

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 9

Tuesday 14th June 2011

This issue was edited by Lyn Robinson and Deb Lewis, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

Professional Development Activities for Term 2 and 3, 2011

Dot power – Literacy activities for braille readers from pre-school to grade 3	Tuesday 21 June
Skill power workshops for VTs, teachers, aides, students etc (BYO lunch) 1. JAWS - 10.00am to 11.30am Lea Nagel, SVRC (BYO laptop) 2. VictorReader Stream - 12.00 to 1.30pm Ramona Mandy, Humanware 3. Braille Maths Follow-up - 2.00pm to 3.40 pm Lea Nagel, SVRC	Wednesday 22 June
Art4kids with VI? Michael Donnelly, SVRC (see issue 8 or call for details)	Friday 24 June
New: Goalball Half Day – ALL welcome; please register (see issue 8)	Friday 24 June
25th National Braille Music Camp – NSW. Email romad@westnet.com.au	25 June to 2 July
Including students who are blind or have low vision in physical education programs Charlie Roberts, SVRC (see issue 8 or call for details)	Friday 22 July
Skill power workshops for visiting teachers, teachers, aides, students etc (BYO lunch and laptop) 1. Computer for low vision users - 10.00am to 11.30am Lyn Robinson 2. MAGic - 12.00 to 1.30pm Trevor Boyd, Quantum Technology 3. Please request a session - 2.00pm to 3.30pm	Wednesday 10 August
Visiting Teacher Professional Development – Term 3	Tuesday 23 August
Skill power workshops for visiting teachers, teachers, aides, students etc (BYO lunch and laptop) 1. Duxbury for schools and VTS - 10.00am to 11.30am Lea Nagel & Maria Elford, SVRC 2. Please request a session - 12.00 to 1.30pm 3. Please request a session - 2.00pm to 3.30pm	Wednesday 31 August
Dot power: Literacy activities for braille readers from pre-school to grade 3	Tuesday 6 September
Blind Cricket – all welcome! (See issue 8 for information and forms)	Friday 23 September

The program for 2011 is available at: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/Acalendar2011.doc>

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New SPEVI Website

Source: The SPEVI listserv

The new, SPEVI website is now up and running at <http://www.spevi.net>. The new website will feature regular news updates, interesting links and our brand new SPEVI Blog. The first Blogpost is by Paul Pagliano, the president of SPEVI, and is certainly worth a visit to the website.

Echolocation

Source: (From the SPEVI listserv) BBC News Health, 26 May 2011.

Full research article: Thaler L, Arnott SR, Goodale MA (2011) Neural Correlates of Natural Human Echolocation in Early and Late Blind Echolocation Experts. PLoS ONE 6(5): e20162.

doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0020162

The part of the brain used by people who use echolocation has been identified by researchers in Canada. Some people who are blind have learned to echolocate by making clicking noises and listening to the returning echoes. A study of two such people showed a part of the brain usually associated with sight was activated when listening to echoes. Susie Roberts, rehabilitation officer at Action for Blind People, said: “This research into brain activity and echolocation is very interesting and improves our understanding of how some people with a vision impairment may be processing information to help them navigate safely. Further investigation may help to improve the way the technique is taught to people in the future, potentially improving their mobility and independence.”

More information on the subject of Echolocation can be found here:

http://scienceblogs.com/neurophilosophy/2011/05/human_echolocation_activates_visual_parts_of_the_brain.php

Why Not Magnification in Your Pocket?

by Marion Blazé

Rather than asking whether a child needs a magnifier or miniscope, I really think the question should be “why not”? Such handy magnification offers our students immediate access to make things bigger or get things closer. It should be seen by teachers and students as part of their repertoire of skills and strategies for exploring their world and educational materials. Natasha Sikman from the Guide Dogs Centre for Vision Independence came to our last VT day and showed us new and tried-and-true products for magnification. For example, the “Powerlux” is a really cool looking magnifier with 5 times magnification and an LED light. It looks and feels very much like a computer mouse and sells for \$110 from the CVI.

This centre is fabulous to visit, with or without your students. Consultations are free and equipment is sold at cost. Consider an excursion with one or a few students to try out some new options for magnification, with a qualified orthoptist on hand to provide the necessary optical advice. It’s close to public transport, too.

Where is it?

Centre for Vision Independence

Suite 505, Fifth Floor

100 Victoria Parade

East Melbourne 3002

Phone: 03 9639 4401

Email: info@cvi.org.au

2012 Scholarships

From: The AVCAT Scholarship Officer, Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust

The Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT) gives financial assistance to help selected children & grandchildren of the Australian Ex-Service Community with the costs of tertiary education. Selection is of the most deserving candidates of merit, who, without our help, would be unable to start or complete studies without financial difficulty. Applicants are considered for all schemes for which they are eligible.

