

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 16
Monday 17th October 2011

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

PD and Other Activities for Term 4, 2011

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> and the program for 2012 will be available soon!

SVRC Masterclass Series: Teaching Reading with Cay Holbrook

Teachers of students with vision impairments often express concern about their confidence in teaching reading, especially as this relates to working with young children who are learning to read through braille, children with low vision who are learning to read through print, or children learning to read through both braille and print. This workshop will focus on the theory, principles and strategies for teaching reading and will provide information on how “blindness related skills” (eg hand movements, concept development, introduction of braille contractions) can be infused in reading instruction.

About the Presenter:

Cay Holbrook is currently an assistant professor at The University of British Columbia in Vancouver, BC, Canada. She has also held faculty positions at Johns Hopkins University and The University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She has taught children with vision impairment in South Carolina, Georgia and Florida in the United States. Cay’s research agenda has focused on literacy for students with vision impairment. She has authored, edited, or co-edited eight textbooks that are used in university programs preparing teachers.

To be held at the SVRC on Monday 31st October and the morning of Wednesday 2nd November. Please refer to the flyer at the end of this bulletin for further information.

Inside This Issue

1	Professional Development 2011, Masterclass Series: Teaching Reading with Cay Holbrook
2	A Comparison of Free and Low Cost Screen Magnifiers, Macular Degeneration: Latest Research, Weally Wonderful Websites
3	Increasing Student Access to E-books, Student Writing: Science Day
4	Battery Boost, PD for teachers of VI students in special schools - up for discussion? Spectronics Workshops: Melbourne
5-6	Magnification Apps, Calculator with JAWS on the Computer, VI Family Network
7	Young Blind Citizen’s Beach & BBQ Day, Special Education Scholarships - 2012 Intake, SPEVI Christmas Competition 2011, Print Disability Scholarships & Seniors Grant
8	Leaders for Tomorrow, Musical Instruments Wanted at the SVRC, Dot Power Songs
9	Blind Cricket Day
10-11	In the News: Blind Cricket Day. Masterclass Series Flyer

A Comparison of Free and Low Cost Screen Magnifiers

Adapted from: http://mediaaccess.org.au/latest_news/general/a-comparison-of-free-and-low-cost-screen-magnifiers

Media Access Australia's web accessibility team has reviewed several free and low cost screen magnifiers and their common features. Reviews for screen magnifiers available for different operating systems and include:

- Desktop Zoom for Windows 2000, XP, Vista
- The Magnifier for Windows 2000, XP, Vista
- Windows 7 Magnifier for Windows 7
- Zoom for Mac OS X, Mac OS8 and 9

They write: "If you use several computers and need a portable magnifier that doesn't require installation then Desktop Zoom is a great option. Alternatively, The Magnifier offers the highest magnification scale of any screen magnifier that was tested (up to 40x) and can be used with dual screens. If your computer operates on Windows 7, Windows 7 Magnifier would be the best option for you since it comes automatically with the operating system and offers most of the core features that are included in commercial products. For Mac users, Zoom is a full-screen magnifier that comes with the OS X operating system and can be easily operated using keyboard shortcuts."

Visit: <http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/digital-technology/assistive-tech/screen-magnifiers>

Macular Degeneration: Latest Research

Adapted from: CERA e-News, 9 September 2011

CERA researchers have discovered the potential of urine as a source of biomarkers for age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The discovery could pave the way for the first urine test to detect AMD, long before the disease can be identified through an eye test or a patient experiences irreversible vision loss. Two urinary proteins were found to be associated with AMD. Recently, researchers have begun to view AMD as a chronic low grade inflammatory disease, leading scientists to look to the blood and urine for biomarkers to predict the disease.

"The early detection of AMD can help patients seek treatment to prevent the irreversible vision loss that is associated with the late stages of the disease."

To read the article, visit: <http://www.cera.org.au/news/18/88/2011-08-31/urine-reveals-blindness-risk/?page=1>

Weally Wonderful Websites

Gerry Kennedy's article Weally Wonderful Websites has grown to 58 pages in length and is a great resource for busy educators and parents wanting a list of good websites for children.

Copies are available online at the following websites along with other articles by Gerry:

<http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/blog/web-links/weally-wonderful-websites/>

and

<http://ndco.cds.org.au/index.php/at/60-gerry-kennedy-at-articles>.

