

# The Bulletin

## Statewide Vision Resource Centre

**Number 3**

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

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

### Professional Development Activities for Term 1 and 2, 2008

For workshop sessions, please BYO laptop.

Professional Development Event 2008	Date
<b>Educational Support for Students with Low Vision – Prep to Year 8</b>	Fri 14 March
<b>Educational Support for Students with Low Vision – Secondary Students</b>	Thurs 17 April
<b>Skill Power Workshops for Visiting Teachers, Teachers, Aides, Students etc</b> <b>1. BrailleNote</b> - 10.00am to 11.30am Ramona Mandy, Humanware <b>2. MAGic</b> - 11.45am to 1.15pm Trevor Boyd, Quantum Technology <b>3. Computer without the Mouse</b> - 1.30pm to 3.00pm Lea Nagel, Senior VT	Mon 21 April
<b>Skill Power Workshops for Visiting Teachers, Teachers, Aides, Students etc</b> <b>1. WindowEyes</b> - 10.00am to 11.30am Ramona Mandy, Humanware <b>2. WYNN</b> - 11.45am to 1.15pm Trevor Boyd, Quantum Technology <b>3. Digital Media</b> - 1.30pm to 3.00pm Staff of the SVRC	Wed 30 April
<b>Educational Support for Vision Impaired Students with Additional Impairments</b>	Wed 7 May
<b>Skill Power Workshops for Visiting Teachers, Teachers, Aides, Students etc</b> <b>1. PACMate</b> - 10.00am to 11.30am Trevor Boyd, Quantum Technology <b>2. Enlarging Options</b> - 11.45am to 1.15pm Scott Freeman, Humanware <b>3. JAWS</b> - 1.30pm to 3.00pm Lea Nagel, Senior Visiting Teacher	Thurs 15 May
<b>Term 2 Visiting Teacher Professional Development Day</b>	Tues 3 June

To download programs for PD activities, visit: <http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au/pd2008.htm>

### Space Camp 2008 (SCI-VIS)

Do you want to join the elite group – THE SPACE CAMPERS??? We NEED TO KNOW NOW!!!

I think we have one student who is KEEN KEEN KEEN – so we need at least three more!!!

What is Space Camp – do I hear you ask????!!! Most suitable for students from year 9, we travel to the USA to participate in a role play-based space program that actually changes lives!!! True!!!

<http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au/camps.htm> and click on the Space Camp links or

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/space/index.htm> - the official SCI-VIS page

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## Spot Dot: Braille and Print on the Same Page!

A recent Skill Power workshop session featured Ramona Mandy from Humanware demonstrating the exciting and relatively new Spot Dot from ViewPlus.

Spot Dot is a braille embosser with an inbuilt HP printer which can be used to produce tactual/braille; colour print; or tactual/braille and colour print on the same page. Some of the benefits of print and braille on the same page include:

- for the student with some vision, information can be obtained through the senses of touch and vision
- the same learning materials can be shared by both print and braille readers

There is a high degree of flexibility with this system:

- documents can be produced directly from Windows-based programs including Word, Excel and PowerPoint
- any of the Windows-based fonts can be selected
- print can be translated to contracted or uncontracted braille within Windows-based programs
- images can be created in Windows-based programs such as Paint
- Tiger Designer is the software (included with Spot Dot) that can be used to produce print/tactile materials and features various fonts and a drawing facility
- Tiger Designer also allows users to trace from a (eg scanned) image
- Documents can be embossed directly from the Duxbury program

The Spot Dot embosser has the ability to emboss dots of seven different heights meaning that tactual diagrams can be embossed using different textures - the height of the dot reflects the density of the colour used to produce the image. Spot Dot connects to your computer via USB and can print/emboss on A4-sized paper (portrait or landscape).

ViewPlus is currently developing curriculum materials for use in the school environment eg Maths and Science resources. Training and tutorials are available - contact Ramona on 0404 834 924.



## **Professional Preparation at the Renwick Centre, North Rocks**

In affiliation with the University of Newcastle, the Royal Institute for Deaf & Blind Children (RIDBC), founded in 1860 and located at North Rocks in Sydney, operates the Renwick Centre as a program for research, professional training, and continuing professional development for teachers and allied professionals working with children who have impaired vision or hearing. The Centre was established by RIDBC in 1992 and is named after the Hon. Sir Arthur Renwick (1837-1908) its second President. He was a medical practitioner and politician who served in two NSW Government Ministries, was Medical Superintendent of Sydney Hospital as well as Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University.