Long Tan Bursary:

The largest scheme is the Long Tan Bursary funded by the Australian Government. Each year there are 50 new bursaries valued at \$9,000 each, which is paid at \$3,000 per year for three years. To be eligible you must be: the child of an Australian Vietnam Veteran, be resident in Australia, be enrolled or planning to enrol in any year of tertiary study having not previously received a Long Tan Bursary.

Other Scholarships:

The other national schemes are the AVCAT Bursary, the RSL Scholarship, Vietnam Veterans' Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Scholarship, Legacy Australia Scholarship and the George Quinsey Scholarship - which directly pays tuition fees for economics, commerce and accountancy studies. There are also regional scholarships.

Schemes vary between \$3,000 and \$5,000 per year each. Some are restricted to location of residence or studies. Most require operational service in Vietnam but others are broader in eligibility criteria. In addition to the above there is one grant per year to assist a handicapped eligible veteran's child or grandchild with special extra costs of transition to tertiary studies or employment.

To apply you must be:

- Within the means test, i.e. eligible on assets and income grounds for the Youth Allowance benefit for full time education.
- Enrolled, or planning to enrol in a full-time course of tertiary education in Australia by attendance at a university, TAFE or college. The course must be of one or more academic years in length and should be at undergraduate level (some exceptions).
- The child or grandchild of a person who has operational service with the Australian Navy, Army or Air Force, or three or more year's continuous full-time service as a member of the Australian Defence Force.
- Under the age of 25 when applying, unless exceptional circumstances related to veteran's service exist.

Applications open on 18 August, 2011

Applications close on 31 October, 2011

To receive an application form, register your interest on 1800 620 361, or by email:

avcat@dva.gov.au. or download from: <http://www.avcat.org.au>

Vision Resources

AFB Press Releases Reach Out and Teach: Helping Your Child Who Is Visually Impaired Learn and Grow

The empowering guide that taught parents and teachers how to promote the development of young children with visual and multiple impairments is now available in an exciting new edition! Written by Kay Alicyn Ferrell with Susan J. Spungin, Consulting Editor, Reach Out and Teach reflects the concerns of today's families and professionals and the latest research on learning in infancy and early childhood. A must-have resource, Reach Out and Teach has been specially designed for both families and the professionals who work with them.

Reach Out and Teach includes new and expanded information on:

- The different learning needs of young children who are visually impaired
- Skills to focus on at different ages
- Effective ways of using everyday activities and routines to teach skills and encourage learning, with specific step-by-step suggestions
- Strategies for navigating early intervention services and the transition to elementary school
- Behaviours to promote in children with visual impairments for success in preschool and kindergarten
- Adaptations, assistive technology and other tools that can help young children in the classroom
- Order Reach Out and Teach today at <http://www.afb.org/store>

TADPOLE Kit: Tools and Activities for the Development of Visual Skills

Tools and Activities for the Development of Visual Skills (TADPOLE) is a set of standardized tools that helps practitioners perform functional vision evaluations or visual skills development activities. It is similar to APH's Tools for Assessment and Development of Visual Skills (ToAD) kit, but is geared for younger learners.

The TADPOLE Practitioner's Guidebook is a collection of suggested activities, primarily for use with students who are very young (0-2 level), or who have communication and/or cognitive delays. These activities are functional, and uncomplicated, natural to the learner's environment.

For more information go to the APH website:

http://shop.aph.org/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/Home_10001_11051

NAPLAN Interactive PDF Feedback

The NAPLAN has been made available as an interactive PDF format for students with vision impairments this year. If your student has trialled this format and you would like to send some feedback to Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) please contact Deb Lewis for the forms.

Please return the completed forms by 25 July 2011 via:

Email: naplan@acara.edu.au

Post: ACARA, Assessment (Interactive PDF), Level 10, 255 Pitt Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000

Literary Awards

Source: Phia from the SPEVI listserve

Vision Australia's Dickinson Literary Awards winning entries are now online. Katie Butler of NSW received a Highly Commended certificate for her entry in the category Young Adult Non Fiction: "Insight from the Blind". I find this of particular interest and I am pleased that I have permission to copy her entry below.

Insight from the Blind by Katie Butler

You call out, but where are you exactly?

I wave and smile and hope for the best.

You sounded like you were over there...

but I can't see you with my ears you know

Don't bother to wave and yell, just come over to me and say hello,

And if you do, who are you anyway?

Please say your name and don't leave me pondering.

You seize my arm and start pulling me along,

Like a wheelie bin going out for collection,

I feel so inferior and useless,

There is no need to grab or drag me,

just offer your arm or go ahead and the dog will lead me,

It is helpful too if you tell me of approaching hazards like steps and ditches,

As I don't like the staring when I take a pitching.

