

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 19

Friday 23rd November 2007

This issue was edited by Deb Lewis, Co-ordinator, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

Professional Development Activities for Term IV, 2007

- **Educational Expo – Access Technology Options**
at SVRC, 10.00am to 3.30pm, Friday 23 November
- **Skill Power for Early Braille Users and their Support Staff / Families**
proposed program 10 to 14 December 2007

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

Borrowing Lists

Dear VTs

Your borrowing lists are included with this edition of The Bulletin – can you please do your best to return resources by the end of the year to the SVRC. Especially brailers and other items on short term loan. Remember that students' funding (and even other sources) can be used to provide the technology (including the dear old, though extremely functional Perkins Brailier – \$1,325 from Equipment Solutions: 201 High St Prahran 3181 tel (03) 9520 5555.)

Thanks from the staff of the SVRC!

Changes at the SVRC

We are taking the opportunity to give the production staff some more space to work in – they have been practically sitting on each others laps – so come and take a walk around the 'new look' production area and the even newer look Resource Room – with Resource Teacher Lyn now in residence!

Student Results

We are very keen to hear how our students have gone with their end of year results – the VCE students, of course, but also our younger students and post-schoolies as well. So if you have student results you'd like to share with us and the readership, please email or call!

Inside This Issue

1	PD, Borrowing Lists, Changes at the SVRC, Student Results
2	'You Don't Have To', BrailleNote (Visual Display & JAWS in Braille, Quick Tac – Free Software
3	Buying Computers, Accessing the Board
4	NVDA – Free Screen Reader for PC, Listening Skills for Students, VisionTech Updated
5	KeyVoice – Voices Keystrokes, Emprint Spot Dot, BrailleNote Transplant
6	Source Forge – Office Files to DAISY, IDEAS New Disability Website, Accessible Communications – Workplace Guide, Kath & Kim Audio Described, Vacancy in Alice Springs
7	Interactive Smart Globe, Braille in the Community Competition, Christmas Card Picture Design
8	Drawing in Dots – A Christmas Tree

“You Don’t Have To...”

Adapted from: Future Reflections, Fall 2007

This is a terrific article written by mother Carrie Gilmer who examines the importance of expectations even in the ordinary events of life that, at the time they occur, may seem inconsequential. She writes:

‘Four little words, “You don’t have to...” How much harm can be done by such a seemingly innocent pardon? After all it is born out of the kindest and most sympathetic of intentions, right? This thing is unfair for you to do, so you don’t have to do whatever this is. That levels everything; all is right with the world.

Recently my son Jordan was excused from an assignment at school with the words, “You don’t have to do it.”’

Gilmer goes on to describe why she feels that her son missed out on important learning experiences by being excused from the activity.

‘While the teacher’s purpose for the assignment had merely been a tool to motivate the class to pay better attention to the film, the actual assignment presented quite a learning opportunity. Doing it forced the students to not only focus on the film, but to analyze it and then go further to articulate what they had analyzed as they formulated and wrote the answers. There are a number of rather valuable skills involved. Everyone had a chance to work on those skills, whether they realized it or not, simply by doing the assignment, but not Jordan. He simply passively watched and enjoyed the film. He had no catalyst to prompt him to analyze anything more deeply, and no opportunity to practice articulating his thoughts. He was relieved by a false idea of fairness, but in reality robbed of a learning opportunity.

Beyond that, how did his classmates view Jordan from the perspective of “he doesn’t have to?” This question got to Jordan and he began to appreciate that it was a big deal after all. How can peers view you as an equal if you “don’t have to?” What does it mean when everyone accepts that you “don’t have to” because whatever it is that you don’t have to do is (or appears to be) harder for you? ... Do you want to raise a blind child who can compete with his or her peers? Then strike the words “you don’t have to” from your vocabulary.’

For the complete article, visit:

<http://www.nfb.org/images/nfb/Publications/fr/fr26/Issue3/fr260302.htm>

BrailleNote – Visual Display & Screen Reader

The ever-resourceful Lea Nagel has been up to her tricks again – she’s created a new cheat sheet to help those supporting BrailleNote users!

1. Have you ever wanted to SEE what the student is reading and writing on their BrailleNote refreshable braille display? – that is, get a ‘visual display’ of the braille display
2. Have you ever wanted to READ IN BRAILLE what the JAWS is saying? – that is if you are struggling to hear what JAWS is saying and you want to read it via the refreshable braille display

Leanne has written the ‘cheat sheet’ for you! There is a quick version that you can print and laminate – but also a more detailed version if you require further instruction or explanation.

