

# The Bulletin

## Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 19

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006

This issue was edited by Marion Blazé, Education Officer, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

### ***It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...some end of year reminders***

Now that the Expo is over, we can start thinking about the end of year and Christmas! At this time there are a few things to remember :

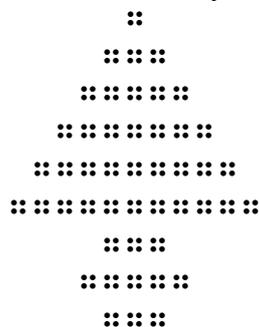
- Get your booklists in for production of alternative format materials for 2007
- Return all those materials your students have used this year
- Come along to our 'Thank You' Christmas morning tea, and bring along anyone from your schools who you would like to thank
- The next Bulletin (No. 20) will be the last for the year, so if there is something you want to share, now's the time!

### ***SVRC Christmas 'Thank you' morning tea***

- 11am Wednesday, December 6, at the Statewide Vision Resource Centre, 370-380 Springvale Rd., Donvale. PLEASE, **RSVP** (so we have some idea of numbers) to 9841 0242

### ***Christmas activity ideas***

Come and look in our glass cabinets at the SVRC for some funky ideas for Christmas crafts. If you have any, please share. Braille Christmas cards are always a winner. Try brailleing a Christmas tree.



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## SVRC Etext Production 2006

From Deb Lewis, Co-ordinator, Statewide Vision Resource Centre

As predicted, the number of requests for etext learning materials increased this year – trebled actually!!! Here are the statistics for production of texts and novels.

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Successful requests	17	36	48	210
Unsuccessful requests	10	9	5	10
Total requests made	27	45	67	220

Reasons for requests being unsuccessful included:

- the books being too old and therefore publishers no longer holding digital copies
- the books coming from publishers in an unsuitable format

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of students requesting books in e-text	9	13	15	43
Number of DE&T Visiting Teachers who made requests	5	7	11	20

We have also been rather busy producing literature for our beginning readers including around 300 picture story books as PowerPoint presentations! And the littlies just love them from all accounts!

So as you can see, our etext resources are growing and there are lots and lots of students out there who are utilising this relatively new format.

Got any great tips or good news etext stories? Let us know!

## Term 4 SPEVI Event: “Online ‘Problem-Based Learning’”

From Deb Lewis, Co-ordinator, Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Last week a small but keen group gathered in the Vision Australia Board Room in Kooyong to meet Mike McLinden, senior lecturer in vision impairment from the University of Birmingham. And his topic, “Online ‘Problem-Based Learning’” had us riveted – as he not only talked about this topic, but also used his presentation to demonstrate how it works for students.

The University of Birmingham offers a 2-year course for teachers of children with vision impairments who study through distance education. But in order to overcome student isolation, the course works in quite a different way to any course I have ever studied!

Starting right from the very beginning students meet and work in groups to discuss what they would like to learn – this discussion based around real life situations. Students build a ‘mind map’ of topics that will need to be investigated – for example:

- vision assessment
- motor skills development
- tactual development
- etc

and this becomes the basis of their learning. Not only does this give students the opportunity to work their way through the prescribed course material in a meaningful way, it also recognises the skills, knowledge and prior learning that students bring to the course.

Having briefly experienced this style of ‘teaching’ I feel it would be an engaging and successful way to learn. And in addition, students also learn braille, participate in teaching practicum and agency visits, meet in regional study groups, are allocated a tutor/mentor, and have access to online discussion groups and daily online support from lecturers – just like a ‘virtual classroom’!

**For recent research activities from the University of Birmingham, see the VICTAR website: <http://www.education.bham.ac.uk/research/victar/research.htm>**

## **Report on the Skill Power workshop on Unified English Braille**

By Marion Blazé, Education Officer, Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Leona Holloway, the Braille Transcription Co-ordinator at Vision Australia, managed to cover an amazing amount of material in the four hours allowed for this workshop. We looked at the history of this change to the Braille code, contractions and sequencing, punctuation and print symbols, mode indicators and numbers and simple mathematics. At the end of each section, Leona asked us to transcribe some Braille using our new knowledge of the code. This really demonstrated how someone who already knows Braille is going to cope with the fairly minor changes on the literary side, but we’ll have some teaching ahead of us on the maths side (you should see fractions now!). Amongst the 35 participants, there were some heated debates and some knitted brows, but I think we all finished the session feeling like UEB had been clarified for us. Thanks, Leona, for a fascinating day. One participant whispered to me “I’d forgotten how much fun Braille could be!”.