Increasing Students' Access to E-books

From Denise Probert – Visiting Teacher, Northern Metropolitan Region

DAISY players

The latest DAISY (Digital CD) players have USB connectivity. Students who are members of the Vision Australia library can have the latest version of DAISY players on permanent loan. The players have a slot for SD cards and an internal memory of 2 Gig as well. It is possible to copy material either from these sources or a CD onto the hard drive or SD card to save carrying many CDs about. A wonderful curriculum advantage of these DAISY players is that most MS Word file formats, (eg teachers' work or texts from the SVRC), and HTML (hyperlinks) can be read out loud with the built in text reader – an Australian electronic voice with a choice of tones, speeds etc. This is a great boon especially for students who don't have a computer screen reader yet.

E-texts from your local library

Since launching in the Northern Region Yarra Plenty Ranges (YPRL) library system late last year, there are now banks of audio Bolinda books and electronic texts available for three weeks borrowing from many metropolitan Melbourne libraries, including the Whitehorse Manningham group.

The above libraries have regular e-text training sessions for interested patrons. I would suggest asking for a private session for vision impaired students as I have done with a senior student and her aide. Each library system operates a little differently but you need Windows Media Player to be installed on your laptop to access the Bolinda company's audio titles that have been purchased by your library. However for the electronic texts, initially you may need to download the library specific software before you can activate the e-text loan process. From then on, borrowing by downloading onto your computer can be effected from anywhere you have internet access to your library's catalogue. Hundreds of e-texts are available – ranging from fiction to self-help and reference. You can usually extend your loan for another three weeks after which time the file item will become inaccessible on your computer.

Specialised Library Computers

Every library in the YPRL system also has a dedicated computer for people with disabilities. These computers have high contrast large print keys and a large mouse pointer. If these computers are not immediately obvious in a given library branch – ask the librarians as the computer may be kept in a separate room.

Student Writing: Science Day

This is a nice thank you to a teacher from one of Denise's students:

On Friday the 19th of August, William Ruthven Primary School had a science day.

The day started with silent reading for fifteen minutes.

Then we got into our groups outside. My group was group 1. My group started off with Bubbleology where we made bubbles. I put 3 bubbles on top of 1 bubble. We had so much fun. And we also did paper planes, rockets, slime, egg drop and a lot more. I loved how we got to do all kinds of science activities. I want to thank all the teachers for organizing this. We all want to do this again but this time making sure that all groups get to do every activity. We haven't done sherbert, kitchen chemistry and straw towers. I also liked when I was interviewed by Mr Saunders. Everyone had a great day.

By Malek

Battery Boost

This information comes from Support Skills student Jacob. Jacob has found an iPhone app called “Battery Boost” which gives tips for saving your phone battery.

Jacob suggests adjusting the following settings:

- Turn on aeroplane mode – this turns off wireless and internet while on a plane but can be used while not on a plane for the same reasons!
- Turn off Bluetooth
- Turn down the brightness of the screen if you don’t need it bright for your vision
- Update to the new iPhone software as it may have new battery saving options

PD for teachers of VI students in special schools – up for discussion?

By Marion Blazé

The year SVRC did not run a PD day for “Educational support of students with vision impairments and additional impairments” because there were insufficient registrations to make it a viable day. The reasons for this are unknown, but we could guess that it was placed too soon in Term 2, that it was not well enough advertised or disseminated to teachers, that most of the teachers who wanted such a PD attended last year, or maybe even that the title of the program did not inspire people to attend. Last year’s PD day certainly received very positive feedback so hopefully the quality of past PD provided did not deter people.

It has also come to my notice that this year we have had an increasing number of queries at SVRC from special school teachers and parents of special school children for intervention or advice from us – so the need is there. This might need to be a point of discussion at our next PD day, but that’s not until next year, so I hope we can start discussing it electronically now. We have set a date for another PD day at Statewide, with the same title as the 2010 one (as above). BUT – Should VTs be running smaller targeted days in their regions, with some SVRC support? Could these be run at one special school with teachers from other schools attending?

Please email me your thoughts: marionblaze@svrc.vic.edu.au

Spectronics Workshops, Melbourne

What: Technologies Supporting Literacy Difficulties, Special Education and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Presenters: Jane Farrall (Speech Pathologist / AAC Support Services Manager, Spectronics)
Greg O’Connor (Teacher / Education Services Manager, Spectronics)

Where: Cliftons Level 1, 440 Collins Street, MELBOURNE

When: Thursday 3rd November 2011 and Friday 4th November 2011

Workshops have been expanded to include discussion of Apps for iPhones and iPads!