Visit: <http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au/CSBNVisDisScR.doc>

Freeware: 'Quick Tac' for Pictures in Braille

For school-based staff who wish to prepare tactual diagrams for their braille students for free, consider Quick Tac, a freeware program. It appears to be similar to the new version of PictureBraille (except there's no support). Take a look here: <http://www.tactileaudio.com/doc.htm> or download from here: <http://www.tactileaudio.com/QuickTac.htm>.

Buying Computers for Students with Vision Impairments

Senior Visiting Teacher Lea Nagel has made some suggestions for those who will be making submissions for funding and buying notebook computers:

If your student has problems with glare

Not many of the computers now have a matt screen. The Lenovo (Department roll-out) ones do, and some Hewlett-Packard do. ASUS and others seem to all have shiny screens.

Memory

Make sure you buy a computer with enough RAM (Random Access Memory) to run Vista, which uses lots more RAM than XP. You can still buy computers with XP or Vista. Schools that I work in seem to still be running XP. In a couple of years, however, the school or the student will probably want to upgrade to Vista, so there needs to be that capability. On top of Vista-capable, you need to buy enough RAM to run extra software, depending on student need: JAWS uses lots of RAM and so might other text-to-speech or enlargement software.

IT Support

Talk to the school Information Technology people before you buy the computer and check that they will be happy to load the (generally Microsoft Office) software that is used in the school onto the computer, and provide IT support for it. If IT are 'on board' before you buy the computer, you will find that they can be very helpful. Some IT departments will only support computers that they purchased themselves on behalf of the integration program (and your student). Some are happy to support whatever you buy. Others will not provide any support. In that case, budget for outsourced IT support.

Accessing the Board for Students with Vision Impairments

Adapted from: 'It's Vision Time', Term 3 2007 – article by Kym Gribble in New South Wales Accessing the blackboard and the whiteboard has been an ongoing problem for students especially in the high school setting.

Our students up here use a number of different techniques at the moment including:

- Teacher giving the student a copy of what is going to be written on the board.
- Seating at the front of the classroom.
- Use a peer's book to copy from.
- Use a peer to read what is on the blackboard as the student types on their laptop.
- The teacher emails the student the board notes.
- Book notes are copied up at home after the lesson.
- In class assistance is given directly to the student from a TAS or Vision teacher.

All these techniques have positive and negative points to them with the last option being the most labour intensive and expensive.

We are looking into encouraging true independence in our students in the classroom. We have trialled the Mimio, the Flipper and a variety of other technologies including a Dinolite (about the size of a matchbox). We have had mixed success with all of these technologies with the most

common problem being the time spent connecting the equipment and have it up and running, the weight of carrying it around, the cost, or it not being “socially accepted” in the class. In the primary school setting where the technology can be set up almost permanently most of the comments is not a problem.

With the popularity of the Smartboard in many classrooms, new issues are arising for students with vision impairments...

If you have any ideas, suggestions or hints please let us know.

NVDA: Free Screen Reader for PC

Developed by a group of young programmers, NVDA is a free and open source screen reader for the Microsoft Windows Operating System. This software can enable blind or vision impaired people to access computers running Windows, for no more cost than a sighted person.

Go to <http://www.nvda-project.org/download.html> if you'd like to download NVDA or <http://www.nvda-project.org/> if you'd like more information.

NVDA is still very much in development. It may contain bugs and not be as stable as other commercial screen readers. However, even though it may not work correctly in every situation, people are reporting that NVDA works well for basic computing tasks, and definitely has the potential to grow into something as usable as the commercial screen readers.

Listening Skills for Students

Source: <http://www.learningthroughlistening.org/> (where you'll find other interesting activities and lesson plans)

Here are some quick listening activities to use while waiting for the bus, standing in line or transitioning to a different activity.

- Play “Simon Says”
- Play a game of Hang-man
- Read a poem, news article or magazine article
- Pick a proverb and ask students to explain it.
- Start a proverb and have students finish it.
- Have students describe a scenic calendar photo
- Clap and finger-snap a pattern for students to copy
- Go from student to student and build a story one sentence at a time.
- Pick a vocabulary word and have the students name its synonyms, antonyms or rhymes.
- Play a game of “I Spy”
- Play some music and have the students describe their visualization while listening, or draw a picture.
- Play “I went to the store and bought something that begins with a P” (Pick the beginning letter of the item)

Many students learn best when learning is accompanied by an action or activity. Use these activities to reinforce the listening lessons you teach.