The Centre currently provides programs leading to the following postgraduate awards of the University of Newcastle:

- Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies,
- Master of Special Education (Sensory Disability),
- Master of Special Education (Sensory Disability) with Honours,
- Master of Philosophy (by research and thesis),
- Doctor of Philosophy.

The majority of courses are offered through on-campus study or by distance education.

### ***Continuing education***

In addition to "award-bearing" professional training courses, Renwick Centre is also committed to the provision of high quality continuing education programs. Typically, these are independent of award bearing courses and include seminars and workshops (of varying lengths) conducted by leading national and international experts in the field of education of children with sensory disabilities. However, it is possible for "non-award" students to enrol in single subjects within the Master of Special Education (Sensory Disability) course as part of the Continuing Education program.

### ***Research***

The Centre is committed to conducting research related to any aspect of the education of students with sensory disabilities. Research infrastructure includes: a modern and highly specialised library that provides access to electronic searching of data bases and abstracting services (both "on-line" and via "CD ROM"); access to a modern local computer network for word processing and graphics packages; access to the University Computer Network for the use of Data Processing and Statistical packages (SAS and SPSS).

### ***Accommodation***

Accommodation is available on campus at King House for full-time students, distance education residential schools, Visiting Research/Teaching Fellows, conference participants, and other official Centre visitors. King House offers a range of accommodation options including single rooms with private facilities, and single and twin-share rooms with shared facilities. Communal dining areas are provided, as are modern kitchen and laundry facilities.

An increasing number of leaders in vision impairment education in Australia and overseas have received their professional preparation qualifications through opportunities made possible by the Renwick Centre. For more information please contact the Centre's Administration Officer

Tel: 02 9 872 0303

Email: [jill.watson@ridbc.org.au](mailto:jill.watson@ridbc.org.au)

## **It's Happening in Melbourne in April**

### ***ICEB Fourth General Assembly***

The General Assembly of the International Council on English Braille will shortly be held in Melbourne.

**When:** 6-10 April

**Where:** Saville on Russell Hotel, 222 Russell Street Melbourne

The program features national and international speakers and would be of interest to anyone working with students with vision impairments. Some sessions of which may be of particular interest include:

Monday 7 April 9.30 – 12.15

UEB Implementation – Australian and international case studies

Wednesday 9 April 9.30 – 11.00

- Alphabetic Braille Contracted (ABC) Braille research study- achievement of students who are Braille readers, Diane Wormsley, USA
- Considerations for Embosser Produced Tactile Graphics, Nigel Herring, Australia

(Note: please confirm these dates and times with the organisers: <http://www.eceb.org>)

### ***Round Table Conference***

Following the ICEB General Assembly will be the Round Table – same venue – in Melbourne. The theme is The Power of Cross Sector Collaboration: investigating working relationships across the private, public, government and not-for-profit sectors.

**When:** 11-14 April

**Where:** Saville on Russell Hotel, 222 Russell Street Melbourne

For program and registration details visit: <http://www.e-bility.com/roundtable/>

Last year's Round Table Conference confirmed its international standing, with participants and presenters from Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Japan, Netherlands, NZ, South Africa, UK and USA. Speakers observed that there appears to be a renaissance in the use of braille in Australia, presenting comparisons between braille and other formats such as this comment from an adult braille reader:

“Braille allows you to read in greater detail.”

Unified English Braille is currently being phased in to Australia with resources increasingly becoming available - the new Braille Primer (2006); the UEB Rule Book (available in 2008); Braille Proficiency Testing (available 2008).

And stay tuned for the 200 year birthday of Louis Braille – 4<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

### ***Braille Window Project***

During the ICEB General Assembly and the Round Table, you'll have a chance to take a look at the Braille Window Project – which will be on view at the Saville on Russell Hotel!

For more information see: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/braillewindows.html>

## Access Technology Workshop Expos

Quantum Technology will be hosting a series of workshop expos in your local area with Glaucoma Australia, Vision Australia and Guide Dogs Victoria. This will be an exciting showcase on the latest information and products available for people with low vision, their families and friends. Attendees can learn about strategies for living with low vision and test products that will enable them to continue to access the information they need for daily living. Consultants will be on hand to provide free technology assessments for those who register.

<b>Mildura</b> Tuesday 18 March 2008 10am – 12pm The Mildura Club 85 – 91 Deakin Ave, Mildura	<b>Horsham</b> Wednesday 19 March 2008 9am – 11am The Horsham Sports and Community Club 179 Baillie Street, Horsham
<b>Bendigo</b> Thursday 20 March 2008 10am – 12noon Bendigo RSL Havilah Road, Bendigo	<b>Ballarat</b> Thursday 20 March 2008 3pm - 5pm Ballarat Leagues – Saxon House 1431 Mair Street, Ballarat City Oval, Ballarat

To register to attend please call Quantum Technology on 03 9545 4100 or email [info@quantumtechnology.com.au](mailto:info@quantumtechnology.com.au)

## National Unified Lifeskills Model (NULM): Parent Summit

Source: ABF Update February 2008

A national parent summit is planned for April 2008. For more information, email Errol Ingram at [errol@nulm.org](mailto:errol@nulm.org) or go to <http://www.nulm.org>.