Because we are so often asked about Apps for special Education, for AAC and for literacy support at both primary school and secondary school level, our presenters will now be including information about some Apps throughout each of their workshops. While this will not be the main focus of the sessions, we appreciate that discussing some App options will allow you to compare them with the other technology options presented in each session.

For more information: http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/travel_diary

Magnification Apps for iPhones, iPads and iTouch

From a Spectronics blog by Anita Raftery. <http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/blog/author/jane/>

I've trialed all the magnification apps listed in the apps magnification chart, (on the Spectronics website) some are user friendly and have good quality screen magnification combined with the capacity to quickly refocus and zoom. Others are less functional. I've also listed some apps that teachers may find useful when conducting disability awareness or simulation sessions.

I've not found any apps with **all** the features many users who have low vision will need. For example: contrast adjustment, foreground and background colour adjustment and white on black/black on white options are features that I haven't been able to find in any magnification apps.

Challenges for users requiring magnification and considering utilising an "i" device may include:

- Holding the device steady, finding or creating a suitable stand for stability
- Issues with using a camera for magnification that isn't centrally located in the device – something to be aware of now with the iPhone or iPod Touch, but being a small device it's fairly easy to adjust to having an off centre camera.

I considered adding a rating for each of the apps, but after some discussion with colleagues, decided against the idea. It's better for each individual (teacher or user) to focus on creating a list of features that they require a magnification app to have that will meet their visual needs, then search for an app that best meets that criterion.

My personal criteria are:

- inbuilt illumination option
- easy zoom functionality, either pinch or slider
- full screen magnification
- quick auto focus when moving across text

My preferred magnification apps that most closely meet my criteria are:

Easy Reader with LED \$1.19 (also compatible with iPad2)

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/easy-reader-with-led-torch/id383057234?mt=8> 

Magnifying Glass with light \$1.19 (or free with advertising)

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/magnifying-glass-with-light/id406048120?mt=8> 

Magnifier \$1.19

<http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/magnifier-tiau/id410315449?mt=8#> 

iCanSee FREE

<http://itunes.apple.com/app/icansees/id332451821?mt=8> 

ZoomReader App

The ZoomReader app from Ai Squared was showcased at ATIA conference earlier this year, unfortunately it still isn't available to purchase through iTunes, I'm looking forward to trialling the app once it is released. Here's some information about the app from AI Squared.

"ZoomReader will be a combination video magnifier and OCR app. It uses the built-in camera on an iPhone or iPod Touch to zoom in on printed materials, apply color filters, and to take a picture of something and have the text in that image read out loud... At \$19.99, it's a very competitive and affordable price point for a mobile application that does real time screen magnification, OCR reading of images, plus voice recognition."

http://www.aisquared.com/news/more/zoomreader_app_for_the_iphone_and_ipod_touch

You Tube video of ZoomReader in action.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GcOXfNnovY>

Apps for Distance Magnification

I'm now working on trialing and evaluating apps that may be useful for enhancing distance vision; many individuals who have low vision rely on using a monocular telescope (sometimes not very "cool" looking) to give them visual access to things in the distance such as signs. There are some camera apps that may assist, here are two:

10 X camera tools \$1.19

Useful features include;

- Add text notes to photos
- Snap multiple photos with continuous tapping
- Date/time, file size, resolution
- GPS Tag location
- Black & White option live zoom magnification on screen using slider.

<http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/10x-camera-tools/id347016223?mt=8>



Camera Zoom \$1.19

Features include:

- 5 X live magnification on screen with digital zoom slider on screen
- anti-hand shake.

<http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/camera-zoom/id349879562?mt=8>



The Apps Chart mentioned in the blog is available on the Spectronics website at:

<http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/article/iphone-ipad-apps-for-magnification-and-vision-support>

Windows Calculator with JAWS on the Computer

Helen has produced a reference sheet for using shortcut keys with the calculator and JAWS, she writes: When trying to work out how to use the Windows calculator with JAWS I found the shortcuts work well rather than trying to get JAWS to TAB around.

Here is a selection of the shortcut keys – ring SVRC if you would like the two-page document.

