

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 8

Friday 6th June 2008

This issue was edited by Lyn Robinson, Resource Teacher, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

Professional Development Activities for Term 2, 2008

For workshop sessions, please BYO laptop.

Professional Development Event 2008	Date
Skill Power Workshops for Visiting Teachers, Teachers, Aides, Students etc 1 Using Your Computer Without the Mouse - 9.45 am to 11.15 am Lea Nagel, Senior Visiting Teacher 2. ZOOMTEXT – Talking & Enlargement Software – 11.45 am to 1.15 pm Trevor Boyd, Quantum Technology * Please arrive early so the demo software can be loaded to your computer 3. GTCALC – Talking <u>Calculator</u> Software - 1.45 – 3.15 Bernice Fox and Anita Ross, Software Developers * Please arrive early so the demo software can be loaded to your computer ** All orders for GTCalc made on the day will be offered at a discount price to students of \$95 (regular retail is \$195)	Friday 20 June

To see the annual program and to download programs for professional development activities, go to: <http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au/pd2008.htm>

Vision Loss Support Group

This Support Group provides opportunities for parents and siblings of children with vision impairments, to come together, share experiences and information and develop friendships. The group generally meets once per school term on a Saturday afternoon to hear from a guest speaker and then to socialise over afternoon tea. Child minding is provided so that families can bring little ones.

Term 2 Meeting: Saturday, June 21, 2008

Where: Statewide Vision Resource Centre, 370-380 Springvale Road, Donvale

Time: 2pm

Guest speaker: Trevor Boyd, Quantum Technologies

Topic: Access technology and mobile phones for people with vision impairments

Please bring a plate to share for afternoon tea.

Please RSVP so that we can cater for numbers and especially if you require child minding facilities.

For further information or to RSVP, contact: John or Judy Bowen on 03 9842 5103, Leigh Heaven on 03 9890 8130 or Annette Godfrey-Magee 03 9841 0807.

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iZoom

Technology Review from RNIB web site:

http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicwebsite/public_jbizoom.hcsp

Introduction

There are a large number of freeware and shareware magnification software packages available and there has been for some time. At the time of writing there were 32 freeware and shareware Windows magnification utilities listed at <http://www.magnifiers.org>, a web site describing itself as the “screen magnifiers homepage”. An Internet search would find other packages. But until last year, I had not found anything more helpful than the magnification utility that has been included as part of the Windows operating system since Windows 98. At least that was my opinion as a partially sighted computer user.

In 2005 iZoom from [Issist](http://www.issist.com) became available, and this has far more functionality than any other freeware magnification program that I know of. The focus of the magnification will fill the screen. It can magnify from 1.5 to 16 times, which covers the highest settings that most people would find practical to use. There are other options for the appearance of the magnification available, lens, line and split screen horizontal or vertical. There is a range of false colours available including black and white and reverse contrast. There is also some artificial speech support, although this doesn't read Word documents, for example. IZoom works on Windows XP and 2000.

Limitations

IZoom does not have all the features that the more expensive commercial magnification software products have. It works best at a resolution of 800 x 600 or less and with 16-bit colour or less. The tracking is not entirely consistent. The focus will follow the typing caret and the mouse cursor. When tabbing around icons on the desktop, however, or when using Alt + Tab to change program, the focus does not follow the highlighted screen area. It does also slow down the PC when it is running, and is limited to Windows 2000 and XP only; there are many Windows 98 users still out there.

Conclusion:

Most users of magnification simply want to make the text on the screen appear bigger, and iZoom does this successfully. The most important difference between iZoom and other free magnification programs is that the focus of the magnifier can fill the screen. IZoom does have a range of other features, and although it does not have the same range of features that you get with the more expensive products, anecdotal evidence at least suggest that some of the functions are not often used anyway.

If you are willing to run your PC with “low” graphics settings, then iZoom is a viable magnifier. The software can be downloaded from the Issist web site where there are also FAQs and discussion forums for anyone who wants to find out more.

Editors Note: iZoom is now available as Version 2.0. It is available as a free 30 day demo version, after that it costs US\$199.00. It is also available as a portable device called “iZoom2Go”.



