

# The Bulletin

## Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 10

Friday 18 July 2008

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

### Professional Development Activities Term 3, 2008

For workshop sessions, please BYO laptop.

Professional Development Event 2008	Date
Visiting Teacher Professional Development Day	Wednesday 13 August

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

### VTAC Information Sessions for Students with Disabilities

Mystified by the VTAC process? All at sea over the SEAS forms? Do you have a student who would like to know more about applying for tertiary courses? Then come along to one of the information sessions to be held at the Camberwell Centre on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> August or at La Trobe University on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August.

#### The sessions will provide:

- valuable information on the VTAC and SEAS application process
- information on how selection officers interpret the SEAS application form
- information on career and course selection for students with disabilities
- an overview of support services offered at TAFE and University for students with disabilities
- how to access support services for students with disabilities at tertiary institutions

#### At the sessions there will be:

- TAFE and University information stalls
- Adaptive Technology stalls

This event is coordinated through the National Disability Coordination Officers for Eastern Melbourne (RMIT University) and Central/Northern Melbourne (Inner Melbourne VET Cluster) and supported by VTAC. For more information contact Joanne Webber, National Disability Coordination Officer, Email: [joanne.webber@rmit.edu.au](mailto:joanne.webber@rmit.edu.au)

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# **I.B.M. Software Enhances Web Accessibility for the Blind**

By Martyn Williams, New York Times, July 8, 2008

**IBM** launched on Tuesday an application that seeks to harness the power and time of Internet users around the globe to make the Web more accessible to the visually impaired.

Many blind or partially sighted users run screen reading software that describes the content of a Web page but often encounter problems. The screen readers rely on text or descriptive tags to explain the items on a page but these are often added as an after thought or are incomplete.

Using the new IBM software users can report these problems to a central database and ask for additional descriptive text to be added to a site. Other Internet users that want to contribute can then check the database, select one of the submitted problems and "start fixing it" by added text labels.

The additional information isn't incorporated into the original site's HTML code but into a metadata file that is loaded each time a visually impaired user subsequently visits the site.

"This idea came from my own experience with inaccessible Web sites," said Chieko Asakawa, a researcher at IBM in Tokyo who led a six-person team on development of the software. Asakawa is blind herself so knows well the problems of navigating the Web and its increasing rich multimedia pages.

"As users we face a lot of problems everyday but currently we don't have any mechanism to report what we have found. Every day we find images without alternative text (the text description of an image that usually accompanies it in the HTML code) but there is no way for me to say 'I want to have a description for this image.' It's a simple motivation but if we can report this kind of problem without difficulty and have it easily understood by sighted people I think it's going to be great." IBM began offering the software from Tuesday as a beta release through its AlphaWorks Web site. The software for blind or partially sighted users runs with Internet Explorer and the "Jaws" screen reader while the software for supporters of the project is available as a plug-in for Firefox. It runs in English or Japanese.

Demonstrating the system, Asakawa typed in the address for the White House Web site and soon found problems. While the site appears to have been designed with accessibility in mind, the headings at the top of the three main columns had no data attached that would allow her screen-reading software to make sense of what they were.

A couple of key presses brought up a box into which Asakawa typed her request for headings, which was then entered into the database. Upon finding the request, a user could enter the desired headings quickly and, later when checked again, the navigation was made a little easier with the additional metadata.

Looking ahead, Asakawa said she hopes the project will be expanded to help users with other disabilities including those who are deaf, hard of hearing or have motor disabilities.

"We started from a small group but to make this project successful and to make information accessible we really need to collaborate with the community," she said. "Our goal is to expand the applicability of this project."

Source:[http://www.nytimes.com/idg/IDG\\_852573C4006938800025747F007CBD5E.html?scp=1&q=IBM%20software&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/idg/IDG_852573C4006938800025747F007CBD5E.html?scp=1&q=IBM%20software&st=cse)

## New Braille Resources

For the past couple of months we have been lucky enough to have the talented and creative Taryn working in the Braille department. She has been busy producing some wonderful tactual braille books.

Ready to go out on SHORT TERM LOAN (no more than a month please) are:

**Five Speckled Frogs**- a picture story book to read to the student with tactual embellishments.

**Fairy Tale Fiddle Cards** - Rapunzel, Snow White, Jack and the Beanstalk, Sleeping Beauty.

These are 4 or 5 page books on sturdy cardboard with just a little bit of braille and strong simple tactual illustrations.

**Hansel and Gretel** – a kit with the gingerbread house and puppets and small braille book.

**Dear Zoo** by Rod Campbell

**The Very Hungry Caterpillar** by Eric Carle

**Icecream** by Joy Cowley

**Ten in the Bed**- picture below, complete with bed and 10 little people. Thanks to Visiting Teacher, Ann and daughter, Tysha, for your amazing creative help with this one!



