

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 16

Friday 12th October 2007

This issue was edited by Marion Blazé, Education Officer, and Deb Lewis, Co-ordinator, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

Professional Development Activities for Term IV, 2007

- **O & M Morning – Experiencing Vision Loss in the Community:** Friday, October 19th
- **Computer without the Mouse:** SVRC, Friday, October 19, 10.00am to 12.30pm
- **Computer with JAWS:** SVRC, Friday, October 19, 1.30m to 3.30pm
Both workshops with Lea Nagel – no lunch provided, no charge, BYO laptop
- **Educational Expo – Access Technology Options:**
at SVRC, 10 to 3.30, Friday, November 23

To see the annual program and to download programs for professional development activities, go to: <http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au/pd2007.htm>

Other Activities:

- **SVRC Christmas ‘Thank You’ Morning Tea:** 11am, Wednesday, December 5
If you have people you’d like to thank, add them to our invites list.

Driving Camp 2007 – one more place

Helen Caldwell wanted to let you know that there is one vacancy left for this year’s Driving Camp to be held at Charlton on Thursday & Friday 6th & 7th of December, 2007. Please email Helen with any queries: caldow.helen.f@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Alternative Format for 2008

Big congratulations to some schools that have already put in requests for materials in alternative format for next year. And amazingly, some of the books have been completed – how’s that for super efficiency!!!

VTs please bother your schools for their book lists so we can begin production ASAP – and thanks in advance from the team!

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Report on SPEVI Combined Agencies PD Day, Oct 8, 2007

70 professionals in the field of vision impairment gathered at Vision Australia School, Burwood to get the 'good oil' on support of our students. The day was both informative and entertaining beginning with Larry Abel with new insights from his research on nystagmus, we then heard from Kerry Fitzmaurice about her work on eccentric viewing, Kath McKay who told us about employment trends for VI people, Gill Cochrane on her PhD research and brief reports from all the agencies. In the afternoon, we went in different directions for concurrent sessions, which dealt with anything from art to brain injury, before re-grouping to hear from our Geoff. Comments from participants were very positive, with participants especially valuing the networking opportunities provided by the day. And we've already begun thinking about next term's and next year's SPEVI events ... we'll keep you posted!

Thanks from the organisers: Lil Deverill (Guide Dogs), Garry Stinchcombe (Vision Australia) and Marion Blazé (SVRC, DEECD).

Open Days at 'ie Directions'

'ie Directions' is an independent facility in Box Hill which offers programs to assist in the transition between school and tertiary for young people who are 'disadvantaged, disengaged, with learning difficulties or with learning disabilities'. They are having two open days on October 25 & 27. Call 9890 7444 for details or see attached flier.

Richmond Glaucoma Meeting

The Richmond branch of the Glaucoma group is meeting on October 27 from 10.30 to 12.30 at Richmond Library, 415 Church St Richmond. Entry is with a gold coin donation. Associate Professor Justin O'Day will address the meeting on glaucoma and retinal health. To book, please call 03 9404 2974 or email catia@glaucoma.org.au.

Vision Australia Study Group – Alternative Formats

When: Wednesday 17th October 2007.

Time: 1.30 - 4pm

Venue: 201 High Street Prahran in the Board Room

Topic: Methods for reading using alternative formats – Renee Williamson

Bookings: are essential so please RSVP

Contact: Renee Williamson, Tertiary Education Consultant, (03) 9520 5555 if you have any further queries.

Seven Ways to Succeed in Exams

Helen Caldwell came across this website which offers help to VCE students. Go to <http://www.vcehelp.com.au/ae>.

Car Reversing Alarm

There is a gadget available which just replaces your reversing light bulb and creates an alarm ('beep beep') whenever you are reversing. They are available from Super Cheap Auto stores at about \$20 (or \$17 on special sometime). You can fit it yourself by just removing your bulb and snapping it in.

Happy Camping (Skiing/Tobogganing etc etc) at Mt Baw Baw

Queensland Visiting (Itinerant) Teacher Di Porrill recently conducted a ski camp to the RVIB Ski Lodge at Mt Baw Baw. She writes: “we have returned from Mt Baw Baw and it was an amazing experience ... I hope we can return and next time I would like some students from Melbourne to join us – that would make it even better.” Here’s her article (thanks Di!)

If you’re looking for a great place to stay in the snow, we know just the place for you! The Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB) Ski Lodge at Mt Baw Baw! We’ve been there just the once, had a fabulous time – teachers and students alike – and we’re now working towards returning again next year.

