

The Bulletin

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 19

Monday 28th November 2011

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

Professional Development Activities for Term 1, 2012

Skill Power Workshops 1. BrailleNote for absolute beginners Lea Nagel, SVRC – 9.30-11.00 2. JAWS for absolute beginners Garry Stinchcombe, SVRC – 11.30-1.00 3. PD By Request – 1.30-3.30	Thursday 2 February
Skill Power Workshops 1. ZoomText for beginners Trevor Boyd, Quantum – 9.30-11.00 2. MAGic for beginners Trevor Boyd, Quantum – 11.30-1.00 3. Duxbury and Picture Braille Lea Nagel and Maria Elford, SVRC – 1.30-3.30	Friday 3 February
Educational Support for Blind Students This day is designed for class and subject teachers, integration teachers and aides, therapists, parents/care-givers and visiting teachers who support students who utilise braille	Monday 13 February
New Visiting Teacher – Orientation Day – 9.30am to 3.00pm	Monday 27 February
Educational Support for Students with Low Vision – repeated on 5 March This day is designed for class and subject teachers, integration teachers and aides, therapists, parents/care-givers and VTs who support students who have low vision (max participants: 60)	Tuesday 28 February
Educational Support for Students with Low Vision – repeated from 28 Feb This day is designed for class and subject teachers, integration teachers and aides, therapists, parents/care-givers and VTs who support students who have low vision (max participants: 60)	Monday 5 March
Visiting Teacher Professional Learning Day – Term 1	Tuesday 13 March
Dot Power Day of literacy-based activities for braille readers from pre-school to grade 3	Tuesday 20 March

The program for 2012 is available at: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/Acalendar2012.doc>

Inside This Issue

1	Professional Development 2012,
2-3	Cay Holbrook Masterclass: Feedback from participants
4	Every Australian Counts Campaign, Daisy to go,
5-6	Cinema Access, Scientific Talking Calculators, Interesting Websites
7	iSeek Beach Day
8	Lizzie's Reflections on the Support Skills Program
9	Braille Music, Braille Evening Classes, Student Poetry: My Bird,
10	VCE Students 2012, Staff News
11-12	Fliers: Braille Evening Classes, VCE Students 2012

Cay Holbrook Masterclass: Feedback from Participants

Monday 31 October (full day): 50 participants

Wednesday 2 November (half day): 39 participants



The Statewide Vision Resource Centre, with funding provided by the Student Wellbeing Professional Learning program, recently held its inaugural Masterclass with international speaker, Professor Cay Holbrook, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

Feedback was received from 18 participants and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Most responses indicated that participants had enjoyed and valued the Masterclass and the presence of an international specialist in the field of literacy and vision impairment very much. Comments such as “this presentation was one of the best I have attended”, “it is great to reignite the fire” and the speaker was “a highly engaging and interesting presenter” were common.

Participants appreciated presentation of international evidence-based research and indicated that this would assist in their decision-making regarding the teaching of uncontracted or contracted braille with beginning braille readers, acknowledging however that each learner is unique. One participant made the comment that as most of the research pertained to Canada and USA, it “wasn’t so helpful.”

A number of participants commented that Holbrook’s research findings indicated that students require “direct consistent on-going instruction by a qualified teacher of the vision impaired” and that “the main barrier to student success is caseloads and time allocations” were of great interest. Some participants wondered how best to support Visiting Teachers with high case loads, particularly those in the rural regions.

A number of participants commented that as most Visiting Teachers work somewhat in isolation, the opportunity to observe others at work, via the SLATE videos, and to use these as a basis to reflect on personal practice was very valuable.

To provide a balanced overview, a few participants were disappointed that the focus was on the braille reader and not the student with low vision, and a few commented that some more “hands on activities about actual strategies” would have been helpful.



One participant reported that she was able to relate the findings from the ABC Study into braille acquisition in young readers and the research into early life experiences as being essential to the development of literacy to members of a PSG she attended soon after the Masterclass.

Suggested ideas for future professional development

The following ideas were suggested by participants and this information will be used to inform planning.

- **Assessment:** learning media assessment, reading assessment used in schools eg Running Records, reading comprehension, reading speed, finger/hand movements
- **Review and discussion:** of Project SLATE (Supporting Literacy Achievement and Teacher Effectiveness for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired)
- **Teaching:** if, as research has shown, braille readers are significantly slower than their sighted peers, how are we to optimise the skills of braille readers

Suggestions for development of resources

- Literacy assessment tools – skill, speed, comprehension
- Strategies to increase braille reading speed and fluency and comprehension
- Resource to assist the teaching of slate and stylus (braille handframe)

In conclusion

I believe that our first Masterclass has overall been a resounding success and I look forward to offering Visiting Teachers access to excellent speakers who can challenge us to explore our views and opinions, and encourage us to consider and discuss the issues facing us as professionals working in this low incidence disability area.

As one participant commented, “our work is highly specialised and we need access to the best speakers and information so that we can apply our professional learning to continually improve student learning outcomes.”



