

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 14

Monday 29th August 2011

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

Professional Development Activities for Term 3 & 4, 2011

For workshops: Please bring laptop, BrailleNote etc as required. No charge. No lunch provided.

Skill power workshops for visiting teachers, teachers, aides, students etc 1. Duxbury for schools & VTS - 10.00 to 11.30am Lea Nagel & Maria Elford, SVRC 2. BrailleNote for Beginners - 12.00 to 1.30pm Lea Nagel, SVRC 3. PlexTalk and Olympus - 2.00pm to 3.30pm Danny Keogh, Quantum & Braille Maths Q&A - 2.00pm to 3.30pm Lea Nagel, SVRC	Wednesday 31 August
Dot power: Literacy-based activities for braille readers from pre-school to grade 2	Tuesday 6 September
Support for Students with Vision Impairments – The Psychologist’s Role Geoff Bowen, Psychologist, SVRC – for flier, see issue 12	Tuesday 20 September
Blind Cricket - all welcome! (forms in issue 13)	Friday 23 September
SPEVI Day - Professional Development Day for those supporting students with vision impairments - teachers, aides, therapists, parents etc	Monday 10 October
Special activity for students - Career day - for students, parents, teachers, aides etc	Friday 14 October
Educational Expo - Access technology options This day is suitable for teachers, aides, therapists, parents/carers, visiting teachers, STUDENTS and members of the wider community - all welcome!	Friday 25 November
Dot power Day of literacy-based activities for braille readers from pre-school to grade 2	Tuesday 29 November
SVRC Christmas morning tea. All welcome! – please RSVP	Wednesday 7 December

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

Blind Cricket

When: Friday 23 September, 9.30am-2.30pm

Where: Meet at the Cricket Pavilion, Victorian Blind Cricket Association’s grounds
454 Glenferrie Road Kooyong (rear of Vision Australia)

RSVP: Friday 2nd September

Cost: Free – and a sausage sizzle and drink are provided

Further information and forms: see issue 13 of The Bulletin or <http://www.vbca.org.au/clinic.php>

All students with vision impairments are encouraged to join us! Participants will learn the art of blind cricket through a range of activities and games designed to enhance teamwork and the individual’s hand eye/ear coordination skills. Parents/carers and VTs are most welcome to attend.

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Braille Music Camp – One more Comment!

Olivia, Year 11, attended her first camp this year

This year I was fortunate enough to attend the National Braille Music Camp. The week I spent at Camp gave me the opportunity to improve my Braille Music skills and meet other musicians from all over the country. As someone who is very passionate about music I enjoyed singing songs of many different styles in the choir and listening to others perform and the Braille lessons I had have taught me skills that will be valuable as I further my studies of music in the future. It was a very enjoyable and productive week.



Quality Living Group for Young Adults

Would you like to attend a face to face or over the phone Quality Living group?

A face to face Quality Living Group for young adults aged between 18 and 40 is being setup by Melissa Howe at the Kensington (Melbourne) office to begin early next year (January or February).

In the meantime she is also interested in setting up an over the phone Quality Living Group in October for interested others in this age group who would not be able to attend a face to face group in Melbourne.

Quality Living Groups are a great opportunity to meet others with similar interests, provide peer support and discuss matters of significance to people with vision impairments. Melissa is hoping to base discussion for these groups on social matters in particular.

Please send enquiries to:

Melissa Howe, Quality Living Coordinator / Case Manager

Tel: 03 8378 1191

Email: melissa.howe@visionaustralia.org

Grants Available for Artists with Disability

Source: NDS National News Update 11 August 2011

Cultivate, a new professional development fund for Australian artists with disability, is seeking applications for grants of up to \$8,000 to cover costs associated with starting or growing a professional practice as an artist.

The grant could be used to cover the costs of specific skills or professional development opportunities, professional fees, travel, training or mentoring.

The aim of the funding is to assist a person with disability to be better placed to pursue a professional artistic career and to compete for funding in general arts funding programs. To apply, a completed application form and support material must be sent to Arts Access Australia to arrive by 10.00am Monday 12 September 2011.

Further information including the application form is available from Arts Access Australia:

http://www.artsaccessaustralia.org/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail_0&cntnt01articleid=282&cntnt01returnid=15

Dropbox – Any file, any time!

From Lyn Robinson

Dropbox is a program which allows you to store documents, videos or photos on a website called “Dropbox”. Once you have downloaded the Dropbox software and set up an account, your files can be uploaded and downloaded any time and in any place you like. Any file you save to Dropbox also instantly saves to your computers, phones, and the Dropbox website.