It’s been nearly two weeks since our trip to Mt Baw Baw and the fun time we had is still fresh in everyone’s memory. Not that we need to remember as we have a truckload of photos and videos!

To make the trip work, we had to be very organised. Thanks to the excellent information we had from Sophie and Allan, everything flowed smoothly. We organised the charter bus – Jindivic Charters – to pick us up at Melbourne Airport and take us up to the mountain, stopping along the way for lunch and grocery shopping. We can’t speak highly enough of Ken from Jindivic Charters as nothing was a problem for him. He helped pack groceries, was able, due to the snow conditions, to drive us right up to the door of the Lodge and then helped us unload the trailer of the mountain of luggage and food. No mean feat I can assure you as we were four teachers with eight vision impaired students.

Thanks to good planning, we managed to have just the right amount of food with very little left over. After four fun-packed days filled with tobogganing, building snowmen, snow throwing, lots of “Survivor” games both in and out of the snow, and team competitions, Ken picked us up on Friday for the return trip to the airport. We told him to expect a call again next year.

Allan and Ros joined us for a couple of days and showed the students their skis and snow shoes and even left them for us to try out. What great mentors they are for our students as they enjoy all life has to offer, including cross-country skiing!

We loved the Lodge and were very comfortable. The four bedrooms accommodated us well, with the girls in two bedrooms on the top floor and the staff and one male student in the other two bedrooms on the ground floor. The middle floor houses the well-equipped kitchen and large dining/lounge room. The central heating was very welcome, and the automatic temperature reports from the system kept us informed as to both the inside and outside temperatures! I can assure you it was much, much warmer inside, with the lowest outside temperature during our stay being minus 4 degrees. The “drying room” for the wet snow gear is a blessing and made life much easier. We were so fortunate to have snow during our stay and this allowed us to maximise our fun in the snow. Everything ran perfectly and we could not have asked for better conditions

There was nothing during the week we could have made better. It was great and I hope that many others, both vision impaired units in schools and vision impaired individuals/families, are able to take advantage of having this great facility available to them. Trust us; it’s well and truly worth the effort!

Alternative Format Production: Or “Creating Accessible Information”

Adapted from article in LiveWire, August 2007

People with a print disability typically need information changed from one format into another. Whether you are blind, low vision or dyslexic the challenge that is shared by all is to be able to access information in a manner that suits your particular needs. And this is a challenge increasingly faced by schools, universities, government agencies and employers. How to quickly and easily convert material so that you provide equal access to all.

A wonderful resource that will help you stay in touch with developments from all around the world is <http://www.AltFormat.com>. AltFormat is an independent website focusing on how developments in the production of alternative format materials are transforming the education of visually impaired and dyslexic students of all ages.

Quantum is now marketing a product for creating alternate format information from Dolphin Systems in the UK, called EasyConverter. EasyConverter quickly creates Large Print, MP3, DAISY and Braille versions of learning materials that can either be scanned from paper, or input from Word, PDF, html or text files.

- EasyConverter is designed for use in schools, colleges, universities, small or large companies and government organisations.
- EasyConverter is simple to use for those with no altformat creation experience. It is equally suited to experienced professionals looking for a single flexible high quality altformat creation tool that will meet the needs of all dyslexic, visually impaired and learning disabled students.
- EasyConverter ensures that you remain adaptable, and able to convert from a wide range of file formats including printed handouts to downloaded PDFs, Word files, NIMAS content and html documents.

The EasyConverter interface is a single screen from which you select the document you want to be converted, and then simply select the format you want to produce. In one step a document can be automatically converted into any one of 5 different formats. For example you may need a Digital Talking Book (Daisy format) for one student, an MP3 file that can be downloaded to an iPod for another student, or a Large Print version for a student with Low Vision.

Other Products from Dolphin include:

- EasyProducer converts standard Word files into DAISY digital talking books (synchronised audio and text) that can be searched and navigated.
Easy to use one-click operation instantly converts text into a DAISY DTB, no training required. Convert an average textbook chapter in 90 seconds, compared to 2 hours when narrating onto audio cassette.
- Dolphin Publisher has been designed for publishers of audio books, Publisher is the premier tool for the creation of DAISY digital talking books. You can use human recorded audio, synthetic speech or record your own audio directly into Dolphin Publisher. Or import html documents, copy and paste word documents or type directly into Dolphin Publisher. Includes copyright tools for publishers to protect content from unauthorised copying.