Every Australian Counts Campaign

Extract From Vision Australia website 15 November 2011

What is the Every Australian Counts campaign?

Every Australian Counts is the campaign for the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. The NDIS will be a new support system for people with a disability, their families and carers. It will transform the way services are funded and delivered, enabling people who qualify to have greater choice and control over their future.

The Productivity Commission has released its report to the Government on the findings of its inquiry into a long-term disability care and support scheme. The commission found that the present system is underfunded, unfair, fragmented, and inefficient, and gives people with a disability little choice and no certainty of access to appropriate supports.

What you can do

The Every Australian Counts campaign wants 100,000 individuals and organisations to:

Sign up - individuals and organisations can sign up at <http://everyaustraliancounts.com.au/>

Spread the word and join the conversation - http://everyaustraliancounts.com.au/latest_news/

Source: <http://www.visionaustralia.org.au/info.aspx?page=823&news=2387>

DAISY to go

There are a number of downloadable versions of DAISY software on the internet for use with PC, MAC, iPhones and iPads giving you more choices for how and where you listen to audio books. Here are a few.

PC

AMIS - Multimedia Information System. AMIS is a free program you can use to read DAISY books on your computer. It has its own voice so you don't need expensive screen reading software on your computer to use it. AMIS is available from: <http://www.daisy.org/projects/amis>

Mac

- Olearia – full-featured Daisy Talking Book Player For OS X
<http://code.google.com/p/olearia/downloads/list>
- DaisyWorm – developed by the Association for the Blind of Western Australia. DaisyWorm can be used to play books from their library as well as other talking book libraries world wide which use the non-encrypted DIASY format. For more information about DaisyWorm go to: <http://www.guidedogswa.org/daisyworm/>
- Read2Go is an accessible e-book reader for Apple devices such as the iPad, iPhone, and iPod touch. It connects directly to Bookshare for on-the-go reading. It costs \$19.95 from iTunes. <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/read2go/id425585903>

For an extensive list of Daisy software options go to: <http://www.daisy.org/tools/splayback>

Cinema Access

From the SPEVI List

Information about local cinemas with audio description or captioning in all Australian states and territories can be found at <http://www.yourlocalcinema.com.au/find-out-session-times>

Audio description is a commentary for blind and vision-impaired patrons about what is happening in between the dialogue. An audio describer provides the commentary. This is transmitted to wireless receivers and headsets worn by the audience members.

The Cinema Access Implementation Plan and the establishment of the Accessible Cinema Advisory Group aims to assist Australia's major cinema chains in converting to a digital based technology to significantly reduce barriers to people with disability.

By the end of 2014 captions and audio description will be available in at least one screen in every one of the 132 cinema complex run by Hoyts, Village Cinemas, Event Cinemas, and Reading Cinemas.

Scientific Talking Calculators

Information provided by Steve Monigatti

I've tried the Speq maths with JAWS and it works well – however when the answer is calculated it does not read it – but by simply pressing the up arrow the answer is read.

For a stand alone talking scientific calculator there is the Platon talking scientific Calculator \$550.00. Quantum Technology stock the item.

<http://www.quantumrlv.com.au/Platon-Scientific-Calculator>

Interesting Websites

Braille Bookstore

The Braille Bookstore has thousands of braille books as well as braille games and activities for all ages and interests. There are books by such highly acclaimed authors as **Dr. Seuss**, **Margaret Wise Brown** and **Eric Carle**. You'll even discover such rich treasures as Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes, and over a hundred classic fairy tales.

<http://www.braillebookstore.com/view.php?C=Braille+Bookstore>

Vision Aware: The Self-help Resource Centre for Vision Loss

This website has resources for everyday living such as labelling and marking for people who are blind or have low vision. It also has ideas for organisation and home modification.

Some tips from the website:

If you have low vision, try using any of the following household or office supply materials:

- White or fluorescent unruled 3" x 5" index cards
- Jumbo colored paper clips
- Colored adhesive labels
- Colored Dymo labelling tape
- Colored electrical or plastic tape
- 20/20 pens

- Wide-tip markers
- Flair felt-tip pens
- Laundry markers
- Polymark fabric/craft paint

If you are blind or if your vision changes from day to day, try using any of the following household or office supply materials to create raised or tactile markings:

- Safety pins
- Rubber bands
- Pipe cleaners
- Velcro
- Self-stick magnetic tape
- Velour pads/furniture protectors
- Iron-on patches
- Foam alphabet letters
- Polymark fabric/craft paint