Following Directions: Have fun with your students while demonstrating how important listening and language are when attempting to follow oral directions with no visual input given.

Got a Minute? Listen up!: Learn how to maximize the down-time throughout your day by building your students' listening skills.

Journal Jots: Journals are a powerful tool that can help increase listening skills in the classroom. Learn how implementing journals into your lessons can help.

Prosody: Do this interactive activity with your students to help them understand how important tone, beat and emphasis are when they speak. Complete the Prosody activity.

Scavenger Hunt: Use this engaging activity to help students learn how to navigate through an audiobook or to sharpen up their navigation skills.

VisionTech Website Updated

The 'VisionTechnology' website has recently been updated (again) – and there are all sorts of new technologies to compare – with information including a description, source, compatibility, features and price.

Visit: <http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au>

KeyVoice – Voices Keystrokes on the Keyboard

<http://members.dodo.com.au/%7Epcrain/>

Ever wondered how to teach your blind students to type? You could try one of the self-voicing programs but as it is important to work 1:1 with most students, particularly the very young child ensuring that they are using the correct fingers for each key, you might as well use a print copy (eg the worksheets from TTAPS or similar) and just read aloud from this. So all you need to worry about is how the student receives feedback about which key they have pressed – and perhaps KeyVoice is the solution.

KeyVoice is free software that is downloadable. KeyVoice is not a screen reader. It speaks keystrokes. It will not read out menus etc like JAWS, WindowEyes or any of the more sophisticated programs – and in fact if you have these programs installed on your computer you should turn off your screen reader's key announcement option. If you do not turn off this feature, the screen reader and KeyVoice will both speak out the keys.

KeyVoice is designed for Windows 98, Windows 2000, and Windows XP. A minimum system includes a Pentium, CD-ROM drive, and sound card with speakers. The program requires about 6 MB of available hard disk space to install.

Other features include the ability to:

- change font size
- mute the sound
- invert text and background – black or white
- clear or delete text

Download from: <http://members.dodo.com.au/%7Epcrain/>

Emprint SpotDot

SpotDot is a relatively new technology which:

- prints braille and ink on the same page (colour ink with Emprint™)
- includes software which automatically formats Word and Excel documents for braille
- enables the creation of raised visual images on paper from anything on the computer screen
- includes Tiger Designer—tactile graphics design software for Windows® Emprint Spot Dot is available from HumanWare for \$9,350.00.

Contact Ramona Mandy on 0404 834 924.

BrailleNote Classic Transplant (to BrailleNote mPower)

Source: Ramona Mandy, Humanware

The BrailleNote Transplant Scheme introduced in 2005 will shortly be discontinued. Customers wishing to take advantage of the BrailleNote Transplant offer, keeping their technology current, must do so before the 19th December 2007.

The BrailleNote mPower offers a second synthesizer (Eloquence), bluetooth, two USB host ports, an SD card slot, FM radio, the latest KeySoft version (KS 7.5), and more. You send in your old BrailleNote, and Humanware take out the braille display and transplant it into a brand spanking new BrailleNote mPower.

Until 19th December 2007, there is a flat price of \$2,750 for all braille display transplants to BN mPowers, irrespective of KeySoft version and braille display length.

Call Sam or Anthony to place an order on (02) 9686-2600.

SourceForge – Converting Office 2007 files to DAISY Format

Adapted from: CNET News 13 November 2007: Microsoft Word Files to Serve as Talking Books
Microsoft and open-source site SourceForge will offer a free plug-in early next year that will convert Office 2007 files to the DAISY format that translates text to speech.

The free tool will add a “Save as DAISY” option within Word 2007, 2003 and XP software.

DAISY XML files can be read aloud by speech synthesizers, paired with audio narration and used to create electronic braille. Users can navigate open-standard DAISY documents quickly by jumping between page elements, such as headers and indexes.