According to the web site “iZoom2Go is the world's first portable access solution available on a USB drive. You simply plug it in and it starts up. No installation, no administrative access, no license agreements. iZoom2Go possesses all the features of iZoom Standard and... it's not locked down to a machine! You can attach it to your keychain and take it with you anywhere you go. All your settings are saved on the USB drive so you don't have to reconfigure it on every new machine. It'll work on any Windows 2000/XP/Vista machine. So the next time you get on a machine at your library, your school, a friend's place, you can relax knowing that their machine isn't affected and you can use it as freely as you would your own.”

iZoom2Go costs US\$299.00 and is available from Issist web site: <http://www.issist.com/>

Camp Howqua

Camp Howqua and Vic Youth in partnership with Vision Australia, Rural Access, Access for All Abilities and Valley Sport with support from the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) are pleased to extend to you an invitation to join us for five days jam-packed full of fun, action and adventure at New Vision '08.

New Vision '08 will take place at Camp Howqua from 26th September – 1st October 2008 and has been tailor made to suit people from 13 -18 years of age with low vision.

If your idea of fun and action includes any or all of the following activities: Riding a horse like the “Man from Snowy River”, sliding down 100 meters of the waterslide known as ‘The Wedginator’, Shooting arrows at targets just like Robin Hood, Zipping down a 270 meter Flying Fox, Balancing 7 metres from the ground on the new High Ropes course, Driving a Go Kart and heaps more (*and that's just some of the the daytime activities*) then New Vision Camp is the place for you. Night times will be full of fun too with a fantastic band to sing along with and great speakers who will inspire and challenge you.

At New Vision '08 you will definitely laugh, you may even cry but one thing we can 100% guarantee is that you will make some great new friends while you are having the time of your life.

If you think that New Vision '08 is the camp for you please contact Camp Howqua on 03 5777 3509 or email howqua@adventist.org.au

Electronic Magnifiers

From Marion: Jaycar Electronics currently have a couple of cheap, small, electronic magnifiers. They are made by a company called ‘vitiny’ and are priced at \$249 and \$299. Both offer 24X to 90 X electronic magnification on a small colour screen. The more expensive one can be linked to a computer so that magnified pictures can be ‘sent’.

They are certainly not marketing these as magnifiers for people with low vision, because they have fairly small screens (1.8 inches square). They are described as small microscopes for the ‘hobbyist’ to look in more detail at nature (for example). They would probably not be suitable for reading but might, for example, suit a science student for viewing specimens.

You can view them on the web at www.vitiny.com.

Susan Spungin's Retirement

From American Foundation for the Blind, forwarded by Tricia d'Apice - SPEVI

New York, NY (May 19, 2008)-Today the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) announced that Dr. Susan J. Spungin, Vice President, International Programs and Special Projects, and Treasurer of the World Blind Union (WBU), will retire on December 31, 2008, after 44 years of distinguished work on the education and rehabilitation of blind people in the national and international arenas.

"Susan's contributions to the blindness field in the U.S. and abroad are almost too vast to number," said Carl R. Augusto, President & CEO of AFB. "Her influence can be seen through the record of her many publications and the workshops, lectures, and keynote speeches she's presented around the world, as well as the awards and honors she has received and the enormous respect and reverence that greet her wherever she goes."

An internationally renowned expert on the education and rehabilitation of individuals who are blind or visually impaired, Dr. Spungin joined AFB in 1972 as a national specialist in education. In this capacity, she identified nationwide issues affecting blind, deaf-blind, and severely visually impaired children and youth, and worked in partnership with schools, agencies, state departments of education, universities, the federal government, and other organizations to resolve those issues. In addition to her education work, she was instrumental in shaping AFB's research and policy work, and its national programs in the areas of early childhood development, aging, employment, rehabilitation teaching, low vision, orientation and mobility, career education, and more. Dr. Spungin currently coordinates AFB's international activities.

Shortly after joining AFB, Dr. Spungin was tapped to run in-service teacher training workshops in Argentina, establishing her as a major figure in the international blindness field. Her teacher training, literacy (especially regarding braille), and education work in the United States frequently served as models for the international community, and her presentations, expertise, and consultative services have been sought out in Europe, the Eastern Block countries, Australia, Asia, East Pacific Asia, the Middle East, and beyond.