## ABF Recycled Equipment Website

Source: ABF Update February 2008

Australia's delegates to the World Blind Union (WBU) Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly has endorsement a surplus equipment exchange scheme to be piloted in the Pacific-Oceania Region. The website was launched in November 2007 and in the three months since has provided the following equipment:

- Papua New Guinea: Perkins Brailers, slate and stylus sets, Braille paper, audio cassettes, talking watches and magnifiers
- Samoa: Perkins Brailers, slate and stylus sets
- Tonga: Perkins Brailers and reading machines
- East Timor: Braille slates, white canes and talking watches

In addition, a request has been received from Nepal.

The ABF urges all blindness organisations in Australia and New Zealand to help make the pilot scheme a success by adding their lists of available equipment to those already on the website at <http://www.rsb.org.au/wbu/index.html>.

# Ten Top Tips for Visiting Teachers

Mike Steer [mike.steer@ridbc.org.au](mailto:mike.steer@ridbc.org.au)

Gillian Gale [gilliang@alphalink.com.au](mailto:gilliang@alphalink.com.au)

RIDBC Renwick Centre  
North Rocks

In a discussion with students towards the end of last semester we were asked what we thought were the 10 most important tips we would give someone beginning a career as a visiting teacher. We thought this quite a challenge.

Visiting teachers after all, work in a potentially isolating profession. They travel from school to school, negotiate the complex labyrinth of the educational system, provide individualised instruction to students, consult with school administrators, teachers, ancillary personnel and families. In addition they provide an array of individualised expanded core curriculum skills to the students on their case loads. The students can range in age from preschoolers through to those engaged in high school leaving exams. In many ways visiting teachers are the unsung heroes of inclusive education. How can visiting teachers better manage these difficult tasks and their itinerant lifestyle successfully and remain professionally effective? We each made a list of those we considered our ten best tips, and then with much debate reconciled the items and merged the two lists. Here are the 10 top tips that resulted, nine that can work across every level of the educational system and the tenth is a reminder to ensure that you take care of your own needs. We invite you (a) not to merely accept the tips we've listed but to modify the list by perhaps adding to it, and further, (b) to send us a list of the items you think we should have included. Our contact addresses are provided above.

1. **Set high expectations** for all of your students and the teacher aides?
2. **Set up a user-friendly, compatible work-station** for the vision impaired student that is as like his or her peers' work-station as possible while providing for the extra requirement of the student, and that ensures that the vision impaired student can be as self-sufficient as possible
3. **Use differentiated instruction methods.** Plan your sessions with the student(s) to incorporate ways that promote their learning according to their strengths, whether they are visual-auditory or tactile-kinesthetic learners. There is no 'one shirt size fits all' or 'best way' to learn. Using multiple styles to match multiple intelligences will make sure that no-one is left out.
4. **Model behaviour for your student's teachers and peers.** Try to learn and use the names of the regular students in each of the classes you visit. Describe objects in detail. Allow your students to have the opportunity and extra time

required to examine items at close range. Demonstrate sighted-guide techniques when necessary

5. Encourage teachers to use collaborative or cooperative learning techniques and ensure that the student with a vision impairment is fully included. It is worth spending your time and resources to help create these learning situations so that the student can participate fully with groups of peers. Cooperative/collaborative learning can:
  - promote student learning and academic achievement;
  - enhance student satisfaction with their learning experience;
  - help students develop skills in oral communication;
  - develop students' social skills; and
  - promote student self-esteem
6. **Suggest to generalist teachers**, if necessary, that they also adopt a student-centred learning approach to encourage independent learning
7. **Confront challenging behaviour** if presented by the student with a vision impairment.
8. **Use positive behavioural strategies** when you teach
9. **Develop and use school and community resources** to support such areas as daily living skills, orientation & mobility and leisure activities. Areas that present a challenge because of the visiting teacher's limited time at each school.
10. **Nurture yourself-**
  - Ensure that you have maximum regular contact with colleagues for support, feed-back and cross-fertilisation/sharing of ideas
  - Attend PD's regularly
  - Keep up your SPEVI membership.
  - Keep up to date with professional reading
  - Retain your sense of humour and laugh lots

## Getting Ready to Work

Excerpt from an article in the March 2008 issue of Parent News by Robyn McKenzie

Having managed an employment service at Vision Australia for four years, I have a keen interest in preparing children for the world of work, and I think it is never too early to get started. I'd like to share with you a couple of thoughts I presented at the summit.

