

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 16
Friday 9th October 2009

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

Professional Development Activities for Term 4, 2009

Professional Development Event 2009	Date
Blind Cricket Come and Try Day	Friday 9 October
Educational Expo – Access Technology Options This day is suitable for teachers, aides, therapists, parents/care-givers, visiting teachers, students and members of the wider community	Friday 27 November
SVRC Christmas Morning Tea – All Welcome	Wednesday 2 December
Braille Professional Development Day for New Schools 2010 – Orientation to the SVRC	Friday 4 December
Dot Power for 2010 Kinder and Prep Braille Readers and their Teachers, Aides & Parents	Monday 7 December

*All Skill Power days – **BYO laptop** and lunch. For a complete list of the Professional Development offered by the SVRC go to: <http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au/PD2009.doc>

Louis Braille Day

On Monday 7th September 26 students from as far away as Rutherglen attended the Louis Braille Day at the Statewide Vision Resource Centre. The theme, of course, was Louis Braille and fancy dress was the order of the day. There were several Louis Brailles with oversized coats and caps! Students dressed as French children of the time and some even came as their favourite dot. One student dressed in white and wore a sandwich board made up of white paper. On the front she had her initials in braille made up of pearls and on the back she had LB in braille for Louis Braille.

We had a question and answer session about Louis Braille from Pari complete with French accent and Daniel gave a very impressive history of Louis Braille's life and the development of the braille code. Lots of fun and laughs followed with prizes handed out to all the children at the end of the day. As one student commented, "This was the best day ever!"

An article from the Manningham Leader about the celebrations is featured on the next page of this edition of the Bulletin.

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Oui, braille a brilliant system celebrated at Donvale school

IN CELEBRATION of the 200th anniversary of the birth of French inventor Louis Braille, visually impaired students came together at Donvale to commemorate the creator of the braille system.

The braille reading and writing system, which uses raised dots to form letters and numbers that can be felt, opened up a whole new world to visually impaired people.

The celebrations were held at the Statewide Vision Resource Centre, which is based at the Heatherwood School in Donvale.

Twenty-six students, staff, parents and aides dressed up in colonial French costumes, explored antique braille writing machines and learnt about the history of the inventor.



Abbey and Alexandra, both 12, donned French gear to celebrate the bicentennial of Louis Braille's birth.

Source: Manningham Leader Newspapers September 23 2009-10-07

<http://leader-news.whereilive.com.au/news/story/oui-braille-a-brilliant-system/>

Transition Day

A professional development day will be offered to support the transition of services for students with vision impairments from Vision Australia to DEECD. This activity will be open to regional personnel, principals, integration co-ordinators, classroom teachers and interested school personnel.

This professional development will provide information on:

- The Statewide Vision Resource Centre - a DEECD facility
- how to access resources to support students who are blind or who have low vision through the Statewide Vision Resource Centre
- DEECD Visiting Teacher Service
- PSD funding enhancing support for students
- technology available to support students with vision impairments
- successful inclusion of students with vision impairments into the regular school

When: 4th December 2009

Where: Statewide Vision Resource Centre

370 Springvale Road, Donvale (on the grounds of Heatherwood School)

Time: 9:00 – 3:30

Cost: \$44

A delicious lunch will be provided.

RSVP: svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au 9841 0242

Dot Power Day

We are looking forward to fourth term Dot Power day on Monday 7th December. This program is for Prep and grade one children who are developing their braille skills.

We are continuing with our theme of introducing our new Braille Reading Program: Ozzie Dots. The emphasis of this session will be to introduce the braille shortcut word GO. Activities will include concept development, functional aspects of braille literacy and an introduction to tactual mapping. Students will enjoy music and practical, interactive activities. Another important outcome of this special program will be socialisation with a small group of students of similar ages who are also blind. Please let schools and families know about this day and stay tuned for more information and notices which will be mailed direct to participants' families, Visiting Teachers and schools.

Bop It

Looking for an accessible game for students with vision impairments and their classmates? This might be good to add to the classroom's game collection. From the Vision Australia online shop comes an audio game called Bop It:

Bop It is a handheld interactive audible game that asks you to twist, pull or bop the respective knobs. It does this to a beat that gradually gets faster as you get better. The knobs that you twist, bop, and pull are different colours and each have their own unique shape so that the game can be played without looking.

The game can be played in three different modes that are accessed by pulling the Pull knob and are indicated by three different sounds:

1. A cymbal crashing sound - This game is played in a group. It announces the action required about four or five times and then it asks you to pass it to the next person.
2. A rattle like sound - As above, however, rather than announcing the action required, the sound effect of the action needs to be matched.
3. A sinking whistle like sound - Individual version of number 1 game that keeps your score.

By twisting the Twist knob you can hear the high score.

Powered by 3 AG 13 button cell batteries. Battery compartment accessed by one Philips screw.