Every Child Matters Conference

NDS is very pleased to release advance publicity about the national conference on children and young people with disability and their families, Every Child Matters. This inaugural event will be co-hosted with Families Australia during National Families Week in Melbourne on 14-15 May 2008.

For further details, see the conference flyer at <http://www.nds.org.au/conferences/cyf2008/flyer.pdf>.

Graduate Diploma in O&M

Guide Dogs Victoria in conjunction with LaTrobe University is offering a one year post-graduate course in O&M. For further information, see attached flier or contact:

Contacts:

Dean Johnson at Guide Dogs Victoria: tel (03) 9854 4506 or dean.j@guidedogsvictoria.com.au

Associate Professor Kerry Fitzmaurice at La Trobe University for more information and application forms: tel (03) 9479 1914 or K.Fitzmaurice@latrobe.edu.au

Applications for National Youth Roundtable 2008

Source: AFB Update, September 2007

The National Youth Roundtable is the Australian Government's youth consultation mechanism. It brings together young people aged 15 to 24 years. Minister for Community Services, Nigel Scullion, says the Roundtable is the first place he turns to for advice on issues that impact on youth. Roundtable members include young people from all States and Territories, metropolitan and regional areas and from various cultural backgrounds. For example, Roundtable 2007 includes 44 members – seven are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and 12 are indigenous. Young people aged 15 to 24 years on 1 January 2008, who are interested in the issues that affect them, are encouraged to apply for the 2008 Roundtable. Applications close on 18 October 2007.

More information: http://www.thesource.gov.au/involve/NYR/get_involved.asp

Contact Information: Margaret Verick, NDS National Office, tel 02 6283 3214 or email margaret.verick@nds.org.au

Paralympic Talent Search

- Do you have a physical disability?
- Do you have a vision impairment?
- Do you dream of being a Paralympian?
- Have you even considered it?

If you have answered yes to any of these questions, you should come along!

The Australian Paralympic Committee will be conducting sporting tests to help identify future Paralympic athletes. Some of the sports that will be targeted are athletics, cycling, swimming, wheelchair basketball and table tennis.

Where: Cardinia Life 930 Olympic Way, Pakenham (Off Princess Hwy)

Date: Sunday October 28, 2007

Time: 1:00pm until 4:30pm

For further information and for a registration form contact: Tim Matthews tel (03) 9614 6800 or tim.matthews@paralympic.org.au

Web: <http://www.paralympic.org.au>

Tracking and Scanning – Large Print and Braille

Source: It's Vision Time, Issue 3 Term 3 2007

Want a simple IDEA for training low vision skills!!

What about Sudoku puzzles?

Those really build your scanning skills (as well as logic and sequencing and who knows what else). AND, you can get them in large print. Why not put a few into braille to build those tactile scanning skills.

Search the net for your favourite Sudoku webpage or go to: <http://www.sudukopuzzles.org/sudoku-printables.html>

Talking PowerPoint

Source: It's Vision Time, Issue 3 Term 3 2007

Powertalk is a free program that will speak text in PowerPoints, go to <http://fullmeasure.co.uk/> to download the program.

Screen Magnifier for the Web

Source: It's Vision Time, Issue 3 Term 3 2007

Big.com – is a new search engine developed to deliver search results to users in a large, easy to read format. Available from <http://www.big.com/toolbar> as a free, downloadable toolbar for use with Internet Explorer web browsers, Web Magnifier provides users with the ability to enlarge the text and graphics of any HTML web page for easier reading and navigation.

The trend of decreasing font sizes in web design has made navigating the web an increasingly difficult task for many Internet users. Web Magnifier sits as a toolbar at the top of a user's screen and contains a Big.com search box for immediate web searches as well as three buttons for the various levels of magnification – normal, big and bigger. Once a page is magnified to the desired level, Web Magnifier remembers the setting and automatically adjusts the magnification on subsequent visits to the page. Additionally, the toolbar itself can be displayed in large and standard sizes.