It is my belief that the average 22 year old who is blind or vision impaired is about 6 years behind their sighted peers in labour market experience. This is because the average 22 year old, after completing their year 12 and a tertiary qualification, has often had around six years experience in the casual workforce in jobs such as fast food chain customer service, check out work in the local supermarket or delivering newspapers. For the most part, these types of jobs are not available to a young person who is blind or vision impaired. As a result the lifeskills of time and stress management through having to juggle priorities, plan study and work loads, dealing with a range of people who you might not otherwise have contact, problem solving, initiative taking and Working within hierarchy and large systems.

Before you get depressed about the options available to your child, let me give you three positive strategies to put in place with your child now so that he or she is better prepared for the world of work.

1. Provide your child with a structure beyond their schooling experience. By joining local sporting teams, getting regularly involved in community activities such as visiting the local retirement village or local animal welfare society, mixing with other children or people outside of your child's current family circle, your child will develop a broader experience of the world which may set in place higher expectations of what might be available to them in the future.
2. Join your child in organisations such as Junior Rotary. These types of clubs develop leadership skills in children by teaching them public speaking, event management and exposure to other children and adults. These clubs also foster in children the development of their passionate interests and hobbies.
3. Regularly introduce your child to various job roles. Visit people in their workplace and give your child a tour of each work environment. Sighted kids get the opportunity to casually reference workplaces by seeing them depicted on television or by having a quick visit to Auntie Helen's workplace. Making a conscious effort throughout your child's growing years to model the world of work will, again, reinforce what the world of work is. As opposed to it being a foreign concept.

Finally, I can't say enough about role modelling. Your child needs to hear the stories of other blind people who are in work. It is important that you actively seek out opportunities for your child to meet people who are blind or vision impaired engaged in all sorts of jobs. BCA has an employment page on our website ([www.bca.org.au/employment/index.htm](http://www.bca.org.au/employment/index.htm)). It may be worth taking a look at some of the employment profiles of our members.

Remember, it is never too early to start getting your child ready to work.



## Direct Braille with Quick Paw! (For FREE!)

Turn your QWERTY keyboard into a six- or eight-key entry keyboard for braille production – on your PC!

Quick Paw is a free six- or eight-key braille input software. It allows you to use a standard keyboard to enter braille directly into mainstream Windows programs such as MS Word – AND you can send this file to a ViewPlus embosser for output in embossed braille.

To download this free software, visit: <http://www.viewplus.com>. Just fill out a short survey for the registration number.




The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying <http://www.viewplus.com/products/braille-embossers/braille-software/quickpaw/>. The website header features the ViewPlus logo and navigation links for Home, Products, Support, ViewPlus, and Downloads. The Products menu is expanded, listing Braille Production, Hands-on Learning, Math Access, Testimonials, and Product Store. Below this, there are links for Braille Printers, Ink & Braille Printers, Braille Software, and Braille Printer Accessories. A prominent orange banner highlights "Quick Paw Six-Key Braille Input Software", with a sub-link for "Tiger Software Suite Quick Paw".

Quick Paw is a free six- or eight-key Braille input software. It allows you to use a standard keyboard to enter Braille directly into mainstream Windows programs such as MS Word, giving you greater versatility. Not only does it let you select your preferred input program, but Quick Paw also allows you to select your preferred Braille table, giving you more options than ever before. To download this free software select the link below.

**Quick Paw's Unique Features:**

- Users a standard keyboard.
- Enters Braille directly into mainstream Windows programs.
- Allows you to select your preferred Braille table.
- It's free! Just fill out a short survey for the registration number.



The image shows the Quick Paw logo, which consists of a paw print inside a magnifying glass. Below the logo is a screenshot of the software's user interface. The interface includes a window titled "Quick Paw" with a message: "Please register from the list of preset applications below or enter IP to enable Quick Paw to talk with your embosser." There are fields for "Current application:" and "IP:" with a "Quick Paw" button. At the bottom, there are keyboard shortcuts for "B" (Braille), "R" (Refresh), and "E" (Exit).

### System Requirements:

PC 486 or higher

Windows® 2000/XP Operating System

Keyboard with six-key rollover

Now you can keep doing your SVRC Braille Lessons by Correspondence – even if your Perkins Brailier goes bung!!!