Can be played individually or in a group.

Suitable for ages eight and up.

Price: \$38.00

Source: <https://secure.visionaustralia.org/visionaustralia/onlineshop/ProductDetail.aspx?BestSellers=true&ID=195>

Some ideas for teaching PE

CAMPABILITIES: Teaching Children who are Visually Impaired in Physical Education

This is a great website especially for those looking for tips about camps and sporting ideas for students with vision impairments. There are videos and resources for teachers.

Go to the link on left hand side of page called "Teaching Strategies"

The Campabilities website can be found at

<http://www.campabilitiesbrockport.org/Camp-Video.html>

Teacher Assistant with braille skills

Kim Batten is looking for employment as a braille aide - she is currently living in the Romsey area but is happy to relocate. Please contact her on 5429 6015.

Report on SPEVI PD day, October 5, 2009 by Marion Blaze

50 educators of the vision impaired arrived at the Plaza at Vision Australia, Kooyong to participate in this year's professional development theme: 'Finding the balance: life skills, technology and education'. The day was a mix of networking, discussions and presentations. The feedback was positive about all sessions, but especially about the panel of students (Sam Byrne, Ben Schmidt, Megan Sykes and Kim Black chaired by Barb Forehan), and the afternoon session on 'Life and career skills' facilitated by Annette Godfrey Magee and Sherry Cunningham. Feedback also indicated the ongoing benefits of networking time on the day, facilitated by our break times, soap boxes and times for workshopping during sessions.

There is overwhelming support for a theme in 2010 on 'Futures for children with VI'. According to the feedback this should include options for less able students, social skill development and a panel of VI young people in employment. We'll get thinking about this very soon!! Thank you to all the organisers (Dean Johnston, Garry Stinchcombe and myself), to Barb Forehan who was a fabulous panel facilitator, even corresponding with the panel members prior to the day, our hardworking presenters, many of whom gave up valuable school holiday time to perfect their PowerPoints, Micheal Kelly who provided tech support and the many willing helpers who offered their assistance on the day. Thanks also to Di Skillern and the SVRC staff for admin support and to Vision Australia for providing the venue free of charge.

Braille Rocks

After 18 months of planning, Braille on Manly Beach became a happening thing on Sunday September 20 as part of the Manly Arts Festival. Teams of volunteers coordinated by artist Anne Walton and under the expert guidance of sand sculptor Dennis Massoud worked enthusiastically to make a giant braille message in the sand of Manly's West Esplanade harbour-side beach.

The teams that had been recruited prior to the event were joined by dozens of beach-going locals and tourists of all ages who pitched in to shovel sand and carry buckets of water. The shovelling and water-carrying began at 9:30, and the 23-dot message quickly took shape. Each dot was 1 metre in diameter and 0.5 metres high. The entire message was completed at about 3pm, 2 hours ahead of schedule, and just in time for the helicopter fly-over that produced some stunning aerial photographs of the message set amid the panorama of Sydney's northern beaches.

Those who preferred a more relaxed experience kept themselves busy buying tickets in the raffle for 4 tactile T-shirts with the alphabet embossed on the front in braille and print. Long lines of children formed near the marquee waiting to have messages brailled for them by a crack team of on-location braille transcribers, while others contributed messages to the braille time capsule.

Just before 5pm, a short ceremony took place, during which Disability Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes unveiled the message that had been made in the sand: braille rocks (using the "brl" contraction for "braille"). Graeme also announced the four lucky winners of the braille T-shirts.

Quite a few people expressed an interest in purchasing the T-shirts. If we receive enough advance orders, we will be able to have T-shirts produced with "braille rocks" embossed on the front in braille and print, and the alphabet embossed on the back. Each T-shirt will cost about \$30 (the exact price will be confirmed prior to ordering) and sizes available are small, medium, large and extra-large. You can have any colour you like, as long as it's black with white embossed dots. Please contact me by email or phone (02 96863665) if you'd like to order one of these unique T-shirts.

For those of you who would still like to contribute a message to the braille time-capsule, there is good news: we received so many messages that the two antique bottles we intended to use quickly overflowed. We now have to find some larger bottles. So if you would like a short (2 line) message included in the time-capsule, there's still time to send me the text. I'll emboss it and add it to the collection. We'll let you know when we've decided on a new date for the ceremony to seal and consecrate the time-capsule. The time-capsule will be earmarked for opening on January 4 2109, the 300th birth of Louis Braille. Graeme and I have already put it in our diaries.

Braille on Manly Beach was conceived by Anne Walton, who has become internationally respected for working with braille in ways that are both artistic and inclusive, and braille advocate Bruce Maguire. It was made possible by the expertise and enthusiasm of sand sculptor Dennis Massoud, and the event was supported by a grant from the Community Partnerships Division of the Australia Council. And it all happened because so many people were inspired by the coming-together of braille and the beach, and gave generously of their time and energy. Thank you to all who were involved.

