

The Bulletin

Number 18, Monday 14 November 2017

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Dates for Your Diary – 2017

Here's what's coming up:

- **Support Skills Try Day:** 17 November
- **SVRC Annual Writing Competition Closing Date:** 7 November
- **SVRC Technology Expo:** 28 November – Check out the navigation beacons at SVRC – see below
- **SVRC Christmas Morning Tea:** 6 December

See the SVRC website for more information and online registration.

SVRC Expo 2017: Finding Your Way

When: 28 November 10am to 2pm

Where: SVRC

No need to RSVP – just come along! And it's free!

More information including a brief description of our exhibitors: svrc.vic.edu.au/expo

Workshops:

10:30am NV Access demonstrating NVDA – the free and powerful screen reader

11:30am Guide Dogs Victoria show how beacons and QR codes are the future in navigation.

1:30pm Monash Uni's SensiLab show how 3D printing offers a clear advantage over tactile graphics.

You can also:

Try magnification and screen reading software, audio books, navigation and optical character recognition devices, braille technology and more.

Navigate through the expo space independently with QR codes on each exhibitor's table.

Support Skills Careers Day and Graduation!

Prepared by Garry Stinchcombe 14 November 2017

SVRC recently hosted 17 Support Skills students when they attended a combined Careers and Graduation session. The focus of the day was on Careers and then farewelling 10 students who are leaving the program at the end of this year.

Our keynote speaker was Ben Pettingill. Several of the students had identified Ben as someone they would like to hear and meet. Ben graciously came in and kept the students, their families and SVRC Staff engaged, inspired and motivated! Ben's personal approach to managing his vision loss in a way that is no barrier to his life was affirming to hear. Ben is an excellent communicator and has a delivery style that is both engaging and powerful. At the end of his presentation, he was surrounded by students and families all wanting to meet him and soak up some of that positive energy he transmits when sharing his personal story.

Ben has a great website where you can go to find out more details about his approach to life and where you can get information about how to book him to present at your local school group or club. Visit: www.Benpettingill.com

We all look forward to hearing about Ben's next ventures whether it is walking the Kokoda Track, competing in a water ski race or setting up his own business and foundation! I'm sure this isn't the last we've heard from Ben Pettingill!

After recess Belinda Wilson from Vision Australia, Building Stronger Futures, ran a workshop on "What Employers Want". The group brainstormed ideas and then reported back. Belinda is currently working on a program which is aiming to target people who are blind or have low vision aged between 18 and 25. Belinda has already run the workshop once in Melbourne and is now off to run it in Brisbane and Sydney. Belinda brought lots of current experience which she was happy to share with the group. Again, a theme which ran through the feedback Belinda was providing was that students need to be proactive and get involved. While it might be hard to find part time work if you can get involved with leadership opportunities at school, volunteering experience outside of school, joining up a club or sporting activity, these all help to fill out that resume that the employer is so keen to see.

Thanks to Belinda and Vision Australia for making time to come and run a very useful workshop.



Above: Singers entertain staff and families.

We were then treated to a panel session, "Reflecting on the Journey So Far" with four speakers sharing their personal stories about how they secured their current job. Darren Moyle from Guide Dogs Victoria, Peggy Soo from Youth Disability Advocacy Services, Belinda Wilson Leader, Building Stronger Future from Vision Australia and Renee Williamson who currently teaches in the Support Skills Program. All four presenters spoke about what impact their vision impairment had on getting a job. Everyone had a vastly different story. What was common to all four presentations was the need to persevere, be a problem solver and aim high! There were lots of other messages contained in their presentations but we all valued their honesty, openness and can do approach.

After lunch, Peggy Soo spoke to the group about NDIS – "NDIS – the Questions I Forgot to Ask". Earlier in the year Peggy had come in and run workshops for all the older students on getting them thinking about NDIS and what it meant for them. Peggy answered a number of questions and encouraged people to contact her through YDAS if they needed further information. Again, we extend our thanks to Peggy Soo and YDAS for coming in and meeting with the students and their families.

The final part of the day saw all the students come together with their families and SVRC Staff to formally farewell the ten SSP graduates. Some students have been attending the program since they were in Grade 3. After some individual musical performances and group singing, Marion Blazé finished up with some words about each of the graduates, a line of handshakes and then off to afternoon tea!

Marion asked the students to ponder the following:

1. The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.
2. Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right.
3. Security is mostly a superstition. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.

A little sad but also a great opportunity to reflect on the successes and milestones of the group members.