# National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy 2008

Source: <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/prep10/naplan/geninfo.html>

## ***What is different about the NAPLAN tests?***

The main difference is that spelling, punctuation and grammar, previously part of the AIM English test, will be in a separate Language Conventions test. Also, Teacher Assessed Tasks will not be part of the 2008 NAPLAN. The tests will be also held over three days instead of two days.

Year 7 and Year 9 students will each undertake two numeracy tests on Thursday 15 May 2008. The second test will require the use of a calculator. Schools will need to ensure that all Year 7 and Year 9 students have either their own calculator or a calculator that they are familiar with, to use during the test. Schools are advised to have a reserve of working calculators available for students to use should students forget to bring their own calculators, or if their own calculator fails during the course of the test.

The NAPLAN tests for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students will assess literacy and numeracy skills in much the same way that the previous AIM tests did. The format of the national tests will be very similar to the questions previously used in the AIM English and Mathematics tests. The NAPLAN tests are expected to align with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

## ***NAPLAN 2008 testing schedule***

Testing dates for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are as follows:

- Tuesday 13 May: Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Writing
- Wednesday 14 May: Reading
- Thursday 15 May: Numeracy\*

\* Year 7 and 9 students will undertake two numeracy tests, the second of which will require the use of a calculator.

## ***What if a child has special needs?***

The NAPLAN tests will offer the same levels of support for students with special needs as previously existed under the AIM testing system. All students will be encouraged to take part in the NAPLAN tests.

Special provisions will continue to be made available to meet the needs of individual students, such as alternative versions of the tests in large print or braille.

Information gained from NAPLAN tests will be used for reporting against the National Benchmarks. These benchmarks describe minimum acceptable standards for students across Australia in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy. Students who do not achieve these standards are likely to have difficulty making satisfactory progress at school without additional assistance.

For further information contact the VCAA NAPLAN Help Desk on freecall 1800 648 637 or email [vcaa.naplan.help@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:vcaa.naplan.help@edumail.vic.gov.au).

The application form for requesting special provision can be found on pages 19 & 20 of the Principal's Guide and should be faxed to VCAA by the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008 on 9225 2334.

## Guide Dogs Victoria - Children's Mobility Service News

Guide Dogs Victoria (GDV) provides an Orientation and Mobility (O&M) service for vision impaired and blind students who are currently completing their education at primary, secondary or tertiary education settings.

The goal of O&M instruction is to equip the student to travel safely, efficiently and as independently as possible. To achieve this goal, instruction may cover many areas. Any student with a vision impairment can be referred to Guide Dogs Victoria by parents or teachers for Orientation and Mobility assessment and training.

For further information or to make a referral to the service please contact Rachel Morgan on - 9854 4469 or email [rachel.m@guidedogsvictoria.com.au](mailto:rachel.m@guidedogsvictoria.com.au)

### **Staff update**

The CMS team welcomes Laura Hunt to the team. Laura will be providing Orientation and Mobility service in metropolitan and regional areas.

Angela Reynolds who is based in Wangaratta continues to provide O&M service to children in the Hume region.

### **Upcoming programs**

All programs are based around an Orientation and Mobility theme and include activities and events that are designed to promote the development of independent travel skills as well as providing opportunities for children to meet with their peers. All programs are free of charge.

**March 25 – 28** Junior program based at the Guide Dogs Victoria campus in Kew  
**June 30 – July 4** Senior program based in regional Victoria  
**September 22 –25** Junior program based at the Guide Dogs Victoria campus in Kew

**April 18** Young Adults Program: Amazing Race Melbourne CBD  
**June** Sporting Event  
**August** YA goes CBD  
City Limits  
**October** Ladies Day Out  
**December** Night Activity

Please contact any member of the CMS team to discuss group attendance and content.

### **Fun with Dogs – a Program for Junior Students**

**When:** Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 6.30pm

**Where:** Guide Dogs Victoria Arnold Cookhouse building

**Cost:** FREE

**RSVP:** Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March. Places are limited so please register your interest by contacting: Erin Galloway, Orientation and Mobility Instructor on 9854 4521 or Deb Biderman Guide Dog Instructor on 98544 481.

### **SVRC PD days**

The CMS is involved in a number of SVRC professional development days throughout the year so keep a look out in the SVRC newsletter for events where CMS is included on the event agenda. Attendance at these events is an opportunity to learn more about the nature and scope of Orientation and Mobility for children.

## ***Publications***

### **CMS Newsletter, GDV Education Kit and Look Out Marcus**

The CMS newsletter is published on a quarterly basis and is provided in a variety of formats and contains information about CMS events and activities.