Further to that, I don't appreciate all the other staring that goes on,

I am vision impaired, nothing more or less,

I am a person, just like you and it gets old being treated otherwise,

Please just let me meld into the crowd.

You talk to and pat my guide dog,

How would you like it if I suddenly took your steering wheel?

You could be in trouble, especially as I'm blind,

I know he is gorgeous,

But, the go is, he is my set of eyes and needs to be on the ball all the time.

You talk to me like I am a hero for being,

Or like someone half my age,

Please treat me like you would anyone else,

Only with a little common sense.

All entries for the competition can be found at <http://www.visionaustralia.org> in the About us section, awards and competitions, Vision Australia's Dickinson Literary Awards. Entries for the 2012 Vision Australia's Dickinson Literary Awards will be accepted from October 2011.

CyberSafety For Students

Report by Lyn Robinson

I recently attended a Cybersafety Outreach program run by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). ACMA runs programs in schools for students, parents and school staff around the topic of cybersafety and digital media. Some of the topics included: social networking, understanding cyberbullying, positive online behaviour, cybersafety resources for schools and how to report incidences of cyberbullying. Here is some advice for students from the presentation:

Cyberbullying – student advice

- Cyberbullying is not ok, tell someone you trust
- Use the cybersafety “Help” button on the Cybersmart website
- Keep passwords secret and mobile numbers private
- Do not reply to unwanted messages and/or block the sender if they are in your contact list
- Call the Cybersafety Contact Centre on 1800 880 176
- Keep all instant messages (IM) and SMS messages, print out any text, web content or emails, keep links to web pages or user names in IM

Some ways to report abuse

- YouTube – Flag as inappropriate
- MSN – Click “report abuse”
- Bebo, Facebook, MySpace – Click “report abuse”. Pages can be shut down if they are found to be abusive.
- Hotmail – Click “report abuse”
- Kids Helpline 1800 551800
- CyberSafety Help - link to Kids Helpline <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Report.aspx>

For more information go to CyberSmart website: <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/>

Blind Archery In Victoria

From Hazel Hockley, Blind Sports Newsletter

A Come N Try Day was organised on 28 February 2011 to explore if any blind or partially sighted people would be interested in archery. Eight people attended, with four people in each group for safety reasons. Everyone shot inside at two targets. At the end of the sessions, six people were interested in continuing on. This group formed the basis for a Pilot Program. No one had used a bow and arrow before, so we were all beginners.

The Pilot Program had two sessions each Friday, lasting an hour and an half for each group. After five weeks of coaching, we were all able to hit the target after loading the arrows correctly. The group had a break during the school holidays and have returned full of energy and enthusiasm. Archie, our coach from Box Hill Archers, is passionate and committed to our group learning this sport correctly, so that we will be able to shoot safely and hit the target continuously.

Following some assistance from the British Blind Archers, we now have plans for the “foot locators”, which are being made for us to use during training as well as competition. Archery is interested in more people coming along to join the group, so why not give me a ring and find out more.

If anyone is interested in archery and would like to hear more or would like to try something different, contact Hazel on mobile 0412 224 242 or email: nuttyhazel@optusnet.com.au

Great Victorian Bike Ride – Volunteer Required

Blind Sports Victoria has had a request from a young person wishing to participate in the Great Victorian Bike ride on a tandem bicycle from November 26 to December 4, 2011. The ride is over 590kms over nine days in all weather conditions.

A female front rider is required to assist this person in training and for the event. If you are interested, please contact the Blind Sports Victoria office on 9822 8876 for further information.

PowerTalk – Automatic speech for PowerPoint presentations.

Source: the PowerTalk website

PowerTalk is a free program that automatically speaks any presentation or slide show running in Microsoft PowerPoint for Windows. You just download and install PowerTalk and while you open and run the presentation as usual it speaks the text on your slides. The advantage over other generic “Text To Speech” programs is that PowerTalk is able to speak text as it appears and can also speak hidden text attached to images. Speech is provided by the synthesised computer voices that are provided with Windows 7, Vista and XP, and other voices are available. PowerTalk uses PowerPoint supplied with Microsoft Office to show the presentation.