Press this key	To do this
Atl+1	Switch to Standard view
Alt+2	Switch to Scientific view
Alt+3	Switch to Programmer view
Alt+4	Switch to Statistics view
Ctrl+E	Open date calculations
Ctrl+H	Turn calculation history on or off
Ctrl+Q	Press the M- button
Ctrl+P	Press the M+ button
F1	Open Windows Help and Calculator Help

VI Family Network

The VI Family Network provides information for parents and children with vision impairments. Find out more at <http://www.vifamilynetwork.org.au>

Young Blind Citizens' Beach and BBQ Day

When: Sunday 20 November 2011

Where: Chelsea Beach, 8-12 Camp Street Chelsea

Meet at: the park area near the main entrance to the beach

Time: 11.30am to 4.00pm

Cost: (includes BBQ lunch) \$10

Transport assistance can be arranged – phone Brooke on 0466 309367

Further information: Kim on 0412 457943

S389-2011 Special Education Scholarships – 2012 Intake

The Special Education Scholarship supports current teachers (DEECD) seeking to become special education teachers. The scholarship provides funding to undertake endorsed special education qualifications. Applications for the 2012 intake close 25 October 2011.

Please refer to Schools Bulletin, week ending 14 October or go to HRWeb Scholarships:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/careers/teach/scholarships.htm>

The SPEVI Christmas Competition 2011

One lucky member of SPEVI has a chance to win a publication that is highly recommended and relevant to members of SPEVI: “Experiencing literacy: A parents’ guide for fostering early literacy development of children with visual impairments” (2005), written by Cay Holbrook and Alan Koenig.

To enter the competition for a chance to win this publication – and ensure yourself of a great read over the summer holidays – send an email to webmaster@spevi.net before 15 December 2011 and share an innovative teaching idea for students with vision impairment. The idea could be big or small, tested or a concept, and will be assessed for the purpose of the competition only. Just be creative.

Please use the word ‘Competition’ in the subject line.

Competition only open to members of SPEVI, winner to be contacted via email. Ideas will not be published without prior consent of the sender.

Print Disability Scholarship and Seniors Grant – 2011

Closing date: 25 November 2011

Primary, secondary and tertiary students with a print disability are welcome to apply for the any prize in the Scholarship award collection, which includes the Pearl camera with Open Book Scanning software, Plectalk Pockets, and iZoom Screen Magnification and Speech software.

All applicants for the Seniors Grant will go in to the draw to win a ClearView+ Spectrum (full colour) CCTV with a 22” Flat Screen Monitor or ClearReader+ Book Reader!

Prizes will be drawn mid-December 2011 and all applicants will receive a voucher for 5% off your next purchase from Quantum.

For further information visit:

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

Leaders for Tomorrow Program

Applications are now open for the (Australian) Leaders for Tomorrow Program.

Over a period of 12 months participants will have access to coaching, mentoring and other leadership development opportunities, based on their individual interests and needs. The Leaders for Tomorrow program will be tailored according to each participant's leadership aspirations and goals. The program aims to support people with disability to become more skilled, confident and active in whatever leadership role they pursue.

To download an application pack visit <http://www.leadersfortomorrow.com.au>

For further information call 1800 887 624 (NSW, ACT, Vic and Tas) Or 1800 648 021 (WA, SA, NT and Qld).

The program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Musical Instruments Wanted at the SVRC

Do you have a musical instrument gathering dust in a cupboard or under a bed at your house. The SVRC is on the lookout for a number of instruments to add to the music program including (but not limited to):

- guitar
- violin
- tuned instruments (eg zylophone)

Thanks in advance!

For more information: http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/travel_diary

Dot Power Songs

At Dot Power – the SVRC program for braille students who attend pre-school to year 3 – we sing songs as a focus for learning specific braille contractions.

You can download the following songs, as mp3 files, sung by the students themselves:

- What would you like to do? - LIKE (dots 1,2,3)
- I am a music man - CAN (dots 1,4)
- What is it? - IT (dots 1,3,4,6)
- Are you sleeping? - YOU (dots 1,3,4,5,6)
- Muffin man - THE (dots 2,3,4,6)
- Wheels on the bus - GO (dots 1,2,4,5)
- How do you do? - DO (dots 1,4,5)
- Pirate man - WILL (dots 2,4,5,6)
- The postman - AND (dots 1,2,3,4,6)
- Pizza - LITTLE (dots 1,2,3 dots 1,2,3), OF (dots 1,2,3,5,6)
- Echolocation - the skill of using sound to give information about the environment

Visit: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/EPdotpowersongs.shtml>

Blind Cricket Day

Report by Garry Stinchcombe

On the last Friday of Term 3, 18 students along with their parents, Visiting Teachers and O&M staff from both Vision Australia and Guide Dogs Victoria assembled for a great day of fun and tuition provided by the Victorian Blind Cricket Association. Rod Pritchard and the VBCA Board had gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure that every student who was blind or vision impaired in Victoria knew about the day.

