

The Bulletin

Number 1, Friday 29th January 2016

Welcome Back!

Welcome everyone to the SVRC in 2016. We hope you all had an enjoyable and relaxing time over the school holidays. Whether you are a student, parent, visiting teacher or school staff member we wish you all the best for the coming year.

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New-Look Website for SVRC

To kick off a year that is going to be a ripper, we are launching our new-look website along with this new-look issue of The Bulletin today! We hope that navigation will be easy and that you'll be able to find the things you are looking for – if not, please send an email and we'll sort you out!

Along with the text-based content, this year we will be adding lots of new training videos and tutorials to assist you to learn more about access technology, the expanded core curriculum and more in your own time. Visit: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au> and for suggestions and feedback, please be in touch!

Professional Development 2016

The PD calendar including downloadable programs can be found on our new-look SVRC website. Upcoming events for terms 1 and 2 include:

- **Educational Support for Blind Students:** Monday 8 February
- **Skill Power Workshops:** Wednesday 17 February
- **Educational Support for Students with Low Vision:** 22 Feb **OR** 23 Feb
- **New Visiting Teacher Orientation Day:** Monday 29 February
- **Skill Power Workshops:** Tuesday 1 March
- **Including Students with Vision Impairments in PE & Sport:** Wednesday 9 March
- **Skill Power Workshops:** Wednesday 16 March
- **Family Futures Forum @ SVRC:** Saturday 19 March
- **Educational Support for Students with Vision and Additional Impairments:** Tuesday 19 April
- **Skill Power Workshops:** Wednesday 4 May
- **Art4Kids with VI?:** Wednesday 11 May
- **Skill Power Workshops:** Tuesday 17 May

Professional Development 2016 @ SVRC

We are planning another stimulating year of professional development for you this year. We begin the year early in Term 1 with **Educational Support for Students who are Blind** on 8th February. This full day introduces school staff to teaching strategies, technology, braille, SVRC and other agencies' support and programs for students who are blind.

On 22nd of February and repeated on 23rd February, we are running a full day for school staff, **Educational Support for Students with Low Vision**. Low vision simulation activities and sessions about the educational implications of vision loss will help participants better understand the needs of these students.

On the 9th March, Emily White and Charlie Roberts will be running a program called **Including Students with Vision Impairments in PE & Sport**. This day is an excellent opportunity for all PE teachers who have a student with a vision impairment involved in their program. It's very interactive, and some of the activities will be done under blindfold or simulator! We already have a participant coming across from WA for the day!

Educational Support for VI Students with Additional Impairments will be held on 21st March and will include simulations, technology, teaching strategies and more. This is an excellent day for teachers and aides who work with students in specialist settings or students with significant additional learning needs and are enrolled in regular schools.

In Term 2 Michael Donnelly, SVRC Support Skills Art Teacher, runs an **Art4Kids** day where participants are invited to experience art appreciation and create art under simulation. This day often involves a visit to an art gallery where participants can explore sculpture under blindfold.

Feedback from our programs often includes "best PD I have been to", "invaluable" as well as "lunch was delicious!" Please check our 2016 calendar which can be downloaded from the SVRC website.

Skill Power Workshops are booked for selected Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and are intensive hands-on sessions of 90 minutes. We cater for requests from schools and usually run 3 sessions each Skill Power Day. Sessions may run on: Victor Reader Stream with WiFi, BrailleNote Basics, magnification options or using the computer without the mouse. We love your requests, so please feel free to drop us an email svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au or call us!

PD: New VT Day

New and newish VTs are welcomed to the SVRC on Monday 29 February. It's a chance to meet the SVRC team and to borrow resources with a program that incorporates the information about eye and vision impairment, EVAC and eligibility, the expanded core curriculum, learning media, resources and how SVRC can support VT work in schools. Please register by phone or email to let us know you are coming. And if you'd like anything in particular included on the day, please ask!

UEB Introduced in Scotland

Source: ABA Facebook Updates, December 2015

Unified English Braille (UEB) has now been introduced in Scotland. UEB was developed with the aim of establishing a single braille code for all English-speaking peoples of the world. UEB has been adopted in Australia (2005), Canada (2010), New Zealand (2005), Nigeria (2005), South Africa (2004), UK (2011) and USA (2012). UEB is being introduced throughout the UK this year.

Rio 2016 Unveil Paralympic Torch and Relay Route

Source: <http://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1032493/rio-2016-unveil-paralympic-torch-and-relay-route>

Rio 2016 has revealed its design for the Paralympic Torch and the route for the Torch Relay, which is set to take place between September 1 and 7 ahead of the Games.

At a special ceremony, officials claimed the Torch celebrates “diversity and equality” and will act as an iconic symbol which will spread the spirit of the Games and the Paralympic values throughout Brazil.



Created using the same design concept as the Olympic Torch, with both Torches aiming to illustrate equality, the differing characters of Olympic and Paralympic athletes are claimed to be revealed.

The Paralympic version has “sinuous curves” to represent the highs and lows in the life of a Paralympic athlete, acknowledging an athlete’s determination and achievements throughout various stages of their lives.

Additionally, the quadrangular shape is stated as referring to the four Paralympic values – courage, determination, inspiration and equality - **which are written in braille on the torch.**

For more, please see the link above.

VA’s New Tool for Checking Accessibility in Word Documents

Source: <https://www.visionaustralia.org/dat>

Vision Australia has developed a free (beta) accessibility ribbon menu for Microsoft Word that makes it quicker and easier to create accessible documents. The Document Accessibility Toolbar (DAT) supports content authors to provide accessibility as ‘business as usual’ at no cost.

Download single or multi-user licences for the DAT from the website above.