## **Braille Correspondence Lessons – now ‘UEB friendly’**

Don’t forget that Deb Lewis and Lea Nagel have spent a heap of time going over our braille correspondence lessons and these are now available in the new UEB code. So, if you, or any parents or aides need to brush up before next year, now’s the time to start.

## **Report on the Skill Power Workshop on JAWs**

By Annette Godfrey-Magee, Education Officer, Statewide Vision Resource Centre

A total of 26 people: Visiting teachers, integration aides and class teachers, some as far away as Echuca, attended Leanne Nagel’s workshop on JAWs. Leanne, with great skill and humor taught some of us serious luddites some of the intricacies of this screen reading program. Lea loaded a document on each of our laptops that was printed in white (on a white background, so it was not visible: a very clever idea to stop us cheating), and we were forced to be attentive to the audio output, just like our students. Navigating around the document was a matter of understanding where the cursor was and manipulating it to read a word, a paragraph, a line or letter. All good fun stuff!

## **Our 2006 Expo - Report**

By Marion Blazé, Education Officer, Statewide Vision Resource Centre

The staff of the SVRC and, I think, many presenters were exhausted after the efforts of Friday. This event gets bigger (and better) every year!

The latest in technology was displayed and demonstrated by Humanware, Quantum Technology and Micro Marvelous. The Mimio man (from IBS Audio Visual) hardly had time for a lunch break. European Eyewear and the Library, Equipment Solutions and Vis Tech Centres of Vision Australia, showed their latest, and we even had people from the Blind Sports Association, Blind Citizens Australia, Braille & Tactile Signs and Guide Dogs Victoria. Our own ex-student Bryony offered her pearls of wisdom on VCE and career paths. Bolinda Publishing sold a few audio books and very generously donated to our SVRC library and our ‘Door prize’.

Many other organizations who could not send representatives, provided brochures, catalogues and some ‘freebies’. There are lots of brochures still at Resource, if you missed out.

### Who Came?

110 people signed our registration lists (compared with 63 last year) but, from discussions with presenters, there were probably closer to 150 people there on the day. We met personnel from schools, many students and parents, Visiting Teachers, of course, and even a group from New South Wales. Vision Australia even sent their Friday Support Skills Group over in a bus both in the morning and a different group in the afternoon. So we can literally say we had bus loads of people!

The Bolinda Door Prize was won by number 58 on our registration list: Eileen Houben, mother of a little girl on the CEO VT service. Mike from Bolinda picked out six audio books which he thought they might enjoy. Congratulations Eileen and happy listening to you and your daughter!

I'd like to say a huge 'thank you' to our ever busy SVRC staff who slaved away setting up, keeping things moving, directing traffic, making food appear and disappear and being so friendly throughout it all. They really are a magical team. Thank you also to Lea Nagel who, after overhearing a conversation about how we might get one, made us a terrific banner for the front fence, so that everyone could find us.

### Poor Screen Contrast when running on Batteries (IBM laptops)

In order to save batteries when not connected to power, IBM laptops have a low contrast screen display. To brighten it up use the following key command:

- Fn + Home

To set up your laptop to open every time with a bright screen on batteries:

- Access IBM (blue oval key, top left) > Close Welcome Screen > Configure (2 blue circles, top left) > Manage your Display > LCD Display Settings > Brightness when on Batteries > High > Apply

Thanks to Jake (VI student), Mt Evelyn PS

### Full-Time VT - VI position in Eastern region

There is currently an advertisement online for a full-time Visiting Teacher for the Vision Impaired in Eastern region. Call Lea Nagel for further information (9841 0242).

### In the Driver's Seat - 2007

The Lions Club of Warrandyte are running a driving day to provide the opportunity for blind and vision impaired people to drive a motor vehicle. It's happening in March next year and the flier is attached to the print copy of this bulletin. For further information, call Peter Watts on 03 9844 3903.

### Gippsland Paralympic Talent Search

The Australian Paralympic Committee are on a search for talent and will be in Morwell on December 9. Some information is attached to the print copy of this Bulletin, or for further information, call Tim Matthews on 03 9614 6800.