Braille on Manly Beach was a celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Louis Braille with a truly Australian flavour. We want to spread the word that braille rocks, so as soon as we've collated all the photographs and edited the video footage, we'll be publishing the highlights on YouTube and elsewhere. In the meantime, please contact me if you have any questions about the event.

Braille rocks!!
Bruce Maguire

For more information about the project go to the Braille on Manly Beach webpage at <http://www.e-bility.com/braillespace/bomb/>

Postscript from Bruce re: video release. There's no audio description at the moment, but we're working on that. In due course we'll probably produce a more extended video (the Director's Cut) that will include audio description and captioning, which we'll release on DVD. I also have some still images (including the shots taken by the helicopter), complete with text descriptions if anyone would like them (in total there are about 23 images occupying nearly 2MB - these will progressively appear either on our Blog or Flickr).

The video is available on YouTube at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cobAz7AYUI4&feature=youtube_gdata

Creative Writing Competition: A Reminder

A reminder to those who are to participate in this years Statewide Vision Resource Centre creative writing competition: this year's competition is open to children of all ages, and all contestants have the freedom of choice to write on whatever topic they like.

Please note that entries close on November 6th, 2009, with winners to be announced at the SVRC Expo on the 27th of November, 2009.

Entries are to be 1-2 pages long and must be sent to:

Maranatha Sao-Mafiti

Care of Statewide Vision Resource Centre

P.O. Box 201, Nunawading, Victoria, Australia 3131

WebAnywhere: a web-based screen reader with no installation required

By Dr Scott Hollier, Project Manager, Media Access Australia

It's a common story: a blind or vision impaired student has started at a school, and requires assistive technology software such as a screen reader. It seems like a simple request in theory, until the IT department realises that the software needs to be installed on one of their machines.

It's at this point that the usual issues emerge. The three main issues that I hear are:

1. "I've never heard of this program, it's a security risk."
2. "This library terminal has a specific profile that is locked down tightly, and there's simply no way additional software can be installed."
3. "We have a Standard Operating Environment here and we can't accommodate software that only offers a single user license."

As a result, it can often take a while before a student has a computer set up at the school with all the appropriate assistive technologies installed.

Fortunately there is now a free solution that will work on pretty much any computer regardless of its operating system or type of web browser. The solution is called WebAnywhere, and it can be used by simply going to the following address at the University of Washington website:

<http://webanywhere.cs.washington.edu/wa.php>

Once the webpage has loaded, the computer will start talking, allowing the web browser to be used as a basic screen reader. From here, any other page can be loaded and also read out through the page's internal web address window.

For students who are blind or vision impaired, the benefits of WebAnywhere are profound: although the screen reader is not as advanced as a product like JAWS, the fact it can be used instantly by simply going to a website means that students have the flexibility to use any Internet-enabled computer, no matter how much security was put on it by an IT administrator.

From an itinerant teacher perspective, WebAnywhere means that students can start accessing their online education resources immediately at a basic level while the issues of setting up more specialist products are addressed.

For more information on WebAnywhere and other helpful tips and tricks for making the Internet more accessible to people with disabilities, please visit the Media Access Australia website,

<http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/newmedia>

Source: It's Vision Time Issue 13, 2009

Storynory - Free audio books for kids

If you are into Audio books to use with students who prefer audio to print this is a wonderful site. Loads of free, quality recordings of hundreds of audio material. It comes with the print as well which can easily be enlarged or brailled to accompany the audio. Our team have downloaded nearly all the books onto a memory stick and are finding them wonderful to give to Support Classes as well as many mainstream students. The site is <http://storynory.com/>

A New Tool from Google

Talking to some colleagues recently I found that I was not alone in my habit of jumping onto Google to type in a question. Now Google has come up with a new search engine called "Google Squared". This allows you to type in a question or a key word e.g. "Zagreb". It then asks you to type in any related key words, e.g. "time", which allows you to cross reference your search. Google Squared then searches for the best matches for your query. Give it a try at: <http://www.google.com/squared>

Questions Time

How can vision impaired students access the IWB?

Answer: This has been an ongoing problem that seems to have a number of solutions or should I say complications. Of course it all depends on the student and how they normally access information in the classroom eg braille, LP etc.

Some of the solutions that have proved to work:

1. students are just getting up from their desks when there is a IWB presentation on and sitting as close as they need.
2. provide the student with their own computer screen on their desks. The screen is directly linked to the teacher's computer and therefore will pick up whatever is being presented.
3. Allow the student to use the teacher's computer
4. Using Brigit software and the student's own laptop, information can be transferred via the internet. This will be made easier when schools have wireless networks installed.

Can you label a CD or DVD with braille label or with LP labels without affecting the reading of the CD/DVD?

