

The Bulletin

Number 8, Friday 31 May 2019

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Dates for Your Diary

Here is a list of our planned PD and other activities:

TERM 3

Tuesday August 13: [Educational support of students who have low vision](#)

TERM 4

Tuesday October 15: Preparing your school for inclusion of a student who uses braille

Tuesday November 26: Assistive Technology Expo

Note: For upcoming professional learning at SVRC along with programs, registration & online payment, visit the SVRC [professional learning page](#). SVRC Online Training information and registration is available on the [online training page](#).

Fully-Funded Scholarships for Master of Disability Studies

Applications are **NOW OPEN** for **FULLY FUNDED SCHOLARSHIPS** that cover all course fees for Victorian government school teachers and other departmental staff to complete the RIDBC Renwick Centre/Macquarie University Master of Disability Studies.

The scholarships are offered by the Inclusive Education Grants Initiative. Applications close midnight Sunday 2 June 2019.

You can study to become a qualified Teacher of the Deaf (entirely online) or Teacher of Students with Vision Impairment (online and one on-campus lecture block).

For more details on the **specialisations** available in the Master of Disability Studies refer to the [2019 Student Handbook](#).

View the scholarship [general information and guidelines](#) (scroll down to the Inclusive Education grants link) and then submit your application via the [smartygrants page](#) or <https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/Pages/school.aspx#/app/news/detail/2828/>

Please note that this link can only be accessed by Department of Education & Training employees.

Opportunities and Struggles at SVRC

SVRC is in a state of change at present, and this is causing both challenges and opportunities. Having had some very skilled braille transcribers leave our midst, we are prioritising our production in order to get the essentials to students in a timely manner. Please be patient with us. There will be some production that we will not be able to manage, we may need to leave out some diagrams (for example), and proofing may need to be done very quickly to meet deadlines. You can all support us in our endeavours to produce quality work for the students by being explicit with requests (specifying exactly what is essential to the learning) and also notifying us if you find any errors or omissions.

We have also had some retirements (Education Officer and Support Skills Coordinator) and our Media and technology consultant is moving to Guide Dogs Victoria. It is becoming increasingly difficult to replace skilled staff – I know it is the same in the VT world, too!

We have needed to cease supporting people through our Braille Correspondence Course, instead referring them to the excellent UEB online option. Our priority needs to be producing the work for the students.

But as you can read in this Bulletin, there are already two positions being advertised on Recruitment Online, and there will be more, opening up opportunities for new SVRC staff. If you know any one skilled and dedicated in this field, please let them know about these opportunities.

Marion Blazé – SVRC Manager

2019 Premiers' Reading Challenge

The 2019 Premiers' Reading Challenge is now open. This challenge is open to students from birth to Year 10.

If your school has registered to take part, you'll be provided with a user name and login. If your school is not taking part, you can register your child as a "home-based reader".

Number of books to read:

- For children below school age – each child must read or have 40 books read to them
- Prep to year 2 – 30 books (20 or more from the challenge book list)
- Year 3 to year 9 – 15 books (10 or more from the challenge book list)
- Year 10 – 15 books (5 or more from the challenge book list)



The Challenge ends on 6 September and certificates are sent out during November.

Useful links:

- [Premiers' Reading Challenge](#) – general information
- [Premiers' Reading Challenge book lists](#)

The Statewide Vision Resource Centre has many books from the PRC book list available in alternative format so please check the [SVRC catalogue](#)

Any excuse to read!!! (Ed)

Tech Notes from Glen Morrow

Please download the following from the SVRC website – thanks Glen for uploading these!

Mac Accessibility

macOS is accessible for people who are blind or who experience low vision. The platform has various features including VoiceOver, Zoom, and other options to make the platform more accessible.

Here are some notes that may help you out:

- [macOS for users with low vision](#)
- [macOS VoiceOver Basics](#)

ZoomText 2019

We recently ran an online training session on the pros of the new version of ZoomText. You can read the notes here: [ZoomText 2019 Basics](#)

NVDA Basics

If, however, NVDA - the free screenreader is more your thing, well here are some notes from the recent online training we ran for NVDA fans: [NVDA Basics](#)

Windows 10 Basics

We also have notes on the basics of Windows 10 including the Magnifier and changing the size of the mouse pointer: [Windows 10 Basics](#)

Podcasts on Inclusion

The NCCD (Nationally Consistent Collection of Data) have produced a series of Podcasts on inclusion and one is about Classroom Adjustments for students with Vision Impairment. You'll recognise a few voices in this podcast!!

https://www.nccd.edu.au/resources-and-tools/topics/best-practice-17?search_api_fulltext=&sort_by=changed&page=0

Another Australian Tactile Bank Note in Circulation

Australia added a new tactile bank note to our currency. The \$50 displays four small tactile dots along both edges running lengthwise. It is the third in the series to be recognisable by touch, a truly exciting addition, allowing people who are blind or have low vision to identify their notes independently.

\$5, launched in 2016, has one tactile dot

\$10, launched in 2018, has two tactile dots

\$50, to be launched on 18 October, has four tactile dots (see photo of specimen note)

\$20 will enter circulation in 2020



UEB Mathematics Online

Source: RIDBC Media Release, May 2019

In response to the growing need for STEM skills in Australia and overseas, RIDBC has today launched UEB Mathematics, an online course that enables teachers and parents to better support braille-using students.