We wish the 2017 Year 10's all the best for the future and look forward to hearing about their achievements.

(Right: Sam and Thien performing on our piano, kindly donated by Professor Hector Maclean.)



Requesting Materials from SVRC – We Need Your Help

From Marion Blazé

We are up to our 2,528th request for alternative format materials for 2017, and are already working on more than 400 requests for materials for 2018!! Boy are we busy!!

With this in mind we ask that you please have a chat with your schools. Please ask them to "completely complete" the request forms for materials, otherwise we end up having to fill in copyright and cataloguing details for many multiples of forms for our many students! Use shortcuts if you like – fill in the student and school details, and even the general details if it's a series of books, and duplicate this before filling in the particulars.

ALSO, we would like schools to download the documents they require rather than just sending us a link. It creates a lot of work and also a lot of uncertainty when we just receive a link with a request to provide it in (for example) braille. If the school has downloaded the material, at least we know that they have looked at the information and decided if it is really needed.

We thank you in anticipation of your assistance with this!!!

Ed: See some interesting production statistics towards the end of this issue!

SVRC Technology Lending Library

From Marion Blazé

It's that time of year again, when students are preparing to move on and perhaps their equipment and technology needs are changing, and with seven new braille students starting in schools next year, we would love some equipment to be returned to us.

Here are some reminders about our lending library to Government schools:

Any equipment on loan to students is for the time of their schooling in a Govt. school. If a student is moving to a Catholic or Independent school, then equipment needs to be returned.

If a student is no longer eligible for VT or SVRC support, their equipment needs to be returned. Usually we allow them to use it until the end of the school year, but then it needs to be returned.

If students are finding any of their equipment is no longer useful to them, please return it.

In most cases, students should only have one of each piece of equipment. For example, if you find that a student has more than one of our Perkins Brailers (one used by the student, another perhaps used by the ES), then the school should arrange to lease a Perkins from Vision Australia, or purchase their own brailer. We haven't enough to be lending more than one per student.

Also a note about BrailleNotes: the Apex model is no longer being made by Humanware. The 30 or so units we have out on loan are getting older and we are increasingly getting requests for repairs or replacement. This is difficult to sustain, so we'd appreciate the return of ANY BrailleNote Apexes not being used or on loan to students moving into other educational sectors. We are currently researching other options (BrailleNote Touch, BrailleSense Polaris, ElBraille, Brailiant, etc), but are undecided about which will replace the BN Apex models currently being used by the majority of our braille-using students.

Please feel free to call Marion to discuss any of these points. 03 9841 0242

5 Reasons Why Enlarged Print Isn't Always the Best Option!!!

By Marion Blazé

1. Although often seen by teachers and parents as an "easy" way to read, enlarging work for children makes them dependent on someone to do this for them, and can create delays in getting access to print.
2. There is no "skill" in reading large print. We might better assist students by supporting them to develop skills in using a magnifier (optical or electronic), reading via a computer or tablet, maximising lighting, or using "natural" enlargement by bringing reading material closer to their eyes. Remember, young eyes (unlike our older eyes) can focus very close without fatigue or eye damage.
3. As Karen Wolffe always says, **think next environment**: will students have access to large print in their next educational or life setting? Again, skills are better in the long term.
4. It can be big and bulky, and students often don't like how it draws attention to their special needs.
5. Some claim that if they don't have large print, they suffer from reader fatigue. Reading for education requires rigour. We need to develop stamina and sustainable reading speeds so that students with low vision have the best chance of meeting the increasing demands of the curriculum as they go through school.

Please share your opinions on this and other topics!!

Mozilla Firefox with JAWS, ZoomText & MAGic

Message from Quantum RLV:

We have been advised by our suppliers at VFO Group of an issue with the latest release of Mozilla Firefox web browser version 57 (Also known as Firefox Quantum). This is designed to be much faster and more efficient.

However, the change has meant that it currently isn't working well with screen reading software such as JAWS, ZoomText and MAGic. In short this is because of a change in the way that these software programs can get information from Firefox to interpret what is on the web page and turn it into speech.

If you are using Firefox as your browser it is recommended that for the time being you switch to the Extended Support Release of Firefox by downloading it from the following page: [Firefox ESR download page](#). This will give you important security fixes without going to version 57. The Quantum changes are not scheduled to be rolled out to this release until the second quarter of 2018, by which time VFO are hoping that the accessibility situation with Firefox Quantum will have improved.