Answer: Absolutely no problem unless the label was so thick or large (or curled up) that it interfered with the CD (being placed on the printed (up) side of the CD because the "reading" of the CD/DVD happens on the non print side. It is okay even to put lots of info on.

Source: It's Vision Time Issue 13 2009



The Black Book of Colors

The Black Book of Colors is written by Venezuelan author Menena Cottin

There are no colors in this book only black pages with black raised pictures. The text is written in braille and white print appears at the bottom of each page. The book's dust jacket reads:

"It is very hard for a sighted person to imagine what it is like to be blind. This ground breaking, award winning book endeavours to convey the experience of a person who can only see through his or her sense of touch, taste, smell or hearing.

The text is translated into braille, so that the sighted reader can begin to imagine what it is like to read by touch, and there is a full braille alphabet at the end of the book.

Fist published in Mexico, *The Black Book of Colors* won the New Horizons prize at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in 2007. It has since been published around the world and has been universally praised for its unique and innovative approach."

We now have a copy of this book at SVRC. It is an interesting book which could be used as stimulus material for a whole class writing or discussion activity around the theme of color or blindness. It would benefit from better quality dots.

Find out more at <http://www.underconsideration.com/speakup/archives/004796.html>

Available from Parentbooks <http://www.parentbooks.ca/>

Walking With Willpower

Maurice Gleeson has recently sent some information about a new program being coordinated through Blind Sports Victoria called Walking With Willpower. This program matches community volunteers with blind and vision impaired people in their local area as a walking companion for friendly regular walks, on an ongoing basis.

If you are interested or know someone with low vision or no vision who would like a walking buddy, please contact Walking with Willpower Coordinator, Amanda Webb, on (03) 98228876 or by email: walkingwithwillpower@blindsports.org.au

Quantum Scholarships

The Gillian Gale Award for Braille Literacy 2010

This award honours the remarkable contribution Gillian Gale has made to the education of blind students in Australia and internationally.

A Mountbatten Learning System and all associated software and accessories will be awarded to one child in both Australia and New Zealand.

The award is open to applications on behalf of children between the ages of 3 and 8 years, who are learning Braille or are assessed as a future Braille learner.

Eligibility

Applications are open to Australian and New Zealand residents between ages 3 and 10 years. Applications should be submitted with the signature of an Early Childhood or early Intervention professional and/or a parent.

In one thousand (1000) words or less tell us why you feel Braille literacy will be essential to your child's success and describe the role you envisage the Mountbatten Learning System will play in your child's future.

The key issues to cover include:

- Describe the expectations you have for your child.
- Explain how you envisage Braille and technology skills will be essential in your child's future?
- What other factors will be critical to the success of your child?
- Describe the functions of the Mountbatten Learning System that you think will most benefit your child.

Applications must be received by 29th January 2010. Winners will be notified by phone and subsequent letter.

For more information about the Gillian Gale Award for Braille Literacy and its criteria or for Applications forms please visit the website, <http://www.quantumtechnology.com.au> or email info@quantumtechnology.com.au

A copy of the application form is available from the SVRC.

Staff and Student News

The spacecampers are having a wonderful trip doing lots of exploring and space missions. One of the highlights according to a recent email from Deb was a talk given by a blind chemist - Dr Craig Moore. Deb writes:

Dr Craig Moore - who works for NASA, as do nearly 20 other people who are blind or who have low vision. Dr Moore uses a PACMate with a refreshable braille display and a QWERTY keyboard and prefers braille for information that he needs to be precise, such as Maths. He uses voice for lengthy documents and emails etc.

He described his work and continued his session with the following insights:

- find something that you are interested in and go for it
- if you work hard people will want to help you
- don't let other people and their expectations get you down
- it might take perseverance so seek out encouraging people
- try everything with all your might and you will get a job
- the future is inspiring for young people nowadays because of the changes to technologies and the improved access to information
- believe in yourself

Cassie and Nathaniel had the opportunity to speak further with Dr Moore over lunch. For more information about Dr Moore, visit: <http://www.dvlop.nl/downloads/ICEVI%20-%20SCIVIS%20%20interv%20C%20Moore%20DVLOP.doc>



Picture above show some of the students at Space Camp. A space shuttle is in the background.

Space Camp photos can be found at the SCI-VIS website which you'll find here: <http://public.fotki.com/scivis/>

Finally

Thanks to everyone for their ideas for this Bulletin particularly Bruce Maguire, Kym Gribble, Marion Blazé, Deb Lewis, and Maranatha Sao-Mafiti
Many thanks to Leanne Terry for proof reading this edition of the bulletin.

Don't forget, we appreciate your input.

If you have something you would like included in "The Bulletin", or a question you would like to ask the team at Statewide please contact:

Lyn Robinson lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au

To read The Bulletin online: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/bulletins2009.html>