24 students registered for the day including 3 girls and one young student from Tasmania who with his Dad Andrew flew across specially to be involved in the day. Students had travelled from Wodonga, Bendigo, all points of inner and outer Melbourne. Students from all school sectors were represented.

Peter Robinson and Lindsay Heaven conducted the sessions. The initial session focused on fielding and throwing skills. After morning tea the group practiced their batting. After a lovely sausage sizzle lunch the group finished up with a match with all the students having an opportunity to bat, bowl and field.

Peter and Lindsay were very excited by the skills and enthusiasm of the players. The VBCA is trying to establish a regular junior clinic where younger players can come down and learn about the game while still having lots of fun. Rod Pritchard distributed a calendar to those families who attended with the dates and times for the Saturday clinics.

At the end of the day Rod thanked everyone for coming down and helping out. He asked the students to thank their parents and teachers for bringing them so ensuring a great day was had by all.

As it is the beginning of the cricket season several local papers came down along with several of the Sport and Recreation groups. Hopefully blind cricket will receive some publicity from this day and encourage other young students to come along and “give it a go”.

Anyone interested in having a look at how blind cricket is played are always welcome to come down any Saturday afternoon from October through to March and have a look. The grounds are located at the rear of Vision Australia at Kooyong, opposite the Kooyong Tennis Association.

2012 will be a very big year for blind cricket. This Christmas the National Championships are being held in Brisbane. This will be followed by the National Team visiting England in May and finishing up with the World Cup of Blind Cricket in India in December.

And here is what participant Misjah wrote about the day:

I got really excited about the cricket day and all my friends were there. Zac, Lizzie, Elliot and Nathan came with around 10 more people.

We learned how to play Blind Cricket, similar to sighted cricket but you use a bell ball. We practiced hitting the ball, when to run, how to throw the ball (not too high) and where to stand. After practicing we had some recess. I had pop-corn and a drink that I shared with Zac. After recess we played a full game of cricket. The day ended up to be a fantastic day because I now can hit the ball really high.

In the News: Blind Cricket Day

And here are some newspaper articles from Rod Pritchard about the Blind Cricket Day:

- No Boundaries - Melbourne Leader, September 26, 2011
<http://www.vbca.org.au/media/MEV26SEP11028ME1MAIN-----.pdf>
- Victoria's Young Blind Cricketers Are Ready To Play, October 9, 2011
<http://www.melbourneweekly.com.au/news/local/sport/cricket/victorias-young-blind-cricketers-are-ready-to-play/2317743.aspx>



Pictured above: Geordie, Bendan, Zac and Kiel at the cricket clinic.
Source: Melbourne Weekly, October 9, 2011.

Finally

And finally thanks to everyone for their contributions to this Bulletin, especially Max Bini, Odette Budge, Helen Caldow, Deb Lewis, Heidi Littleford, Denise Probert, Rod Pritchard, Garry Stinchcombe 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>

Statewide Vision Resource Centre
MASTERCLASS SERIES

Teaching Reading to Students with Vision Impairments

Professor Cay Holbrook
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C. Canada

Monday 31 October (full day) and
Wednesday 2 November 2011 (morning only)

Teachers of students with vision impairments often express concern about their confidence in teaching reading, especially as this relates to working with young children who are learning to read through braille, children with low vision who are learning to read through print, or children learning to read through both braille and print. This workshop will focus on the theory, principles and strategies for teaching reading and will provide information on how "blindness related skills" (e.g., hand movements, concept development, introduction of braille contractions) can be infused in reading instruction.

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Audience

The intended participants are Victorian Visiting Teachers (Vision impairment).

Cost

The cost for this Masterclass is \$22.

Registration

Registration is essential. A light lunch will be provided on Monday 31 October. Please let us know of any special dietary requirements.

Phone 9841 0242, fax 9841 0878 or email svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au.

Student Wellbeing Professional Learning 2011



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development