Visit: <http://www.sourceforge.net>

IDEAS – New Disability Website

The IDEAS’ website provides a high quality accessible web portal for people with disability and people with age related disability, their families, carers and other supporters to access and search for information that promotes their independence. Online versions of resources (databases on services, equipment suppliers and travel options, Infobyte fact sheets and newsletters) maintained by IDEAS can be found on the website as well as their blog, events diary and links to other high quality disability resources. Visit <http://www.ideas.org.au>

Accessible Communications: Workplace Guide

Source: DEECD Communication S415-2007 Accessible Communications: Workplace Guide

Accessibility is a component of good communications planning. The Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1994 and the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* make disability discrimination unlawful and aims to promote equal opportunity, inclusion and access for people with a disability. It is important to consider the communication needs of your whole audience. The *Accessible Communications: Workplace Guide* has been developed to assist staff make workplace information and communication more accessible for people with a disability. For further information, see:

https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/Schools/Circulars/2007/s415-2007_accessiblecomms-clr.doc

Audio Description: Kath & Kim are Audio Described!

Source: Audio Description Online, November 2007

Kath's fluorescent pink g-string leotard will no longer be a mystery for blind and vision impaired fans of Kath & Kim, as season four of the television series was released on DVD with audio description. For a Christmas gift that is nice, different, and un-u-su-al you can't go past Kath & Kim Series Four on DVD.

For more information visit: <http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/audiodescription/>

Media Access Australia recently launched a brand new radio segment titled 'A Way of Life' on Vision Australia Radio. Broadcast every Sunday morning at 9.00 am, the lifestyle segment features weekly discussion topics on audio description.

For more information visit <http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/audiodescription/c.aspx?id=111>

Vacancy in Alice Springs

Need a 'sea change' – there is a vacancy for a position working in vision and special education in Alice Springs. Go top:

[http://notes.nt.gov.au/dcis/RMS.nsf/\(LookupWebVacancy\)/7BB0481ACFE76EED69257391000F9CF6?Opendocument](http://notes.nt.gov.au/dcis/RMS.nsf/(LookupWebVacancy)/7BB0481ACFE76EED69257391000F9CF6?Opendocument)

Christmas Present or Learning Tool: Interactive Smart Globe

This surprising globe has a groovy pen pointer and voice output as well as 30 interactive activities such as:

- the distance between two points on the earth
- the size of a country
- the national anthem
- the country's leader

It's a veritable encyclopaedia of geographic knowledge that can be updated on the internet.

Where: Australian Geographic stores

Cost: \$199



Braille in the Community Competition

Lyn Robinson has submitted a surprising entry – surprising in its role and function. It's a Digital Ultrasonic Dog Pet Voice Recorder Trainer – and it has braille markers on the keys!

And this is what it does:

The EZ digital dog trainer is used to train pets when repeated voice commands are needed. Using digital recording technology, anyone using any language can easily record voice commands for the device's eight training options. The trainer also features ultrasonic tones that allow you to train your pet in silence.



Christmas Card Picture Design

We had so many beautiful designs entered that we ended up with four winners – all of which win prizes. The prizes consist of 10 beautifully printed copies of their card and a small gift (which will be delivered via VT in the next couple of weeks).

Here are the winning designs as Christmas cards – by Nikita (10 years), Ingrid (6 years) and Rohan (7 years).



You can place orders for bundles of these delightful cards -
6 cards with envelopes for \$3.50

Drawing in Dots: A Christmas Tree

This picture comes from Lea's student Abby and was the design on her entry to the Christmas card picture competition that we recently held.

[optional: braille 'Merry Christmas' in contracted braille then go down 2 lines]

1. Space (x 7) FOR
2. Space (x 6) FOR (x 3)
3. Space (x 5) FOR (x 5)
4. Space (x 4) FOR (x 7)
5. Space (x 3) FOR (x 9)
6. Space (x 2) FOR (x 11)
7. Space FOR (x 13)
8. Space (x 6) FOR (x 3)
9. Space (x 6) FOR (x 3)

Abby brailled her Christmas tree on green card and glued this to a slightly larger piece of folded red card. Abby's design was sent to braille readers inviting them to our Christmas morning tea on Wednesday 5th December.

Finally

Thanks to Trevor Boyd, Chris Dinning, Michael Kelly, Jackie McKenzie, Lea Nagel, Denise Probert and Mike Steer for contributing to this edition of The Bulletin. Thanks also to my fabulous proof-readers, stuffers and mailers.

If you have something to place in 'The Bulletin', contact:

Deb Lewis (who can be emailed at deblewis@svrc.vic.edu.au).