## More Cheap Specs

Vision Australia, Low Vision Clinic offer standard specs for about \$20. Even high index plastics for very high prescriptions are only \$30. These prices are available to all people with health care cards and include a one hour optometrist consultation.

If you would like to know more call Vision Australia on 1300 84 74 66 for the nearest LVC.



## Did You Know? Nobody knows who invented spectacles

Roman tragedian Seneca (4 BC–AD 65) is said to have read “all the books in Rome” by peering through a glass globe of water. A thousand years later, presbyopic monks used segments of glass spheres that could be laid against reading material to magnify the letters, basically a magnifying glass, called a "reading stone."

In the Middle Ages wearing spectacles signified knowledge and learning. Painters of the time often included spectacles when portraying famous persons even when depicting people who lived before the known invention of spectacles. On numerous paintings the religious teacher Sofronius Eusebius Hieronymus (340 - 420 AD) is portrayed with a lion, a skull and a pair of reading glasses. He is the patron saint of spectacle makers.

It actually is true that eating carrots can help you see better. Carrots contain Vitamin A, which feeds the chemicals that the eye shafts and cones are made of. The shafts capture black and white vision. The cones capture colour images.

The oldest known lens was found in the ruins of ancient Nineveh and was made of polished rock crystal.

In 1718, Edward Scarlett, a London optician, put arms on eyeglasses to hold them on the ears.

About one person in 30 is colour blind.

More men than women are affected by colour blindness.

Healthy eyes are so sensitive to light that a candle burning in the dark can be detected 1.6km away. The human eye can distinguish about 10 million different colours. There currently is no machine that can achieve this remarkable feat.

## Car Camp 2008

Helen Caldwell is, again, kindly organising Car Camp this year and it will take place in early December 2008. Students in Department of Education and Early Childhood Development schools aged 14 years + are eligible to attend this camp.

If students attending non-government and Catholic schools would like to participate in this program, they are more than welcome - but they will need to arrange their own paperwork, transport and supervision.

The cost will be approximately \$160 - cheques payable to "Heatherwood School".

To discuss your participation in Car Camp 2008 please contact Helen on 0409 381723 or email [caldow.helen.f@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:caldow.helen.f@edumail.vic.gov.au)

## Braille Puzzle Winner

The question for the braille competition was “Can you think of a word of nine letters made up of four single-cell contractions?” And the winner is... Ramona, for the word, “showering”. Congratulations Ramona you have won our Braille Puzzle Competition and the prize of a memory stick.

## SPEVI News

### Term III – Friends of SPEVI Gathering

Date: Friday, August 1, 4.30pm until about 6.00pm

Venue: Guide Dogs Victoria, Chandler Hwy, Kew

Format: 4.30 drinks and nibbles 5.15 Guest speaker and panel

Theme: Our VI students overseas

Cost: \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members

Peggy Soo will come along and share her adventures and photo albums on both Space Camp (US) and her GAP year working at a school for the blind in the UK. Find out about the exciting and ‘life-changing’ opportunities for VI students overseas.

### Term IV – SPEVI Day

The first day of Term IV is our “combined agencies” PD Day. Overleaf are the proposed program and registration form.

Date: Monday, October 6, 8.30am to 4.30pm

Venue: Vision Australia, 454 Glenferrie Rd, Kooyong

Theme: Prematurity: implications for vision impairment, development and learning

Cost: \$44 for members, \$55 for non-members

Please contact your SPEVI Victorian Counsellors if you would like more information:

**Lil Deverell:** Orientation & Mobility Instructor with Guide Dogs Victoria

[lil.d@guidedogsvictoria.com.au](mailto:lil.d@guidedogsvictoria.com.au) 9854 4444 0418 370 312

**Garry Stinchcombe:** Assistant Head of School, Vision Australia School

[garry.stinchcombe@visionaustralia.org](mailto:garry.stinchcombe@visionaustralia.org) 9808 6422 0419 528 180

**Marion Blaze:** Education Officer for Vision, Statewide Vision Resource Centre, Department of Education & Early Childhood Development

[marionblaze@svrc.vic.edu.au](mailto:marionblaze@svrc.vic.edu.au) 9841 0807 0409 860 251

A Flyer is attached at the end of this Bulletin with program and registration details.

## Practical Professional Development

- **Assessment of Writing and Spelling**

Topics include: Developmental Stages in Writing and Spelling; VELS Progressions Points; Analysing Children’s Writing; Assessing Spelling to Inform Teaching

Presented by Debbie Sukarna at Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> August

- **Strategies for Success with Non-fiction**

Topics include: Shared Reading of Non-fiction; Features of non-fiction texts; strategies to deepen comprehension; comprehending visual texts.