Melbourne Museum’s Autism-Friendly Approach

Source: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/melbournemuseum/visiting/accessibility/autism-friendly-museum/>

Melbourne Museum offers Autism-friendly support for visitors including:

- social scripts for families and teachers which include photographs showing children what they’ll encounter during their visit
- a map of high and low sensory spaces
- a suggestion of times with less visitors (e.g. 3 to 5pm on weekdays during term time)
- how to buy tickets online and avoid queues

Confessions of a VCE Chief Assessor

By Henrietta Cook, Education Reporter at The Age, 2 December 2015

When thousands of VCE students fling their pens to the desk, Marilyn Wiber embarks on a mammoth task. She oversees the marking of thousands of VCE geography exams, which are scrutinised by an army of assessors in homes across the state.

“The general public doesn’t realise what is involved in developing and assessing a year 12 exam paper. They really don’t,” Ms Wiber said.

The retiring chief assessor for VCE geography has witnessed huge changes during her 21 years in the role. Countries have been renamed and their borders have shifted. Exam marking has moved online and students’ handwriting has deteriorated. “It has certainly gone downhill,” she said. But rest assured, sloppy handwriting does not lead to lower marks.

“This year I have marked a few exams where the handwriting has been less than ideal. But they have done extremely well because they knew their geography.”

Ms Wiber said students’ responses to exam questions have improved. “They are writing in far greater depth and it is far more complex. They are using data to justify their responses.”

Chief assessors rarely give interviews and have to follow strict rules. Ms Wiber, who teaches at Mentone Girls’ Grammar, is banned from teaching Year 12 geography students because she creates their exams.

Students at the independent school joke that they always know where Ms Wiber has travelled, because her holiday snaps have ended up in the geography exam. She said the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority went out of its way to make exams accessible.

One year, it painstakingly created a 3D model of a map with rocky mountains for a blind student. Ms Wiber has dictated details of maps into a microphone at a South Melbourne recording studio, with the audio played to vision impaired students sitting the exam.

“If you’ve ever had to describe detailed world maps, it is a very daunting experience,” she said. Provisions have also been made for sick students, who have sat exams in hospital beds and even on a mattress on a classroom floor.

Unlike the VCE history exam, which accidentally included a phantom robot in 2012, there have been no major controversies involving the geography exam.

“We are a pretty professional team in geography and we put an incredible amount of time into the preparation of the exam paper,” she said. Assessors work in pairs, and if the difference between their marks is too great, the student’s paper is sent to a third assessor. If an agreement is not reached, it could be sent to a fourth marker. “We really want to make sure that students get the marks they deserve.”

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/confessions-of-a-vce-chief-assessor-20151202-gldih1.html#ixzz3yP5Tuzna>

LifeScience Technologies Cortical Visual Impairment System

Source: <http://www.lifesciencetechnologies.com/Vision>

LifeScience Technologies claims to have developed a system which helps develop visual skills in children with Cortical Visual Impairment. This is a technology based system which consists of an app and web based services which includes the following components:

Lesson Planner

The Lesson Planner allows a CVI educator to create and assign lesson plans that follow the CVI protocol. The lesson plan defines the following:

- Plan title
- Plan objectives
- Session directions
- Background images used

Training Session Manager

- Allows for many different movement types including: circular, rectangular, path-based, straight line, random and fades.
- Varies the display of objects in terms of how rapidly they move, how large or small they are and how long they stay on the display.
- Automatically captures key events that are then sent to our back end web server for analysis.
- Emits audible sounds to indicate to the CVI student what is going on in the training session.
- Displays any number of backgrounds for any duration of time as the session progresses.
- Allows the user to vary the brightness of the display.
- Movies can be played as backgrounds and can be used as “warm up exercises” for students.

Training Session Monitor

The Training Session Monitor allows an instructor to join in on a training session in order to monitor that session and has the following capabilities:

- Allows an instructor to record events that are of interest during the lesson plan, based on the information contained in the lesson plan. The lesson plan indicates what events to track while The Training Session Monitor records when these events occur using buttons presented on their workstation.
- Allows the instructor to see all events that are being recorded, both automatically by the system and individually by the human monitor.
- Emits additional sounds to indicate to the CVI student what is going on in the session.

HumanWare Community Forum

HumanWare invites people with vision loss and their families/carers, vision specialists, disability employment agencies, occupational therapists, educators and teachers to attend a community forum for the launch of Explorē and Prodigy Connect 12. After the presentation by orthoptist Tony Wu, there will be an opportunity for you to try the new low vision aids which are suitable for home, workplace or school.

Where: Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, Ringland Seminar Room
Level 1, 32 Gisborne Street, East Melbourne VIC 3002

When: 26 February 2016 from 2 to 4pm

Bookings are essential – please phone 0488 298 819 or email tony.wu@humanware.com

Dolly Bhargava: New Website

Dolly Bhargava, speech pathologist specialising in assisting children, adolescents and adults with disabilities, and author of a range of books including the Getting Started series now has a website. Dolly offers consultancy, workshops, and resource development assistance that is individually tailored to schools or organisations.

Her resources are freely downloadable from the website: <http://www.dollybhargava.com>

News

- **Kara** returns from family leave in 2016 and will be working with students with vision impairments in SWVR on Thursdays and Fridays. Her first day will be 28th January.
- **Ro** (SEVR – East Gippsland) and **Mariette** (NEVR) are new to VT – Vision students this year. We'll have the chance to welcome them on our new and newish VT day on 29th February.

Finally

Editors Deb Lewis and Lyn Robinson would like to thank everyone for their contribution to this issue of The Bulletin, and in particular Deb Davidson, Leona Holloway, Glen Morrow, Lea Nagel and Emily White.

If you would like to contribute to The Bulletin please email svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au

To read The Bulletin online visit: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au>