### Australian Blind Sports Association World Games

Adelaide - October, 2007

Blind Sports Victoria is seeking expressions of interest from blind and vision impaired individuals who wish to compete in athletics, swimming, or power-lifting events. Information is appended to the print copy of this Bulletin.

## **New Mac Operating system works like Jaws!**

Just have a look at this!!!

An Aide and VT told us about the new “talking” operating system for Apple Macs – Mac OS X (Leopard). Information is available on the website below. In the words of the Aide who looked at it: ‘It leaves JAWS for dead’. Doesn’t come out until next year on Apple computers, though.

<http://www.apple.com/macosx/leopard/accessibility.html>

Unlike Windows which needs Jaws; OS X has a screen reader built in. The current version can do English fairly well now, but the Leopard version will have the better voice and support for foreign languages like Chinese.

## **Guide Dogs Victoria Children’s Mobility Service News**

### **New O&M instructor on team**

The team welcomes Janelle O’Loughlin to the team. Janelle completed the Bachelor of Health Sciences (Orientation and Mobility) at La Trobe University in 2003. For the past three years, Janelle has been working as an O&M Instructor with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT based in the Canberra office. She relocated to Melbourne last month and has begun working in the Children’s Mobility Services at GDV and is looking forward to making lots of new contacts and having a great time with the team.

Darlene McIntosh has joined the Orientation and Mobility team at GDV where she will be providing a range of O&M services, including O&M programs for Young Adults, along with the 2 other Instructors in the team. The CMS thanks Darlene for her contribution to the team over the past 2 years.

### **Programs:**

#### **Melbourne Program**

This year the CMS will be running a program for older teenagers based in the Melbourne CBD. Unlike the January ‘GDV Goes CBD’ program where the students stay at the Guide Dogs Victoria campus in Kew, the students will be staying in a hotel in the CBD right where the action is. This program is being run instead of the terrific Sydney program that has been run for the past 4 years. The Sydney program may return next year. The CMS team is always on the lookout for new ideas for programs and ways of providing service that students will find interesting and that will enhance their O&M skill development.

#### **GDV Goes CBD**

This program will be run from January 15 – 19 and will be based at the Guide Dogs Victoria campus in Kew. Although the program name has been used before, the activities and challenges will be new.

#### **CMS Orientation and Mobility morning**

The team ran an O&M morning several weeks ago and the participants enjoyed learning more about the nature and scope of O&M services in general and at the CMS in particular. For more information about O&M mornings contact Alicia at the CMS. The mornings are run on a regular basis and attendees include parents, teachers and teacher aides.

## **Professional Development:**

### **SPEVI conference in Perth**

6 staff from Guide Dogs Victoria will be attending the SPEVI conference in Perth. 5 of the staff will be from the CMS team and 1 will be from the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) service. Some staff will be presenting papers and a poster session.

### **International Mobility Conference Hong Kong**

#### **November 27 – December 1 2006**

2 staff from GDV will be attending the conference in Hong Kong and learning about Orientation and Mobility services from around the world. The presentations about O&M services for children were of most interest to the CMS staff member attending.

#### **CMS newsletter**

The latest edition of the CMS newsletter was distributed at the start of Term 4. We welcome contributions so please contact any of the CMS staff if you want to have an article included in the Term 1 - 2007 edition.

For further information about any of the items here or any aspect of the Children's Mobility please don't hesitate to contact a member of the Instructor team.

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Sharon 9854 4496

Lil 9854 4542

Alicia 9854 4493

Janelle 9854 4520

Dean 9854 4506

## **Student News**

- Meredith's student Alana achieved 82% for year 11 Legal Studies exam - even though she is only in year 10!!!

## **Finally**

Thanks to Jake, Deb Lewis, Dean Jones, Annette Godfrey-Magee, Lea Nagel, Meredith Walsh, Raelene Turpin and Diana Hayward for contributing to this edition of The Bulletin. Thanks also to our fabulous proof-readers, stuffers and mailers.

## **If you have something you would like included in 'The Bulletin', please contact:**

Marion Blazé (who can be emailed at [marionblaze@svrc.vic.edu.au](mailto:marionblaze@svrc.vic.edu.au)).