UEB Mathematics, an addition to the UEB Online e-learning platform, enables professionals and parents to understand and connect language, literacy and mathematics development in children with vision impairment, and to plan learning experiences that are inclusive of those children who use the medium of braille.

An Australian innovation, UEB Online, the first e-learning braille course for professionals and parents, was launched in 2014 with a goal to increase braille literacy in Australia and globally. Since its inception, more than 18,000 people in 184 countries have taken part in the course.

Now, the team behind UEB Online hope that increasing access to braille for mathematics will open up more STEM career opportunities for people with vision impairment in Australia and across the globe.

Dr Frances Gentle, Lecturer at RIDBC Renwick who led the project to create UEB Online, says the new UEB mathematics training courses are designed to promote equitable access to STEM subjects for braille users. "Equitable educational opportunity for children who are blind requires teachers who understand the braille code and how to modify print-based activities in the classroom."

"We want to enable students with blindness to continue studying mathematics into their senior school years and as a result, increase access to careers in STEM-related fields. Achieving this aspirational goal requires teachers and parents who understand Unified English Braille in literary and mathematical contexts."

In her role as President of the International Council for English Braille, Dr Gentle says she has witnessed the positive educational impact when braille-using students have the support of people who understand their code. "It really helps when classroom teachers can read braille text but equally, when parents can use it," she said.

"Knowledge of braille enables parents to share the joys of reading and writing with their child, whether it is assistance with homework, notes of encouragement or birthday cards in braille."

Dr Gentle also says that the ability to read braille amongst the sighted community is essential. "It's critical that we increase the number of people who can use and read braille so that we can continue to teach it and ensure that children with blindness have equitable access to education and employment."

Chris Rehn, Chief Executive at RIDBC, says that keeping Australia at the global forefront of service and technological innovation is an important goal for the organisation. "We are committed to providing the highest quality services and level of care for Australians with vision and hearing impairment, and innovations such as UEB Mathematics play a critical role in this.

With mathematics identified as a vital skill for the future, ensuring students with vision impairment have equal access to education is crucial."

The online training programs in braille literacy and mathematics can be accessed at <https://uebonline.org/> and offer both free courses and paid certification options.

New Accessible Introduction to Computational Thinking and Coding: Ballyland Code 3: Pick Up

Source: Phia Damsma, Ballyland

Sonokids' new accessible app for computational thinking and coding 'Ballyland Code 3: Pick Up' completes the 'Easy to Moderate' Ballyland Audio Based Coding apps.

These three apps for iPad combine to the perfect resource to introduce computational thinking and coding in your classroom.

'Ballyland Code 3: Pick Up', with multi-level Coding Challenge 3, develops students' Computational Thinking, Coding, Sequencing, Listening, Touch Gestures, Spatial Awareness, Orientation, Math, and 'Mental Mapping' skills.

Find out why Wheelie needs to pick up the coin, the flower and the frog, in the fun audio play!

The Ballyland Code apps are suitable for students (from age 5+) who have no previous experience with coding, and those who are beginner users of VoiceOver.

[Now available from the AppStore](#)

For more information, visit <https://www.sonokids.org>



Dickinson Memorial Literary Competition 2019

The theme for 2019 is FREEDOM. What does FREEDOM mean to you?

Here's an opportunity for blind people to pen a short story or poem and be in the running to win cash prizes in this year's competition.

There are categories for all ages to enter and prize money is awarded in every category: \$350 first prize per category and \$150 second prize per category (judges' decision is final).

Entries close Friday August 30. Entries should be submitted in hard copy braille, Simbraille or Duxbury-readable or Word document file.

This year, for the first time, there is a special "People's Choice" award that will be open to anyone (even if you are sighted), all entries in this category will be published on the Braille House website and the audience will get to choose the winner.

6 Categories of Entry:

Adult: Short Story

Adult: Poem/Song Lyrics/Limerick

Adult: Article/Opinion eg: self-reflection, blog

Senior Student: Creative Category, eg: story, poem, song lyrics, limerick, blog

Junior Student: Creative Category, eg: story, poem, song lyrics, limerick, blog

Peoples' Choice Category – Short Story. All entries will be published for the public to vote

To enter: <https://www.braillehouse.org.au/get-involved/dickinson-2019/>

Braille Fail ...

In an apartment building somewhere in Brunswick is the lift labels shown in the photo (right). We are all trying to work out what the braille means. Beneath the up arrow, the braille reads: dots 1,5,6 dots 2,3,6 dots 2,3. Beneath the down arrow, the braille reads dots 1,2,5 dots 1,2,4,6 dots 2,3. Can you solve the mystery?

Thanks Gayle for this photo!



Lost & Found at SVRC

Are you missing your drink bottle? We have two here that might be yours – one gold and one blue. We also have a picture story book called "The Mouse with the Too-Long Tail" by Bani McSpedden that arrived in the "returns" trolley, but isn't ours.

Vacancies at SVRC

Please check Recruitment Online if you'd like to apply for one of the vacancies at SVRC. We are currently advertising for an Education Officer (EVAC) and a Braille Transcriber as follows:

Education Officer: Full time fixed term position until 9 January 2020 (Job ID 1156986)

Transcription Officer: Full time fixed term position until 20 December 2019 (Job ID 1156384)

Finally

Right! I'm about to try to get this issue out to you without the highly able assistance of Glen Morrow ... wish me luck!

– Deb Lewis (Ed) lewis.debra.d@edumail.vic.gov.au