Free Upgrade to Windows 10 (but only till 31 December)

Source: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility/windows10upgrade>

If you use assistive technologies, you can upgrade to Windows 10 at no cost ... but only until 31 December 2018. The link above provides more information and a link to "upgrade now".

Purchase Windows 10 (for DET employees)

Source:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/infrastructure/Pages/microsoftst aff.aspx>

DET employees also have a cheaper option to purchase Windows 10 through the Microsoft –Work at Home program. Rather than the current price of over \$160, DET Employees can pay just \$21!

Audio Described Show: Quippings Risky Business

From Description Victoria:

Risky Business is a cabaret game show featuring songs, tattoos, secrets – and tango!

Quippings are taking back International Day of People with Disability in a show tailor-made for it. There will be no DisabiliTea, no charity, no pity; instead - expect fierce and funny and defiant performances.

Out on a limb and playing with fire are Creatrix Tiara, Rachel High, Gem Mahadeo, Kath Duncan, Julie Mac, Sonia Marcon, Kochava Lilit, Anthony Julian, Imogen Newhouse and Jess Kapuscinski-Evans, performers who all identify as disabled and queer/queer friendly.

When: Friday December 1st from 6pm

Where: The Melba Spiegeltent, 35 Johnston Street, Collingwood, near the corner of Johnston and Wellington Streets.

How much? All tickets \$20

How to book? <https://www.trybooking.com/book/event?eid=330841> or contact Kath Duncan on 0437 579 279.

Swimming for VI

From BCA Parent News:

Summer is almost upon and with summer comes fun at the beach and by the pool.

Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria currently has limited places available in our private one-to-one swimming program for blind and vision impaired children and welcome you to join us.

Children learn to feel more confident in and around the water and hone their swimming technique – guided by qualified swimming instructors.

The venue is small, quiet and private. It's located in Melbourne.

For more information contact us info@blindsports.org.au or call 9822 8876.

Benefits of Audio Description in Education Competition

Source: <http://listeningislearning.org/badie.html>

The Benefits of Audio Description in Education (BADIE) contest is an opportunity for young people (aged 7 to 21 years) who can't see or can't see well to earn prizes by reviewing a film and its audio description soundtrack. This competition appears to be open to entrants outside the USA.

[BADIE rules, deadlines, and instructions](#) , including Top Tips for Writing the Ultimate Film Review included below, are available on the Listening is Learning website.

Top Tips for Writing the Ultimate Film Review

1. Keep it short: 250 words maximum.

Tell us which specific parts of the audio description gave you the most vivid sense of what was happening in the film. How did the audio description make you feel? How did it help you learn? Which description did you like best, and which did you not like? Why?

2. Write in the present tense.

For example: "the main character of the film is called" or "when the film starts, he or she does this or that."

3. Make it fun!

Just because you're writing a review doesn't mean it can't be fun to read. Make it as entertaining as possible for your readers.

4. Dish the dirt.

Say exactly what you think (but say it well). Tell the reader whether you loved or hated the film or video but be certain to say why. The judges want to hear your personal opinion.

5. Don't tell the story.

You only have 250 words so don't waste them telling the story. Readers only need to know the outline of the plot and a little bit about the main characters.

6. Be a reporter!

If you can, take notes while you're watching the film (write down memorable quotes, significant moments, etc.).

7. Make time.

The best reviews are written while the film is still fresh in the mind, so do try to get your ideas down as soon as possible after seeing the film.

8. Edit!

Don't forget to reread your review, edit it, then prepare a finished version.

9. No cheating!

Make sure your work is original and not copied from another source in any way.

9. Meet your deadline.

Even the most famous and best paid film critics in the world have to get their reviews done on time so don't forget your deadline: December 1, 2017.

You Can't Ask That!!! - SVRC's Annual Writing Competition

Here at SVRC, we're forever telling people there is no such thing as a "silly" question. If you want to learn, you have to ask! So inspired by the TV show, "You Can't Ask That!", this year we'd like students to write about:

- Funny/strange things you've been asked about your vision impairment
- Unexpected ways people have reacted to your vision impairment
- Ways you've reacted to people's questions/curiosity

Any student supported by SVRC, can submit a written piece in their format of choice (braille, audio, etext, print, etc), with pictures or photos if you like. Submissions will be judged by a panel and prizes awarded within age categories. With permission, some submissions may be published in our Bulletin or on our website. There is no word minimum or maximum, but the judging panel may not take kindly to reading your novel!!

Prizes will be announced and presented at the SVRC Expo on Tuesday, November 28, 2017. Prizes will include some wonderful Bolinda audio books – thanks Bolinda!!