Dr. Spungin's work internationally is bolstered by her active involvement in several blindness organizations. In addition to her current role with WBU, she is a board member, former international vice president, and regional president of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI), as well as past vice president of the North America/Caribbean region of WBU. She also helped to found the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI), an international membership organization serving families in the U.S. and in 55 countries, and has chaired and held leadership roles with the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) and the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER). In addition, she has authored numerous books and articles for national and international journals.

Dr. Spungin has also been honored with several prestigious awards, including the NAPVI Founders Award, the 2003 Wings of Freedom Award from the American Printing House for the Blind, the 2002 Mary K. Bauman Award from AER, the Mary E. Switzer Scholars award, the 2001 Council on Exceptional Children (CEC) Distinguished Service Award, the AFB 1993 Equality of Access & Opportunity Award for her work in braille literacy, and the Josephine L. Taylor Award from the University Division of AER.

In 1991, Dr. Spungin also became the first sighted woman to receive the Russian Medal from the Byelorussian Association of the Blind.

Perhaps Dr. Spungin's greatest professional contribution is the development of standards that have brought the blindness field together in the areas of competency-based curriculum for universities in the United States; training teachers to work with blind and low vision children; guidelines for public schools after the passage of the mainstreaming legislation of 1975; and the formalization of national organizations in education that include state vision consultants, instructional material centers for the blind, preschool programs for early childhood education for the blind, and guidelines for public school psychologists. This work, as with everything else she has undertaken, reflects Dr. Spungin's priority to always consider the role of the blind consumer, and her early realization that program development and implementation must be guided by the consumers for whom the programs are intended. She will remain in her home in New York City, where she will consult in the field from time to time as needed.

Learning Braille Music

Have you wondered about teaching your student braille music? There are a number of options you could pursue. There are two publications that teach the Braille music code in a systematic way: "Read, Sing and Play" by Ian Cooper in both braille and print which teaches braille music in a step-by-step progression using primarily piano and vocal music examples.

"The Survivor's Guide to Braille Music" by Helen Merrin which is aimed at the adult learner who wishes to learn braille music on their own - however it is a great resource for sighted folk who are interested in assisting their students. Accompanying the book which has been produced in both braille and print is an audio CD containing the musical examples. Both publications are available free of charge from Vision Australia upon request.

Depending on the age of the student, there is the National Braille Music Camp which is held every year at Frensham Girls' Grammar, Mittagong, NSW, during the July school holidays. The camp is aimed at secondary school children who have a serious interest in music where they can improve their braille music skills in a practical setting. Reading scores in a choir and having individualised music classes daily to focus on a particular area are just some of the activities.

For more information contact Roma Dix on (02) 4871 1086.

Understanding The Basics Of Braille

This workshop covers the basics of how to read and write grade one braille. Common uses of braille for independent living will also be described and demonstrated.

Date: Monday 23rd June 2008

Time: 9.30 am – 4.30 pm

Location: Vision Australia Training Room, 454 Glenferrie Road, Kooyong

Trainer: Jordie Howell, Vision Australia Adult Braille Instructor

Cost: \$200.00

Who Should Attend? Any sighted person who wishes to learn about the basics of braille.

Learning Outcomes: After completing the module, participants should be able to:

- identify braille letters of the alphabet
- describe common daily uses for braille by people who are blind or vision impaired
- identify whether or not a page of braille is upside down.

Further information is available from Jordie Howell on (03) 9520 5555 or email jordie.howell@visionaustralia.org

CALL FOR PAPERS

For The 2009 Issue Of The Journal Of The South Pacific Educators In Vision Impairment (JSPEVI)

Original manuscripts and news items are sought for the fourth issue of the Journal of the South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment. The journal presents essays, quantitative and qualitative research articles and analyses, conceptual papers, comprehensive reviews, case studies, policy analyses and innovative practice descriptions and evaluations as well as perspectives and opinions on:

A wide variety of issues and topics related to the education of children, youth and adults in the South Pacific region who are blind or have vision impairments.