Features

- Aids you if you have difficulty speaking or you have an audience that contains people with sight problems (visual impairments, low vision or blind) or who have dyslexia
- Helps you access presentations when there is no speaker and you are partially sighted
- Creates engaging school activities such as reading stores created by students
- Simple to use as you just select a presentation and it runs in PowerPoint as usual
- Speaks the text on any presentation and uses standard Windows speech
- Waits for text to appear and animation effects to play before speaking
- Will speak hidden “alternative text” for pictures, graphics shapes and text
- Lets you add instant narration to presentations without the need to record speech
- Is a useful tool for testing presentation accessibility when using a screen reader
- Free (gratis - as in “free beer”). No purchase, registration or adverts, you just download and run it
- Free (libre - as in “free speech”). The Open Source Licence guarantees you the freedom to make copies and to alter its behaviour

Requirements, what you must have to run PowerTalk

PowerTalk runs on Windows XP, VISTA, Windows 7 (it should also work on NT 4.0 and Windows 2000). You must have PowerPoint 2000 or later installed. For more information and to download a copy of PowerTalk go to: <http://fullmeasure.co.uk/powertalk/>

Staff News

Source: Inspire Issue 4 – May 2011



Congratulations **Laura Greaves** Visiting Teacher, Northern Metro Region.

Laura Greaves was featured on the cover of last month's edition of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's magazine "Inspire". She has recently been nominated for, and won, "Teacher of the Year" in the disability and additional needs sector. The following is from the Inspire magazine article about Laura:

"Laura is passionate about building capacity and teaching excellence to successfully educate students across the Northern Metropolitan Region (NMR) with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). She has implemented several successful programs to accomplish these goals, and is developing a draft model for capacity-building and autism knowledge development for beginning teachers. Continuous evaluation and up-skilling will ensure that all schools in the NMR acquire the knowledge, skill set and enthusiasm to effectively educate a student with an ASD."

Staff taking leave

- Bon voyage to **Linda Doak**, Visiting Teacher, Barwon South Western Region, who is heading overseas for some long service leave. Linda will be traveling to Morocco and France where she has lots of exciting adventures planned!
- **Lyn Robinson** will also be taking some long service leave in June and will be traveling to south west France near the Pyrenees mountains and the Basque region of Spain. Lyn writes, "My summer school French should come in handy provided I stick to 'Bonjour. Je m'appelle Lyn' and the like – wish me luck!"

Student News

Group A was full of news at their last SVRC Support Skills session:

- **Emily** is doing circus skills and Zumba after school and says that she is learning stilts, juggling and unicycle and looking forward to the end of term Zumba concert.
- **Staci-Lee** recently participated in a walkathon and raised \$205.
- **Ari** recently walked 12 km with his Cubs group.

- **Danijella** will be going to Sovereign Hill later this term and (drum roll) she'll be going to Europe next term to visit Germany, England, France, Croatia and Portugal.
- **Monique** has been making a treasure box at home to put all of her treasures in.

Group B was also full of news – here is a selection:

- **Emma-Mae** recently went on a school surfing camp where she also did sea kayaking. She recommends these both as great activities for people with vision impairments. She said that the teachers helped by letting students know which waves to catch – i.e. when there was plenty of time to get on your board!
- **Justin** has a new 8 week old puppy – a Cavoodle called Spencer. He is brown with white feet and white spots on his head.
- **Guy** recently went of a family camp to the Goulburn River. When he was canoeing, he rolled the canoe and says it was freezing!
- **Mohamed's** auntie had a baby and Mohamed was really surprised at how soft the baby's head felt!
- Several students from this group will be attending Braille Music Camp – **Emma-Mae, Micaela** and **Elliot**. It will be the first time that Micaela and Elliot have attended. Emma-Mae told the group that the camp runs for a week and participants stay in a boarding school in Mittagong, near Sydney. Students come from all over the country including Adelaide and Perth. Victorians travel up by train. Age of participants ranges from 9 years to 85 years! The concert at the end of the week usually sells out with locals who love this annual event!

Audio-Described Performance

St Martins Youth Art Centre presents “The Lost Girl”

How real is the online reality for Australia's young people? The Lost Girl features a diverse teenage cast who delve into their own experiences of home, school and growing up to unpack the common feeling of being isolated, alone and lost, collaborating with a professional creative team directed by Sarah Austin, live music from Rae Howell and AV design by Nicholas Verso. Come and peek through a secret window into the complex inner lives of our teenagers. 7/8/9 July 7.30pm (9 July Auslan/Audio described). Group and Education Discounts Apply. St Martins Youth Arts Centre, St Martins Lane, South Yarra. Tickets: \$20 Adults, \$12 Conc. Bookings <http://www.stmartinsyouth.com.au> or phone Bryony on (03) 9867 2477. This show will have special appeal to a teenage audience.

Finally

And finally thanks to everyone for their contributions to this Bulletin, especially Marion Blazé, Annette Godfrey-Magee, Janene Sadhu and Mike Steer.

If you have something you would like included in “The Bulletin” please email Lyn Robinson lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au

To read the Bulletin Online: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/Abulletin.shtml>