1 March
- **Including Students with Vision Impairments in PE, Sport and Recreation Programs** with Emily White and Charlie Roberts – Wednesday 9 March
- **Skill Power Workshops** – Wednesday 16 March
- **Family Futures Forum** to be held at Vision Australia – Saturday 19 March
- **Educational Support for Vision Impaired Students with Additional Impairments** for teachers, aides, therapists, parents/care-givers and VTs (max participants: 60) – Monday 21 March
- **Skill Power Workshops** – Tuesday 19 April
- **Skill Power Workshops** – Wednesday 4 May
- **Art4Kids with VI? – Including students with vision impairments in the school Art program** with Michael Donnelly at SVRC – Wednesday 11 May
- **Skill Power Workshops** – Tuesday 17 May

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Free International Online Conference on Inclusion and Rehabilitation for the Visually Impaired

Source: SPEVI listserv

The International Institute on Visual Impairment is an institution that provides face-to-face and online courses around the world, individual assistance, and training and consultation to people who are blind, low vision, their families and professionals who work with visually impaired people. For more information about the Institute visit: www.deficienciavisual.org/.

The **online conference** will take place from December 11th to 13th, via video conference and will be translated into English, Spanish and Portuguese.

There will be over 30 lectures, divided into seven panels and taught by speakers from countries like USA, Canada, Germany, Israel, India, Chile, Colombia, Argentina and Brazil.

There are over 600 registered persons from 33 different countries and you are invited to be part of this interchange of ideas and experiences on visual impairment living. Registration is free, and you can register online: www.deficienciavisual.org/conference/.

Update: GraVVITAS

Many of us have been involved, since 2011, in the GraVVITAS project which brought together staff from Monash University, Statewide Vision Resource Centre, Vision Australia, jTribe, and Catholic Education Office. The aim was to develop a method of presenting graphics to students with vision impairments and resulted in the development of an iPad app and a custom designed haptic ring. A number of students who attend the SVRC Support Skills Program contributed their input into usability study; and their feedback assisted in the development and fine-tuning of:

- the iPad app, GraVIEWER, for presentation of accessible graphics to blind students using audio feedback. At the moment the focus will be on the audio-only version as the haptic feedback ring is still a prototype.
- the web-based authoring application, GraAUTHOR, for creating accessible graphics suitable for presentation on GraVVITAS.
- the accessible graphing calculator app built on top of GraViewer in which either teachers or blind students can specify a function to be graphed and add optional text or audio annotations. An automatically generated overview as well as sonification is generated to help with navigation.

GraVVITAS was awarded an Honourable Mention in the 2012 National Braille Press Touch of Genius Awards. We look forward to the continued development of GraVVITAS and thank the team, including Cagatay Goncu, Kim Marriott and Armin Krall for their work and dedication.

Earlier this year, the GraVVITAS project was put under the commercialisation scheme at Monash University and will go further under the name of RaisedPixels (www.raisedpixels.com).

Graduate Diploma of Orientation and Mobility

The Vision Australia Graduate Diploma of Orientation and Mobility is a nationally recognised qualification for people seeking employment as O&M Specialists. The course is delivered face to face 3 days a week over a period of 20 months. For further information including flier, course handbook, fee structure and expression of interest form, please visit:

www.visionaustralia.org/oandmcourse or contact Michelle Sharples on (03) 9381 6425.

SSP: What's Happening in Art with Michael?

Ceramics – Coiled Plant Pot Creatures.

Students were invited to create a strange living thing out of clay in a recent art session at Support Skills. The creatures were made by forming 'worms' or coils of clay by hand. These were placed on the edge of a small clay disk and added to with further coils building up a tubular vessel. Upon reaching maximum height in the time available, students were asked to shape some leaves and/or petals or tentacles around the rim to create his own strange thing. This involved joining the pieces of clay together very well by scoring or scratching the surfaces with a fork and dabbing some clay glue or slurry on to help the process, finishing with a welding of the insides of the vessel with a modelling tool.

Van Van (right) completed his piece by creating a very joyful creature with eyes on curled stalks. The claywork was dried out and then fired in the Donvale Primary School Art Room kiln. Glaze paint was then applied to the fired artwork.