The GDV “Education Kit” and “Look Out Marcus” publications are available free of charge to teachers, schools and families. “Look Out Marcus” was written by the CMS team and is a story about a boy called Marcus who is growing up with Low Vision. The book contains activity pages for students to complete and is a valuable tool for classroom teachers.

To be added to the Newsletter mailing or to obtain copies of the 2 publications mentioned please contact Lisa Brown at Guide Dogs Victoria [lisa.b@guidedogsvictoria.com.au](mailto:lisa.b@guidedogsvictoria.com.au)

For further information about any aspect of the Children’s Mobility Service please contact any of the CMS team:

Dean Johnson - 9854 4506  
Rachel Morgan - 9854 4469  
Sharon Taylor - 9854 4496  
Lil Deverell - 9854 4542  
Alicia Madden - 9854 4493  
Janelle O’Loughlin - 9854 4520  
Erin Galloway - 9854 4521  
Laura Hunt – 9854 4457

The GDV website is [www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au](http://www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au) and has information about Guide Dogs Victoria and its services.

## **Test Drive a Guide Dog**

Source: Young Adults Chat, Issue 3

**Have you ever wondered how a Guide Dog works?**

**Is it possible you might use a Guide Dog in the future?**

**Would you like to experience walking with a Guide Dog?**

Guide Dogs Victoria has specifically designed a program for adults who may use a Guide Dog in the future. The aim is to provide information about Guide Dog mobility and the opportunity to experience walking with a Guide Dog.

The program will also cover the benefits and challenges of working with a Guide Dog, prerequisite mobility skills and the application and training process.

For more information contact Rose Long: 9854 4415 or [rose.l@guidedogsvictoria.com.au](mailto:rose.l@guidedogsvictoria.com.au).

## Albinism Survey

The Albinism Foundation Australia are seeking volunteers to participate in a survey to determine the incidence of albinism in Australia. This online survey closes on 31 April 2008.

For further information and to complete the survey, visit: <http://research.imb.uq.edu.au/albinism/>.

## Glaucoma Australia

Glaucoma Australia sells a number of informational leaflets which may be of interest including:

- Glaucoma Surgery – A Guide for Patients \$2.50
- Uveitis and Iritis – A Guide for Patients about Intraocular Inflammation - \$1.50
- Cataract Surgery – A Guide for Patients - \$2.50
- Aphora or Watery Eye – A Guide for Patients \$2.50
- Surgical Treatment of a Detached Retina – A Guide for Patients - \$2.50
- Surgical Treatment of Pterygium – A Guide for Patients - \$1.50

Other items can also be purchased including:

- Eye-drop wallet
- Correspondence cards
- Stationary
- Car sticker

To contact Glaucoma Australia, go to <http://glaucoma.org.au>

Postal address: PO Box 420 Crows Nest NSW 1585

Telephone counselling service (toll free) 1800 500880

## Read Documents with your Mobile Phone

Source: BCA Parent News, March 2008 (Adapted from The Baltimore AP, 'Cell Phone Can Read Documents for Blind' by Alex Dominguez)

Chris Danielsen fidgets with the cell phone, holding it over a \$20 bill. "Detecting orientation, processing U.S. currency image," the phone says in a flat monotone before Danielsen snaps a photo. A few seconds later, the phone says, "Twenty dollars." Danielsen, a spokesman for the National Federation of the Blind, is holding the next generation of computerized aids for the blind and visually impaired.

The Nokia cell phone is loaded with software that turns text on photographed documents into speech. In addition to telling whether a bill is worth \$1, \$5, \$10 or \$20, it also allows users to read anything that is photographed, whether it's a restaurant menu, a phone book or a fax.

While the technology is not new, the NFB and the software's developer say the cell phone is the first to incorporate the text-to-speech ability. "We've had reading devices before," Danielsen said, noting similar software is already available in a larger handheld reader housed in a personal digital assistant. However, the \$2,100 NFB device combines all of those functions in one smart phone, said James Gashel, vice president of business development for K-NFB Reading Technology Inc., which is marketing the phone as a joint venture between the federation and software developer Ray Kurzweil.

## Thinking about a Gap Year?

Are you interested in a Gap Year – between school and tertiary studies?

Former student Peggy gave it a go and is now back with increased confidence and a wealth of experiences and new friendships behind her. She writes:

"The organisation I did my Gap Year through was, Gap Activity Projects Australia (<http://www.gapactivityprojects.org.au/>). They did all the organising of placements and they also gave you a step by step guide of how to get visas, police checks and passports. I told them I wanted to go to a school for the blind and they were fine with that. They liaise with different schools. I certainly would recommend Gap Activity Projects Australia, especially if you're doing something like this for the first time. They take a lot of stress out when it comes to finding placements."