What’s available?

- 2GB of Dropbox for free, with subscriptions up to 100GB available.
- Your files are always available from the secure Dropbox website.
- Dropbox works with Windows, Mac, Linux, iPad, iPhone, Android and BlackBerry.
- Works even when offline. You always have your files, whether or not you have a connection.
- Dropbox transfers just the parts of a file that change (not the whole thing).

What can you do with Dropbox?

- Shared folders allow people to work together on the same projects and documents.
- Invite friends, family or team-mates to a folder. It'll be as if you saved the folder to their computers.
- See other people's changes instantly.
- Create photo galleries viewable by anyone you choose.
- Send a link to any file in your Dropbox using your Public folder.



Dropbox mobile

Apps for iPhone, iPad, Android, and BlackBerry keep your Dropbox at hand, even on the go.

- Bring your files with you when you're on the go.
- Edit files in your Dropbox from your phone.
- Easily upload your photos and videos to Dropbox.
- Share freely with family and friends.

To find out more about Dropbox you can go to <http://www.dropbox.com/features>

A “Note” on Braille Music

By Deb Lewis and Lea Nagel

Originally developed nearly 200 years ago, the braille music code allows print music to be notated for the blind musician. Whilst it is an international braille code – the only international braille code – it appears to have some challenges, particularly for those of us who have not achieved music qualifications at tertiary level but who, nevertheless, are striving to ensure that blind students are able to read and write music.

If you are a complete braille music novice, you may be interested to know that the position of the music note on the music staff is indicated by an octave indicator preceding the musical note. The top four dots in the braille cell represent the musical note name and the time value of the note is indicated in the bottom two dots of the braille cell. Here is one of the many unique and interesting features of braille music:

- the musical note "b" is represented by a "c"
- the musical note "c" is represented by an "d" ...
- the musical note "a" is represented by an "i"

For those charged with the role of braille music translation, there are a number of braille music translation programs including GoodFeel¹ and Toccata² which may assist in music transcription.

There are some very helpful resources to assist transcribers and teachers to read and write braille music, in particular “A Survivor's Guide to Braille Music Notation”³ which is available at no cost from Vision Australia. This guide assumes a knowledge of contracted braille and a basic musicianship and includes braille, print and audio resources. There are also some lovely resources on the Education Queensland website⁴.

A number of visiting teachers in Victoria have taken the time to learn the basics of the braille music code in their quest to encourage students to become braille music literate. Further, Lea Nagel has spent literally hundreds of hours transcribing braille music in her own time to ensure that students have music under their fingertips. Lea has also created a basic braille music quick reference sheet⁵.

Braille Music Camp⁶, held in the New South Wales township of Mittagong each year, offers braille readers an immersion in all things music and this is an opportunity that all students should grab if they can.

In terms of qualified transcription personnel, here in Victoria we have two absolutely fabulous braille music transcribers in Dorothy Hamilton and John Shute – however these fine and dedicated human beings are well past the usual retirement age ...

It is to be hoped that our combined efforts are producing students who are literate in braille music. However, given the complexity of the code and the effort required for teachers to become competent in the code, managing the braille music needs of our students is a challenge for us all.

¹ For information about GoodFeel: <http://www.dancingdots.com/main/goodfeel.htm>

² For information about Toccata: <http://members.optusnet.com.au/terryk/toccata.htm>

³ “A Survivor's Guide to Braille Music Notation” is available from Vision Australia: <http://www.visionaustralia.org/info.aspx?page=1062>

⁴ Queensland music resources: <http://www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=47795>

⁵ “Braille Music Basics” by Lea Nagel: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/RSbraillemusic.doc>

⁶ Contact Roma Dix for information about Braille Music Camp: romad@westnet.com.au

Gaining Employment

Source: Blind Citizens Australia Parent News, August 2011

Article by: Jenny Dawson, BCA National Women's Branch President and mum too!

When you meet most people for the first time they will ask you what you do for a living. How many hours do you work? How much does that type of work pay?

For a lot of people who are blind or vision impaired, the barriers to working are not barriers created by the person, but rather from society's lack of awareness around the skills and abilities of people who are blind or vision impaired. We have the education and skills to do the work, but some of us are not given the chance to prove what we can achieve.

You feel more like an active part of the community when you are working. You catch public transport during peak hours and go to the lunch room or local lunch bar with other colleagues. Often when people see you regularly they are more inclined to approach you and start a conversation.