Zentangling

In a more recent session, students were introduced to a potentially relaxing drawing technique that has become popular lately called 'Zentangles'. Students were presented with a short YouTube introduction and some examples both on electronic magnifier and enlarged photocopies, that explained the basic process of drawing up an approximately 9cm square, inscribing some line



'strings' within that and then slowly and quietly filling each of the subdivided areas inside the square with 'tangles', a variety of lines and patterns. The idea is that the process is less about 'perfect' drawing and more about 'being' in the moment of making the lines and patterns. It is a form of 'doodling' that can hopefully help to de-stress. Some music by harpist Alan Stivell was played to help set the mood.



Students used a slant-board or viewed their zentangling using an electronic magnifier and created some beautiful work with thick and thin pens. Photos show Wes (left) and Leah (right).

Research into Job Success

Source: <http://newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2014/07/grit-common-ingredient-job-success>

In a 2014 article by Amanda Woodward from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) Newsroom, the findings of research conducted by Jennifer Green into job success for people with disabilities is discussed. Green looked into ways to improve the employment chances for the estimated 15 per cent of working-age Australians with disability.

She says that the overriding personal characteristic of high achievers with a disability is “grit”. Woodward writes:

Instead of taking a traditional approach and exploring barriers to employment, she sought out high achievers in the disability community to see if there were common factors in their experiences. Identifying 30 people using a “snowball sampling technique” – contacting people she knew or knew of through referrals or cold calling – Green selected people with a range of ages and disabilities, including mobility, vision, hearing, communication and chronic illness.

The overriding personal characteristic they shared was determination, she says. “They were persistent, saw employment as their right and had a long-term plan for achieving that.”

Significantly, they often had someone in their young lives who believed this was an achievable outcome and offered support.

But the most interesting revelation for Green was that out of the 30, 27 worked either paid or unpaid for disability organisations. Those who began as volunteers with these types of organisations, gained experience and skills that took them into paid employment.

From the launch pads of disability organisations, Green found people stayed connected, developed networks and derived support from others who understood the problems and attitudes that people with disabilities encounter at work.

“There’s huge goodwill in some workplaces but a lack of understanding among managers,” says Green. “And, as a person with a disability, you are the constant educator. What the research shows is that, although it’s not part of their brief, disability organisations are instrumental in creating employment opportunities.”

“Often disability organisations’ funding is insecure and reliant on government. But they are having a big social impact and it needs to be measured, as it’s not recognised now. Yet they are the beginning of a supply chain into the employment market and that’s a very important role.”

And Whilst on the Subject: Thoughts from Dan

In the latest issue of “Get About” from Guide Dogs Victoria, Dan makes the following observation:

“Just get involved! The amount of doors it opens up and the amount of pathways and opportunities it gives you is just ridiculous!”

Dan is currently a fast bowler for the Victorian and Australian Blind Cricket team, an Australian Goalball player, President & Captain St Pauls Blind Cricket Club, Community Rep for GDV, U14s State Coach for the Victorian Goallball Association, and in his spare time is studying Psychology at Monash.

New Cheat Sheets

PowerPoint with JAWS or NVDA

Lea Nagel's latest contribution to the ever-growing resources for those supporting students with vision impairments; and the students themselves.

PowerPoint can seem like a difficult program to use for people whose access to the computer is via synthetic speech.

Lea's cheat sheet begins with an explanation of the layout of the PowerPoint screen including the slide area, status bar tool bar, thumbnails, upper ribbon (menus) and notes. F6 switches between these panes. The cheat sheet describes the steps to add text and images to the slide area, add slides and page numbers, add sound, play the slide show and more.

Download from the SVRC website: <http://svrc.vic.edu.au/PowerPoint-with-JAWS-or-NVDA.pdf>

Keyboard Shortcuts in iOS 9 with an External Keyboard

Glen Morrow has compiled a list of handy keyboard shortcuts that can be used with iOS 9 and an external keyboard.