Presented by David Hornsby & Debbie Sukarna at Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre. Saturday 6 September, 2008

- **Reading Assessment-the how, what and why!**

Topics include: Read and Retell; The four H’s of Comprehension; Assessment of phonological awareness; Assessment of letter knowledge and graphophonic connections; VELS and NAPLAN.

Presented by David Hornsby & Debbie Sukarna at Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre.

Saturday 25 October, 2008. If you would like the flyers and registration details for these PD activities please phone Dianne on 03 9841 0242.

## Quantum Events

Quantum Events, a technology display, will be taking place in Melbourne over a six week period. Explore the latest in technology from Quantum at the following locations:

- **NORTHCOTE**  
Friday 22nd August 2008, 10am—3pm Northcote RSL, 496 High St, NORTHCOTE
- **YARRAVILLE**  
Friday 29th August 2008, 10am—3pm The Yarraville Club, 135 Stephens St, YARRAVILLE
- **MALVERN**  
Friday 12th September 2008, 10am—3pm East Malvern RSL, Ellison St (off Stanley Grose Dr), MALVERN
- **GEELONG**  
Friday 19th September 2008, 10am—3pm Buckley's, 54 Fellmongers Road, GEELONG
- **KILSYTH**  
Friday 26th September 2008 Kilsyth Club, Canterbury Room, Cnr Canterbury & Colchester Rds, NORTH BAYSWATER

For more information please contact Lexie Challi, Quantum Technology, Phone: 02 8844 9834 Fax: 02 9684 4717 Email: [lchallis@quantumtechnology.com.au](mailto:lchallis@quantumtechnology.com.au)

## Paralympic Talent Search Program: 27<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

The Toyota Paralympic Talent Search Program is an initiative of the Australian Paralympic Committee (APC). Its main goal is to identify people with physical disabilities and vision impairments who display the athletic potential to one day make it to Paralympic level competition. A secondary goal is to help introduce people with disabilities to enter into regular sport and physical activities.

The Paralympic Talent Search day is only open to people with disabilities which would enable them to participate in events currently on the Paralympic Games schedule. This includes but is not limited to amputees, people with cerebral palsy, limb deficiencies, people in wheelchairs and people who are blind or have vision impairments.

All age groups are welcome to participate in the program however it is difficult to provide specific pathway advice to younger participants.

General sport tests and activities are conducted, plus some sport specific tests for sports that are on the Paralympic program, e.g. archery, athletics, boccia, cycling, equestrian, CP football, goalball, judo, powerlifting, rowing, sailing, shooting, swimming, table tennis, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis and wheelchair rugby.

Participants are encouraged to take part in all activities. Sport specific testing is dependent on coach availability. Therefore we are unable to guarantee that sport specific testing in all PPP sports will be available at all Talent Search Days.

The APC will forward results from the Talent Search day to coaches from these sports for their information. If you require further information on any of these sports, please go to [www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au).

Participants are required to complete a registration form prior to attending the day. Registration forms are available from [www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au); [tim.matthews@paralympic.org.au](mailto:tim.matthews@paralympic.org.au) or phone 03 9614 6800. Directions and final information will be provided to all registered participants one week prior to the day.

## **HREOC welcomes announcement to improve captioning and audio description for local cinemas**

Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes AM, today congratulated the Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, on announcing funding to assist 12 cinemas to provide access features for the many thousands of Australians who are currently not able to fully enjoy the cinema experience.

Minister Elliot is providing funding for 12 independent cinemas to purchase the technology to allow for captioning and audio description of films. Captioning provides access to films for more than one in six Australians and audio description, which provides background information on what is taking place on the screen, will benefit the more than 600,000 Australians who are blind or have a vision impairment.

“The Minister’s announcement recognises the fact that as our population gets older more and more of us will need captioning and audio description to continue to enjoy things we take for granted like TV and cinema,” said Commissioner Innes.

“This announcement will be welcomed by the community as it will increase the current availability of cinema access by more than 100%,” said Commissioner Innes. “In the longer term I would want to see all cinemas provide access for every Australian and look forward to the outcomes of the Government’s investigation into Media Access currently underway.”

Captioned films are only available in 10 cinemas throughout Australia at the moment following an agreement 5 years ago between the three major exhibitors; Greater Union, Hoyts and Village and organisations representing deaf people and people with a vision impairment.

“This announcement will not only significantly improve the availability of captions in cinemas but will also introduce audio description for the first time”, said Commissioner Innes. “It will also extend the service beyond the major exhibitor chains to include independents, making it more likely that Australians with a disability will at last be able to access Australian-produced films.”