There is the excitement of having extra money to spend. The feeling of being able to buy your lunch or a coffee without thinking you can't afford it, and knowing that you have earned the money yourself when you purchase an outfit or other item for entertainment. You can save for a holiday or take out a mortgage for your own home.

Just like anyone else in the community when we are unemployed we experience low self-esteem and financial hardship. Everyone needs to have something worthwhile in their lives and a reason to get up in the morning.

If you are looking for work and haven't been successful, here is something to think about.

Volunteering: you may have thought about it and decided it wasn't an option for you. However, do not dismiss it straight away as it can bring you a lot of opportunities. No, it won't earn you money but what it can do is improve your self esteem, give you confidence and help you improve your skills as well as learn new ones. Sometimes volunteering can even give you a leg up into paid employment. Volunteering has other benefits such as keeping up your mobility skills and being able to add additional experiences to your CV.

When you have good self-esteem and confidence it changes your whole body language and general wellbeing, increasing your chances in the job market.

UEB for the UK?

Unified English Braille has been in development for 20 years. Australia and New Zealand adopted the code in 2005 with a 5 year implementation period. The United Kingdom is currently considering the adoption of UEB as their braille code. Recent research conducted in Australia will assist in their deliberations. Read the results of their research to date:

http://www.rnib.org.uk/aboutus/Research/reports/support/Pages/UEB_1.aspx

Vision Australia Texpo 2011 (Melbourne)

- Latest products and demonstrations from key technology suppliers will be on display including magnifiers, talking gadgets and computer access tools.
- Visit Vision Australia's Equipment Solutions shop.
- Speak with our professional staff and explore the different Vision Australia services available.
- Meet a Seeing Eye Dog in training and learn how you can sponsor a puppy.

When: Friday 2 September, 10am – 4pm and Saturday 3 September, 10am – 3pm

Where: 454 Glenferrie Road, Kooyong

Research: Sleep Timing Disorders

Excerpt from: http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/home/template/news_item.jsp?cid=411693

Researchers unveil body clock battle for blind New Zealanders

Nearly 3000 blind and partially-sighted New Zealanders could be suffering from undiagnosed sleep timing disorders according to a recent study from The University of Auckland.

The study, which was undertaken in conjunction with the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind (RNZFB), was recently published in the journal PLoSOne. It looked at self-reported sleep habits, sleep disruptions and medication use in people completely blind in one or both eyes; partially-sighted and fully-sighted.

Findings showed a greater rate of self-reported sleeping disorders, and specifically sleep-timing disorders, among blind and partially sighted New Zealanders. Twenty-six percent of people with no light perception in one or both eyes reported drifting sleep patterns (an indicator of an unadjusted biological clock) compared with four percent of fully-sighted respondents.

Principal investigator and chronobiologist Dr Guy Warman says: "It is well known that blind people lacking light perception can have problems keeping their sleep adjusted to a 24-hour day. But until now we haven't known how big that problem is."

This can have a major effect on health and wellbeing. "Effectively it can be like jetlag without leaving home," says Dr Warman.

"In sighted people sleep-timing problems can be treated relatively easily with morning light exposure. For blind people, melatonin taken at the correct dose and at the right time can also be effective."

Typing Program with Voice

This is a nice typing program which voices instructions to students using JAWS or MAGic. Called "TypeAbility", it is available from <http://www.yesaccessible.com/>.

Some information from the website:

TypeAbility is currently being used by individuals and school districts around the English-speaking world, to teach blind and visually impaired students the keyboard skills necessary for typing and using a computer. Teachers are amazed at how engaged the students become while doing their lessons. TypeAbility is so easy to use, that it only takes a few lessons with an assistant before the student is off and running through the 77 graduated lessons.

Cost: Single installation \$100.00, 5 site license \$300.00

Please note that if you purchase TypeAbility from the website, you are asked to submit your JAWS or MAGic serial number.

Quantum Print Disability Scholarship Program & Seniors Grant

For many years Quantum has sponsored a Scholarship program that has distributed over \$100,000 to individuals throughout Australia. There are three categories for students in primary, secondary and tertiary education and prizes will be awarded to applicants based on their application and supporting letter.

Prizes may include the Pearl and OpenBook Text to Speech package, DAISY players, electronic magnifiers and Low Vision software.

For further information: <http://www.quantumrlv.com.au/2011-Scholarship-Program-and-Seniors-Grant.html>

For application form: http://www.quantumrlv.com.au/images/ScholProgram_2011-AppForm.doc

Applications close 25th November 2011.