Big.com is a service of Perfect Market Technologies, Inc – go to: <http://www.big.com>

Hearing Check by Phone

Source: AFB Update, September 2007

A new national service, Telscreen, will allow all Australians to have a free hearing check, anytime, anywhere. Developed by the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) in conjunction with Australian Hearing, Telscreen is a self check of hearing disability via the telephone and is not a replacement for a face-to-face hearing screening carried out by a qualified clinician. It should not be taken as medical advice. People can access the service by calling the tollfree number 1800 826 500 and following the prompts to start the check. For more information about Telscreen, go to <http://www.hearing.com.au/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=233&languageId=1&contentId=-1>.

Staff and Student News

- It was wonderful on SPEVI day to catch up with ex-VTS student, Melanie, who now works at the Vision Australia School. Thanks, Melanie for organising all our 'show bags' and name tags for the day and generally being a terrific support.
- Integration Aide Mandy Zajac at Diamond Valley SC has recently completed the SVRC UEB Braille Lessons by Correspondence – yeeeeeeeeehaaaaaaa for Mandy!

Finally

Thanks to Renee Williamson, Helen Caldwell, Denise Probert and Maria Elford 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).

Guide Dogs Victoria together with **La Trobe University**
are offering a one year

Graduate Diploma in Orientation and Mobility

What does an O&M Instructor do?

An Orientation and Mobility Instructor is equipped to work with people of all ages and abilities who have vision impairment. Orientation and Mobility asks the questions: Where am I now? Where do I want to go? How do I get there as safely, effectively and independently as possible?

The role involves assessing a client's orientation and mobility needs, then developing and delivering individual or group programs which address these needs. The O&M Instructor is required to monitor a vision impaired person in dynamic environments, teaching skills and developing concepts which help the client to increase their level of independent travel. Environments may include the client's home, their school, university, day centre, workplace and the wider community.

An O&M Instructor will often need to liaise closely with other professionals, particularly in the fields of health, education and social work, and with the client's family members. The role also involves educating the wider community about vision impairment.

Curious? Contact your local vision impairment service provider and ask about observing an Orientation and Mobility Instructor in action. This is the ideal profession for someone who has an interest in health care, education and independence, and does not want to be chained to their desk from nine to five.

Contacts:

Dean Johnson at Guide Dogs Victoria for more information.

- Phone: (03) 9854 4506
- Email: dean.j@guidedogsvictoria.com.au

Associate Professor Kerry Fitzmaurice at La Trobe University for more information and application forms.

- Phone: (03) 9479 1914
- Email: K.Fitzmaurice@latrobe.edu.au

Please note that applications close on Friday 30 November, 2007

Selection criteria

Applicants will need to have an undergraduate qualification, preferably in health sciences or education. They will need to submit a resume of their work and voluntary experience and undertake a selection interview prior to acceptance into the course. During interview, candidates will be required to demonstrate:

- an understanding of the relationship between their undergraduate studies and working with people who have vision impairment
- an interest in disability and empowering others to become independent
- good communication and effective teamwork skills
- initiative and an ability to work independently
- independent travel skills, eg, how to access public transport
- a flexible approach to internship
- an interest in working at Guide Dogs Victoria

Time Frame

This is a full time, one year course. It is not available on a part time basis.

Semester 1 commences on February 25, 2008. Spaces on the course will be limited.

Units

Sem	Unit Code	Unit Title	CP
1	ORT2RET	Retinal Disorders	15
1	ORT4REH	Management Rehabilitation	15
1	PHE3TMA	Theory of Orientation and Mobility A	15
1	PHE3TMB	Orientation and Mobility Methods A	15
2	HBS2NEU	Neurosciences A	5
2	ORT1ANT	Anterior Segment	15
2	PHE3TMB	Theory of Orientation and Mobility B	15
2	PHE3MMB	Orientation and Mobility Methods B	15
2		Elective	10 or 15

Cost

This course has been allocated Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP). The student contribution amount you must pay each year is determined by the University within a range set by the Australian Government and depends on your units of study.

Venues

Lectures will take place at Bundoora Campus. The practical component will take place in a variety of settings in the metropolitan area. Students will need to travel independently to and from these locations as required.

Assessment

Student learning will be assessed through a combination of written work, exams and skill-based observations.

Internship

The Orientation and Mobility Profession recommends completion of 350 hours internship for optimum skill development and readiness for employment. Guide Dogs Victoria supports this recommendation, however students will be eligible to graduate from the course without completing the internship. GDV will endeavour to facilitate an eight week voluntary internship for all students upon completion of the course, before the end of 2008 where possible. Students may need to travel interstate to complete their internship. Please note that selection criteria for employment may differ between individual agencies in regard to this internship.