"It is the next step, but this is a huge leap," Gashel, who is blind, said in a telephone interview. "I'm talking to you on the device I also use to read things. I can put it in my pocket and at the touch of a button, in 20 seconds, be reading something I need to read in print."

Portability is only the first step. Future versions of the device will recognize faces, identify rooms and translate text from other languages for the blind and the sighted. Kurzweil said those with vision problems are not the only ones expected to benefit from the technology. Dyslexics, for example, are expected to be among the users of the current device because of its ability to highlight each word as it's read aloud, helping them cope with their disability, which affects the ability to read.

The highlighting function can also help them improve their reading skills, he said. "What's new here is both blind people and kids can do this with a device that fits in their shirt pocket," Kurzweil said. Marc Maurer, president of the National Federation of the Blind, said the device and its PDA predecessor are a "form of hand-held vision" that will make the visual environment "much more readily available to the blind."

## Handy Hints: Cutting and/or Pasting

Source: Julie Bangura - ITS Vision Time, Issue 4 2007

- **'Fold Cutter'**: This is a little plastic tool that has a tiny blade inserted inside it. It is fantastic for cutting braille label (and contact and other labels) as it leaves the backing paper intact. This means you can easily peel off the label. It has also made it easy for students to access braille labels prepared by itinerants as they don't have the difficulty of trying to cut in the correct position. The ISTV can simply pre 'cut' the label into relevant sections for the student to peel off later. They are great for students to create graphs and diagrams more independently. These items are a craft item and are generally designed for making a light cut in card for folding. They are available from the following website: <http://www.stencilstation.com/>  
NOTE: They are not currently listed under the accessories on the website - email the company and you should be able to obtain them - approximately \$4.
- **'Magic Dots'**: These are packets of gummy dots that are widely available for use in photograph albums. We've found them extremely useful where glue doesn't work effectively or when you don't want sticky pages! They are available in most photo processing outlets and stores that sell photograph albums. They cost around \$5.

## Art Workshops in the Brimbank Area

Caroline Curtis from Vision Australia is running an exciting project in the Brimbank area called the "Eye Can Create Project". Funded by the City of Brimbank and auspiced by Vision Australia, this workshop will be conducted by Caroline who is a qualified art therapist for people with vision impairments.

**Format:** 6 to 8 art workshops, with the possibility of exhibiting work at the close of the workshops

**Places available:** 8 maximum (could run with as low as 4 clients)

**Where:** The Hunt Club Community Arts Centre, Ballarat Rd, Deer Park

**Time/day:** Most probably Saturday mornings from 10.30am – 12.30pm

**Dates:** Hope to commence in May (depends on how recruitment goes). Project must be completed by October 2008

For participants from Sunshine to Keilor; Deer Park to Taylors Lakes (or nearby)

This project aims to offer vision impaired people the chance to explore creative art activities that are possible and satisfying within their visual capabilities.

The Project will involve a series of art-based workshops tailored to meet the needs of vision impaired people. Sighted volunteers will assist participants to explore the activities, while participants will also have the chance to meet and socialise with other vision impaired people. The emphasis of the workshops will be on fun, relaxation, and 'ability' (rather than 'disability').

Participants will also have the chance to exhibit their work. Participants will be recruited from the Brimbank area, based of the needs on the vision impaired population in the area.

For more information contact Caroline: [Caroline.Curtis@visionaustralia.org](mailto:Caroline.Curtis@visionaustralia.org)

## Blind Cricket – Come and Try Days (Geelong Area)

**When:** Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March and Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March

**Time:** 11am – 3pm

**Cost:** Nothing, it's absolutely FREE (plus a free BBQ!)

**Where:** Geelong West Sporting club 100 Shannon Avenue Geelong West (Bakers Oval)

**RSVP:** by the Wednesday before each Come and try day.

For more details or for a registration form please contact: Noel Read, Recreation Development Worker, Vision Australia

Tel 5249 2700

Email [noel.read@visionaustralia.org](mailto:noel.read@visionaustralia.org)

## New Movie: The Black Balloon

Source: i:D ... Bulletin Of The Disability Council Of NSW

The Black Balloon is a new Australian movie (starring Toni Collette, Rhys Wakefield, Luke Ford, Erik Thomson and Gemma Ward) which deals, in part, with issues concerning people with an autism spectrum disorder. The film's world premiere was at the Berlin International Film Festival in Germany in February 2008, where it received a Crystal Bear as the best feature-length film in the Generation 14 plus category.