Courage Can Get Pupils Through Academic Blues

Excerpt from an article in the Sydney Morning Herald by Kim Arlington, August 19, 2011

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/courage-can-get-pupils-through-academic-blues-20110818-1j0a2.html>

Students facing difficulty at school should take courage – literally. Demonstrating courage in the face of academic challenges and fear can help high school students improve their performance, new research shows, and it may ultimately help them enjoy school more.

Professor Andrew Martin, from the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney, examined four approaches to schoolwork – confidence, courage, avoidance and helplessness – among more than 7600 students from 14 Australian high schools. He found it paid to persevere, that courageous students, those who persisted in the classroom, despite difficulties and anxieties, could do just as well as their confident peers.

The study, published in *School Psychology Quarterly*, revealed courage was as effective an approach as confidence when it came to achievement in literacy and numeracy.

Confidence was linked to positive educational outcomes, Professor Martin said, and if students did well by being courageous “that courage may then become a springboard to confidence”.

He said confident students tended to enjoy school more “because self-doubt, anxiety and apprehension are not on their landscape”.

So addressing students’ fears, and encouraging them to persist despite fear, was a “vital stepping stone towards enjoying school. An important educational outcome is not just to get reasonable marks but to actually enjoy your passage through school,” he said.

Students can be taught to be courageous, Professor Martin said. By encouraging them to set goals, prioritise their studies and focus on personal progress, teachers and parents can help students overcome fear of failure or inadequacy.

“Some students will face fear by avoidance, procrastination, doing a quick job on their work just to get it over with or even cheat. Other students may deal with fear by actually cranking the effort and diligence right up ... [and] by collecting themselves by focusing on the task at hand. They’re the ones we’re finding in the courageous group of students.

“School is not always easy ... [but] the evidence shows you do not need to be bluffed by fear.”

Student News

Group D discussions at a recent session had a performance theme:

- Geordie is performing in a play based on Dr Seuss books.
- Caroline recently played in the chorus but had one line which she recited most brilliantly – “I thought you’d never leave!”
- Analyse is wearing her specially made dress to her Deb Ball next Friday where she will be dancing a waltz, a barn dance and a tango!
- Steve’s soccer team made it to the quarter finals in Wodonga, but lost in the “golden goal” to an ACT team
- Lizzie recently played interstate Swish ... but they lost to Queensland

Bike Rider Not Deterred by Blindness

From Guide Dog Tales – Winter 2011 Issue

Pam Haigh was born with a rare genetic eye condition called Pattern Dystrophy that presents itself in midlife causing significant vision loss. She developed this in her 40s and went from perfect vision to legally blind within a short span of six months.

Despite this, she has not let her debilitating vision loss let her shy away from community and social events. Pam was the first blind person to participate in the four day Australian Bike Friday Club bike ride with her Guide Dog, Willoughby, to help raise money for Guide Dogs Victoria. The Club chose Guide Dogs Victoria as their charity of choice four years ago and have been supporting them ever since. There are now four Guide Dog users participating each year in the ride.

An avid tandem bike rider, Pam also participates in the Lions Ride for Sight every year – fundraising for the Centre for Eye Research Australia. Her first riding experience was the Guide Dog Global Challenge, riding through Vietnam and Cambodia which helped raise over \$10,000 for Guide Dogs. She has even taken part in a 1200 km, ride from Berlin to Copenhagen with her first Guide Dog Earl.

“I would never have been bike riding if I hadn’t lost my vision. Bike riding is just such a wonderful feeling for a blind person. Once you’ve lost your sight there’s no speed in your life, you’ve always got to walk safely, walk slowly. But when I get on the back of the bike I’m free. I’m not hanging onto a dog and I can just let my mind wander,” she says.

Each year there is a fund raising event for Guide Dogs Victoria. This year the event was held in Grafton NSW and raised over \$6000. In 2012 the event will be held in Rutherglen. For more details http://www.bikefriday.com/community/news_and_events/events

Anyone aged from eight to eighty years old can participate in the Australian Bike Friday Club. Contact Margaret Day for more information. Phone: +61 8 8271 5824

Big Thanks

A BIG THANKS to VT **Brian Hewat** who brought in some cooking implements for our new kitchen – wooden and plastic stiffing spoons, lifters, and large and small sharp knives. Many, many thanks to Brian and his wife for this most useful donation!

Staff News

- All the best to **Taryn**, SVRC Braille Department, who is taking a couple of weeks leave to move into her new house with her fiancé Ritchie.
- **Maria**, SVRC Braille Department, will be taking 2 weeks leave for a little rest and relaxation before the start of a busy term 4.

Finally

And finally thanks to everyone for their contributions to this Bulletin, especially Max Bini 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>