Closing date: 7 November 2017

Please submit your entries, including include your NAME, YEAR LEVEL, SCHOOL, Visiting Teacher name and contact email or telephone number, to:

Marion Blazé – SVRC PO Box 201, Nunawading, 3131 or blaze.marion.g@edumail.vic.gov.au

Alternative Format for 2018

Thanks to everyone who has contacted us regarding students' book lists. We already have over 400 requests for materials in alternative format for 2018 – and it's only November!

Some Production Stats from the SVRC

- **Total requests produced over a 12 month period** (October 2016 to September 2017): 2,444
- **Braille and tactile diagrams** (ranges from one map to an entire text book): 1,018
46 of these received Word file as well as the braille
- **Etext including pdf, doc, docx, txt, epub:** 1,174
27 of these received large print as well as the etext
38 of these received audio as well as the etext
2 of these received large print and audio as well as the etext
[Some also request Word & epub or Word & PDF but this was too hard to figure out]
- **Large print requests produced:** 278
- **Audio including mp3, DAISY, audio CD:** 87
38 of these received etext as well as the audio (as noted above)
- **Maximum number of items produced for one student:** 120
- **Largest book brailled this year:** a year 12 Maths book at 2,740 braille pages, 502 diagrams in 56 volumes!
- **Largest number of braille pages per print page:** 81 (seriously!!!)

Position Vacant

Richmond High School is a new and innovative school, looking for an aide with the demonstrated capacity to support the learning needs of students who are blind or have low vision.

Begin date: 29/01/2018

Hours 27.5

Go to recruitment online: Job ID 1103790 or contact Charlene Lloyd 0438 426 506.

Applications close: 22/11/2017

Finally

Please come to our **Christmas Morning Tea**.

When: Wednesday 6 December at 11am

Where: SVRC

We have great home-made food and excellent company!!!
You ARE invited! RSVP to SVRC by 29 November via email or phone!

[Right: Card made from artwork created by students with vision impairments who attend the SVRC Support Skills Program]

Deb Lewis (Ed)



Dates for Your Diary – 2018

Here is a list of our planned PD for next year.

- **Educational Support for Students who are Blind:** 13 February 2018
- **New (and newish) VT Day:** 19 February 2018
- **Educational Support for Students who have Low Vision:** 27 February OR 6 March OR 14 August 2018
- **PE PD Day:** 14 March 2018
- **Educational Support for Students with Vision Impairments and Additional Impairments:** 22 March 2018
- **Braille Music** (half day) 24 April 2018
- **Art4Kids with VI:** 2 May 2018 (date to be confirmed)
- **VT Master Class:** 5 June 2018
- **Technology Expo:** 27 November 2018

Programs and registration will be available on the SVRC website soon!



Statewide Vision Resource Centre

presents

Technology Expo 2017

featuring best practise
in access technology options
for students with vision impairments

Promoting inclusion and access in education

Tuesday 28 November 2017

10.00am - 2.00pm

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

370 Springvale Road, Donvale

(in the grounds of Heatherwood School)

Parking: in the lower carpark at the Manningham DISC next door (see map)

Displays and demonstrations: of the latest in access technology for students with vision impairments from Guide Dogs Victoria, Humanware, Quantum RLV and Vision Australia.

Come and try: magnification and screen reading software,
audio books, navigation and optical character recognition devices
braille technology and more.

You can even try out the new navigation **beacons** with the BlindSquare Event app (see above).

The day is open to: teachers, ES staff, families, students, mobility instructors, therapists or anyone with an interest in access technology for students with vision impairments.

Plan to spend the time to try out something new!

Cost: Free (and no need to register)

For further details: phone 9841 0242, email svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au

or head over to our website: www.svrc.vic.edu.au

SVRC parking

There is no parking available at the Statewide Vision Resource Centre or Heatherwood School. Please park **in the lower carpark** behind the Donvale Sports Centre (Manningham DISC), the building beside (to the north) of the SVRC. You can then walk through the double gates and the Statewide Vision Resource Centre is to the left.

Public transport: Bus and train

The nearest and most accessible train station is Nunawading. Trains on the Belgrave and Lilydale lines run through this station. A bus also runs from Box Hill Central which also has good train access.

The Statewide Vision Resource Centre is serviced by **3 bus routes**.

- 902 Smart Bus, Chelsea to Airport West
- 271 Box Hill to Ringwood
- 273 Nunawading to The Pines

The 902 and 273 both leave from the Nunawading station. It is an 8 minute trip to the SVRC.