It is intended that the journal will be useful to a much wider audience than researchers. The focus of all articles appearing in the journal will be upon their implications for practice. It is intended that the journal will be a vehicle for informing other researchers, educational administrators, Commonwealth and State personnel and service providers, as well as specialist and generic teachers, parents and others in our communities about research, issues, policies and their implications for practice in the South Pacific Region (Australia, New Zealand, parts of Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands).

Editors are, Dr Gillian Gale, Vision Impairment Consultant, Melbourne, Dr Paul Pagliano, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, James Cook University, Ms Fran Gentle and Dr Mike Steer, RIDBC Renwick Centre.

There is an impressive Editorial Advisory Panel for the Journal. All submissions will undergo blind peer review.

Having this issue will depend on the number of high calibre submissions. To enable timely review and manuscript revision, it would be appreciated if authors could submit manuscripts in print and on disk for review no later than 30 August, 2008

Manuscripts should be sent to: Dr Mike Steer, RIDBC Renwick Centre, Private Bag 29 Parramatta, NSW 2124 or email: mike.steer@ridbc.org.au

Prospective authors may obtain a copy of JSPEVI's Notes for Contributors from the above address.

ABC-book accessible to all

Tamarico, distributes a funny ABC-book with Braille and printed drawings and texts. Each letter of the alphabet is illustrated by an animal and by the letter and the name of the animal in Braille. Each animal is also represented by a drawing (with colours) and by the same drawing in relief. That means that each element of information is available in several ways: printed words, Braille, drawings, relief.

The book introduces seeing children to Braille and will allow them to discover some animals using their fingers only. Several kindergarten classrooms in Belgium have already tested the book and used it with success. This ABC-book is available in English, French, German and Dutch and is available from <http://tamarico.com/index.php?page=abc-book-the-alphabet-book>

Hands-On Handwriting

From Denise: A good resource for teaching handwriting and computer skills is the series called "Hands-On Handwriting, including computer keyboarding skills". A McGraw Hill publication, Hands-On Handwriting is a series of seven books that has been developed to teach Victorian Infant Cursive Handwriting and basic computer skills to children from Prep through to Year 6. The series introduces keyboarding skills in a measured way, teaching young children how to navigate the keyboard and use special keys such as capslock.

There is also a checklist in the back so you can assess the student's level of skill development. There are some copies in the Resource Centre or you can purchase for \$10.00 from Landmark Books.

SVRC News

There are currently four positions being advertised for etext/braille transcribers at the Statewide Vision Resource Centre. If you are interested you and you would like the key Selection Criteria please phone Deb Lewis on 03 9841 0242 or email deblewis@svrc.vic.edu.au

You can also access the positions online at Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Human Resources web site at <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/careers/vacs/advacs.htm>

Free to a good home - we have some resources to give away to anyone who may be interested. There are a number of book and audio tape kits suitable for young primary school children. There are also some desks available-they are of the "large wooden school desk" variety. Please give Dianne a call at SVRC on (03) 9841 0242 if you would like more information.

We had a very successful term 2 Professional Learning day at the SVRC on Tuesday 2nd June with some 20 Visiting Teachers from around the state attending. Karen Underwood, Manager Special Projects Student Wellbeing (DEECD), spoke about the recent changes to the SVRC and answered questions about a number of topics of interest to Visiting Teachers. Gillian Gale spoke about the development of our very exciting "Hot for Dots" Braille Reading Programme and Kim Foley followed on with a talk about literacy and the implications for students with vision impairments. Karen Goodall gave us an update on the process for applying for funding under the Program for Students with Disabilities, particularly in relation to students with vision impairments.

The end of term is fast approaching and we have planned a Christmas in June (as opposed to July) celebration. We are hoping to decorate the SVRC with some vintage decorations so if you have anything bright, colourful and somewhat vintage you would like to donate or loan we would love to put it to good use. Please let Lyn or Dianne know or just bring it in next time you visit!

Finally

Thanks to Annette Godfrey-Magee, Marion Blazé, Deb Lewis, Tricia d'Apice and Denise Probert and all those who contributed to this edition of The Bulletin. Thanks also to the fabulous team of proof-readers, stuffers and mailers.

If you have something you would like included in 'The Bulletin', or you would like to receive the bulletin by email please contact:

Lyn Robinson (who can be emailed at lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au).