For more information on cinema and general media access issues see [www.mediaaccess.org.au/](http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/)  
Source: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission News Release 25<sup>th</sup> June 2008  
[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/media\\_releases/2008/67\\_08.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/media_releases/2008/67_08.html)

## **Teacher Professional Leave for the 2009 School Year**

Are you currently studying or thinking about studying in 2009?  
Then you may be able to apply for Teacher Professional Leave to further your studies.

Teachers can apply to take Teacher Professional Leave for periods ranging from a minimum of four to a maximum of ten weeks, commencing on January 28, 2009.

Applications for Teacher Professional Leave for the 2009 school year are now open.  
Application forms should be completed and submitted to the appropriate Regional Director by close of business 12 August 2008.

For more information please refer to the following link  
[https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/Schools/Circulars/2008/s199-2008\\_tpl-clr.doc](https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/Schools/Circulars/2008/s199-2008_tpl-clr.doc)

## First US coin with readable Braille unveiled

Officials unveiled the prototype of the first U.S. coin with readable Braille characters on Wednesday, a silver dollar commemorating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Louis Braille, the creator of the alphabet for the blind. The coin's display opened the National Federation of the Blind's annual convention in Dallas. "This is going to put Braille in front of people in a very dramatic way," said Chris Danielson, a federation spokesman.

U.S. Mint director Ed Moy, federation president Marc Maurer and U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions revealed the design of the 2009 Louis Braille Bicentennial Silver Dollar in front of about 1,000 people at an outdoor plaza.

The heads side of the silver dollar depicts Louis Braille with the word "Liberty" above it. On the back of the coin, the Braille code for the word Braille — or "Brl" — is inscribed, above a depiction of a school-age boy reading a Braille book with a cane resting on his arm. Behind him is a bookshelf bearing the word "Independence."

"It really expresses the hopes, the dreams and the independent spirit," NFB Executive Director Mark Riccobono said of the design.

While all coins distributed by the U.S. Mint are distinguishable to the blind by their size and weight, the Braille silver dollar is the first to have Braille characters that can be read, Moy said. The commemorative 1-ounce coin will be available in spring 2009, the 200th anniversary of Louis Braille's birth.

The U.S. Mint will produce 400,000 of the coins. Braille was born in France in 1809. A \$10 surcharge will be added to each coin, with money from the coin sales going to support programs to help the blind. The group is launching one of the largest campaigns to boost Braille literacy by doubling the number of young Braille readers by 2015. Fewer than 10 percent of blind children are learning Braille, NFB officials said.

Related Web Sites: National Federation of the Blind <http://nfb.org>

Article: By Anabelle Garay

Source: <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5j7sdL1zUfJrW76TsqQVADojnZoqAD91LTN3G0>



Artist renderings of the 2009 Louis Braille Bicentennial Silver Dollar coin design and a photo of its prototype reverse. (United States Mint images)

## SVRC News

We were delighted to hear recently that student, Kieran, was a recipient of the Pierre de Coubertin Award!

The Award is designed "to recognise senior secondary students who demonstrate attributes consistent with Olympism through participation and commendable behaviour in sporting activities".

Specifically,

**“ATTITUDE, SPORTSMANSHIP, PRIDE, INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY, RESPECT, EXPRESS YOURSELF”**

Kieran attended a ceremony on June 22nd at Melbourne University where former Olympians presented the awards, shared a few anecdotes and provided a great deal of encouragement and positive reinforcement. The award is the initiative of the Victorian Olympic Committee and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, who went to a great deal of trouble to commend and reward the recipients' efforts, resulting in a very warm and supportive atmosphere on the day. Congratulations Kieran from everyone at the SVRC.

It's always great to hear of your student's achievements so if you know of anyone who's exploits should be applauded, please send me an email!

Congratulations also, to Jenny, Lyn, Nola and Zhi who have successfully applied for positions in the braille department. They join Sue, Jackie, Toni and Maria as part of the on-going team in the braille room.

## Word of the Year

The Macquarie Dictionary Word of the Year Committee has announced **pod slurping** as the Word of the Year 2007 from the new words selected for inclusion in the annual update of the Macquarie Dictionary Online. For those of you wondering what "pod slurping" is, as I did, here is the definition:

**pod slurping**-*noun*- the downloading of large quantities of data to an MP3 player or memory stick from a computer.

"In this increasingly tech-savvy world we live in, it seems pod slurping really is the new memory bank for us busy bees. Why carry around vast reams of documents, or CDs or anything for that matter, when you can download absolutely everything!" I thought some VTs might be able to relate to this one!

And the The People's Choice Award goes to "**password fatigue**". I think we can all relate to that one!

Source:<http://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/anonymous@9c9FFC13199875//p/dict/WOTY07/index.html>

## Finally

Thanks to Deb Lewis, Marion Blazé, Toni Chilton, Annette Godfrey-Magee, Mike Steer 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](mailto:lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au)).