Download from the SVRC website: <http://svrc.vic.edu.au/iOS9ExtKBShortcuts.pdf>

Round Table Conference 2016: Call for Papers

When: Saturday, 14 May 2016 to Tuesday, 17 May 2016

Where: Bayview on the Park, Melbourne, Victoria

You are invited to present at the next Round Table Conference:

- **Oral presentation:** 30 minutes (20 min presentation + 10 minutes for questions/discussion)
- **Panel presentation,** 10 minutes per presenter on the panel
- **Interactive workshop presentation** of 60 or 90 minutes duration
- **Poster presentation** that will be exhibited in a dedicated space for informal browsing

Suggested presentation topics

- Legislation, policies, research and/or service delivery models that promote equitable information access for children and adults with print disabilities
- Specialist and mainstream technology, including new and emerging technologies
- Literacy development for children and adults with print disabilities
- Provision and cataloguing of accessible information
- Innovative strategies and practices in print accessibility
- Recent developments in copyright, disability standards and Round Table guidelines
- Issues relating to print disability in school, work and community contexts
- Implications of policies, frameworks and activities under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for Australians with print disabilities
- Workshops demonstrating the creation of accessible documents, websites and/or graphical images

For further information and abstract submission form please contact the Administration Officer, Marjorie Hawkings tel: (03) 9010 6251 or email admin@printdisability.org

Closing date for submission of abstracts: Friday, 4 December 2015

Windows 10

There's a great video introduction to the new Windows 10 Start Menu by CathyAnn Murtha from the Access Technology Institute. The video is designed for people who are blind or have low vision and describes how to use Windows 10 with the keyboard.

Visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMMcebZnnnw&feature=youtu.be>

New iBook About Cortical Vision Impairment

Source: <http://www.ridbc.org.au/cviibook>:

“Understanding Vision Impairment – Cortical Visual Impairment” by Rosa Wright is a new iBook from the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC).

The primary purpose of this iBook is to provide parents with key information about Cortical Visual Impairment (also known as Cerebral Visual Impairment or CVI). It is hoped that this resource will help parents to identify the main characteristics of CVI that their child is displaying, and to incorporate appropriate strategies to promote their child's visual functioning throughout their everyday routines.

This iBook features photos and videos to assist in demonstrating key points. Download from the iTunes Store for AUD\$4.99.

New Mountbatten Braille Whisperer with Bluetooth

Source: <http://www.quantumrlv.com.au/mountbatten-whisperer-bluetooth-dongle-add-on.html>

Mountbatten Braille Whisperer is built to be 70% quieter than a standard braille writer, and includes Bluetooth for interface with an app available for iOS, Android and Mac. The app allows for real-time print-to-braille and braille-to-print translation so students and teachers can interact effectively.

The Mountbatten Whisperer:

- is battery operated and portable
- has a braille keyboard
- produces hard copy braille
- is ergonomically designed to fit fingers comfortably
- has simple correction and erasing function
- can be set to one-handed mode if required
- has speech output
- has braille-to-print as well as print-to-braille translation available
- can be used as a graphics embosser encouraging the development of tactual skills.
- can be connected to a PC keyboard to enable sighted teachers, peers and family to write in braille
- can be connected to a PC to send files back and forward
- can send to printer
- has inbuilt clock, countdown timer, stop watch and date/time



Price: \$5,615.00 from Quantum RLV

Lesson Plan: iOS VoiceOver Gestures Practice

Gestures require dexterity and strength to perform movements that are clear and successful. Flick and swipe gestures can be tricky. The Paths to Literacy website have a lesson plan designed for students who are blind and needing additional support with concepts and fine motor skills needed for effective use of iOS VoiceOver gestures.

Visit: <http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/technology/lesson-plan-ios-voiceover-gestures-practice>

Laptop Q&A

From Jeni Blake, Visiting Teacher SEVR

Question: The new ACER laptops that have been rolled out to schools are not powerful enough to run a split system for the electronic whiteboard and a monitor as previously the Lenova computer roll outs were. You will experience lines and signal failure on your Smartboard or it will run to one screen or the other. Is there a work-around for this?

Answer: To boost the signal strength you'll need to purchase a powered AV 2 way VGA audio splitter. An unpowered Y cable will no longer connect the system as you need the extra power. Jaycar has them at \$64.95 Digitech Audio Visual or try the internet.