More information about the movie is available at the official website at:

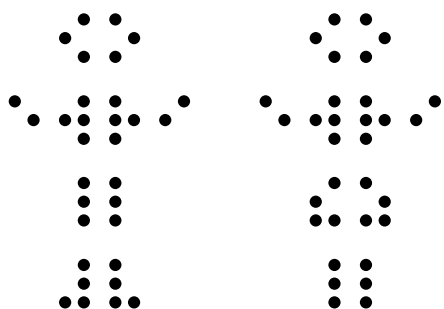
<http://www.theblackballoonmovie.com>

## Drawing in Dots: Stick Figures (man and woman)

Source: ITS Vision Time, Issue 4 2007

This drawing has two figures in it - a man on the left, and a woman the right. It uses 4 lines down and 9 spaces across. The two heads are formed with the contraction OW and the letter "o". The arms of both the man and woman are raised up. The man has straight legs and turned out feet. The woman has a skirt made by using the contraction for THE and the letter "z". Stick figures can be used in all kinds of drawings. They can hold flags, signs, stand on top of things - you'll find all kinds of uses for them.

1. Space once, OW, o, space 3, OW, o.
2. Write e, w, r, i, space, e, w, r, i.
3. Space, dots 4-5-6, l, space 3, THE, z.
4. Space, number sign, v, space 3 times, dots 4-5-6, l.



## Student Writing

Here is the beginning of Year 5 student Darren's story entitled "3 Days with a Prairie Dog!" in which the main character eventually saves the colony from attack...

### Day 1 6:13pm-6:47pm

I was sitting on a stump on watch. I stared over the planes; there wasn't a movement in sight.

I moved to the south of the burrow. there was a storm brewing. As I moved my head slightly downwards I saw a short dark figure walking towards me. I fixed my eyes more closely on the figure. It was a bobcat charging. The beast gave me so much of a fright that I fell with a thud on the solid scorching ground. i quickly scuttled into my burrow.

### Day 2 6:03am-3:28pm

I woke at dawn and was startled at what I had confronted the night before; large footprints could be seen in the dusty ground. I crawled out of my chamber and along the passages out of the burrow. I stumbled over to a tree for some shade as my eyes adjusted to the sun...



## National Parenting Group

Source: BCA Parent News, March 2008

BCA plans to establish a national parenting group specifically for parents or soon to be parents who are blind or vision impaired. Run over teleconference, the goal will share experiences and tips on child raising.

If you are interested in joining this group, or to help get it moving, please email Jessica Zammit at [jessica.zammit@bca.org.au](mailto:jessica.zammit@bca.org.au).

## Student News

- Visiting Teacher **Lynne** from **Colac** reports that former student **Chad** is now studying in his third year towards a Bachelor of Arts in Public Relationships. He is enrolled in 3 subjects at Deakin University, Geelong, frequently travelling independently between Geelong and Colac – and writing websites for folks in the UK in his spare time!
- Former VT Student and Gap Year participant **Peggy** has started university studies towards a Bachelor of Applied Science in Disability at RMIT in Bundoora and says, "It's all very exciting."
- Former Ballarat-based VT student **Lauren** writes, "I'm about to start my fourth year of a music therapy degree at the University of Melbourne. Once I have finished my degree, I am interested in possibly working in the area of palliative care or with adolescents who have mental health issues or chronic illnesses." She is also the 2007-2008 President of Young Blind Citizens of Australia – I bet all that keeps her busy!

## Returns

There appear to be LOTS of our resources – large print, braille etc etc – still out in schools or under kids' beds... Please explain to your students and their parents and schools that the resources are for loan and must be returned at the end of the year. Attached you will find your borrowing list – please do your best to return items that are not required for 2008. Please return all brailers that are not being used by students. If you are using one of our Perkins Brailers to complete your lessons (the SVRC Correspondence Course), please consider using Perky Duck (see issue 2 of The Bulletin) or Quick Paw (see above) instead – and return the Perkins to the SVRC. Thanks everyone

## VA Vacancy

A vacancy exists in a Prahran location for a part time (15.2 hours per week) Language and Literacy instructor. The successful applicant will be responsible for the design, assessment, delivery and review of Vision Australia's "Language for Life" literacy program in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Council of Further Education (ACFE), and the relevant competency requirements of the Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA).

To obtain a position description please phone Cath Caddis or Samantha Marsh on (03) 9520 5555. Email your application by 14 March 2008 to [prahranadmin@visionaustralia.org](mailto:prahranadmin@visionaustralia.org)

## Finally

Thanks to Marion Blazé, Maria Elford, Denise Probert, Lyn Robinson and Faye Squired for contributing to this edition of The Bulletin. Thanks also to my fabulous proof-readers, stuffers and mailers.

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

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