Freedom Scientific and Optelec Join Forces in Assistive Technology Merger

Source: <http://www.freedomscientific.com/About/News/Article/149>

(St. Petersburg, Florida and Barendrecht, The Netherlands, 16 November 2015)

Freedom Scientific and Optelec announced today that the two companies have merged to create the world's largest assistive technology provider for the visually impaired. The two companies have a long history of providing innovative technology solutions that enable blind and low vision individuals to reach their full potential – to gain an education, obtain employment, succeed in professional careers, and live independently throughout their lives.

Both companies were recently acquired by Vector Capital, a San Francisco based firm that invests in market leading global technology companies.

Ed: Not sure what that means for us here in Australia ... we'll have to wait and see!

Student News

Swimming Milestone!

From Jeni Blake – Visiting Teacher SEVR

Will has achieved a wonderful milestone. He is a Year 3 student at Seaford Primary school. He is able to swim 12 metres independently. He has been coached by Steve Cooper husband of Seaford Primary School secretary Erica. Will swims weekly at YMCA Somerville. Great work Will!



Jeni says the YMCA has an open access scheme enabling families to apply for assistance with swimming costs.

Typing Champ!

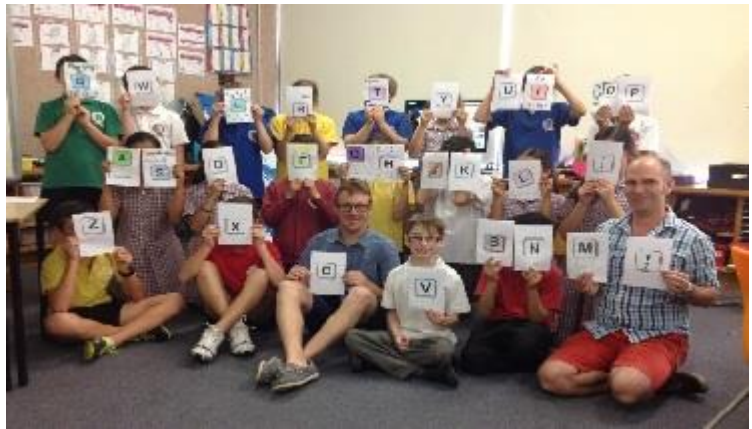
From Lisa Zarb – Catholic Education Melbourne

Congratulations to Quinn (Grade 5 Queen of Peace PS) who has successfully completed the Typing Tournament Program. He showed great persistence and determination to improve his speed and accuracy.

One of the teachers at the school challenged Quinn to a typing competition and in an intense battle Quinn won 51 wpm to 48 wpm. Quinn's highest score so far has been 54 wpm!

His class celebrated by making QWERTY Keyboard cards and are very supportive of his achievement. Quinn also has his own students who he is passing on his skills to as he believes touch typing is a great skill for everyone to have before they go to Secondary School.

Well done Quinn! We are very proud of you.



News

- The following students graduated from the Support Skills Program last Friday – **Elliot, Jamie, Kate, Lilly, Michaela, Nick, Rohan** and **Scott**. Some of these students have been attending SSP since they were in grade 3. We wish them the very best for their VCE studies and beyond ... and we'll miss them all!
- **Brendan** (SSP Class of 2014) has been accepted into the Kick Start Program in New Zealand for 2016. Cassie attended this program for two years during 2012 and 2013 and we are thrilled to hear that another student is going have the same opportunity! For more information about the Kick Start Program, visit: <http://blennzonline.edublogs.org/2012/01/21/kick-start/>
- **Lyn Robinson** is recovering well and will return to the SVRC in 2016.
- VT and SSP Teacher **Charlie Roberts** has recently completed his Master of Special Education – Sensory Impairment (Vision) through RIDBC. Congratulations to Charlie!!!
- Community leader **Maryanne Diamond** will take up a position as General Manager Media, Comms & Engagement on 23 November 2015. We wish her all the best for this challenging role!

Finally

Editor Deb Lewis would like to thank everyone for their contribution to this issue of The Bulletin, and in particular Geoff Bowen, Phia Damsma, Michael Donnelly and Sue Matthews.