Commercially available labelling products

- Aluminium Braille Clothing Identifiers: Durable and washable white plastic tags with braille and corresponding black print. They can be sewn or pinned on to the garment.
- Braille Labeller: Embosses braille on 3/8" or 1/2" labelling tape. The upper rim of the dial is brailled; lower rim has standard print alphabet.
- Bump Dots: Black, orange, and clear raised plastic dots with adhesive backing to mark appliances, computers and keyboards.
- Color Mates Clothing Identifiers: Package of 160 tags, 16 colors in different shapes to identify, mix, and match wardrobe items.
- Talking Color Identifier with Light Probe: This small device detects about 100 colors.
- Hi-Mark Tactile Pen: A three-dimensional plastic liquid that makes raised lines, dots and shapes to identify clothing, canned goods, frozen foods, and mark the settings on appliances.
- Identi-Buttons Clothing Identifiers: Package of eight buttons, one button per color, all different shapes.
- Loc-Dots: Clear raised dots to mark appliances, computers, and keyboards.
- Match Makers Clothing Identifiers: Plastic covers with large tactile dots are bonded to nickel-plated brass safety pins. 200 pins per package.
- Maxi-Marks: Black plastic dots and slashes with adhesive backing to identify appliances, computers, and keyboards.
- Spot 'n Line Pen: A three-dimensional plastic liquid that makes raised lines, dots and shapes to identify clothing, canned goods, frozen foods, and mark the settings on appliances.
- Touch Dots: Black, white, red, yellow, and orange raised foam dots with adhesive backing to mark appliances, computers and keyboards.
- Touch-To-See Labels: Braille and tactile adhesive labels to identify medication and food. Each reusable label contains a raised letter or number with corresponding braille.
- VOXCOM III Voice Labelling System: Record audio talk labels and messages by depressing a button and inserting a card into the unit. The card attaches to canned goods, medication, clothing, food, and household items. You can find the VOXCOM III at [Maxi-Aids](#)
- PenFriend: A voice labelling system that allows users to record, and re-record, information on to self-adhesive labels.

Vision Aware website: http://www.visionaware.org/labelling_marking

iSeek Beach Day

Jane Jensen – Stream Leader,
Vision. WMR

Wednesday 23rd, iseek beach day
was held at Altona beach.

15 students from Prep to Grade 5,
from the Western Region,
assembled at Sadie McCarthy
Learning Centre at Altona.

Our aim today was to navigate train
travel to the beach. With the support
of Guide Dogs Victoria, Orientation
and Mobility specialists, we set off on a short walk to
Westona station.

Tactile and enlarged maps were used to locate our position
and follow our map down Pier St, over two roundabouts to
the park. Six of the students are becoming expert white
cane users as they navigate crossings and footpaths using
skills such as echolocation and tactile ground markers.
Using the ticket machine was a new experience for most of
the children. As we bustled our way down Pier St, we felt
hungry as we smelt morning tea and lunch being prepared
in the cafes and restaurants.

After a snack and play in the park, it was time to hit the
beach. Socks and shoes were abandoned as students ran
along the beach, feeling the wind and sun in their hair. A
paddle in the shallows and shell collecting followed.

One blind student, Tuong, had
never been to the beach before, and
was worried a shark might come
and nibble his toes.

After lunch and a treasure hunt in
the sand, it was time to journey
back to the centre.

Before the train arrived at Altona,
we got to see and feel, the special
markings at the train station for
low vision and blind users as well
as listen to the sounds of crossing
bells as the train approached.

Back at the centre, Santa had even left some surprises in a big red sack. What a great day!



Lizzie's Reflections on the Support Skills Program

This article is by Lizzie, a year 10 Support Skills student, who just completed her final support skills. Lizzie writes:

The first ever support skills program that I attended was in term one of 2005 at RVIB Burwood. I was in grade five at St. Scholastic's Primary School just across the road from RVIB. I am now in year 10 at Avila College in Mount Waverley.

Highlights of the Program:

There have been a lot of highlights throughout the years. Some of my favourite things include

- Catching up with old friends and teachers
- Keeping my technology up to date
- Playing swish and other sports that are designed for people with low vision
- Doing O&M with Gail and other Orientation & Mobility Instructors
- Occupational Therapy sessions
- Physio and sport
- Art with Michael
- Seeing technologies that other students are using
- Helping other people with their needs

Strengths of the Program:

- Making new friends
- Learning new skills
- Seeing the new technologies
- Learning life skills specifically for students who have low vision
- Happy and positive environment

Benefits for Students who are Vision Impaired:

- Learning helpful skills that you don't learn in a mainstream school
- All students are sharing the same experiences
- People have similar needs such as technology and transportation
- Talk to other people who are the same as you to learn about how they have solved problems to do with being vision impaired

Suggestions for Future Programs

- Program needs to be continued because it helps you learn new skills and how to cope with your vision impairment
- More special activity days and excursions
- Some resources to read before or after support skills sessions

Thank you Lizzie for your contribution to the program over the years and best of luck for your VCE from everyone at the Support Skills Program.

Braille Music

If you are interested in some free Braille music you might want to check out this web page by Christina Davidson. Christina writes:

I am a certified Braille Music Transcriber. The following pages are resources for fellow transcribers, educators, and all those who read braille music or who would like to learn braille music! Please feel free to download, copy or distribute anything you find on this site.

Of particular interest is the book called "Happy Fingers". The extract on the web page reads – "The HAPPY FINGERS books are designed to challenge and encourage braille readers of all ages so that ears, voices, and fingers can work together in the enjoyment of music. Songs are presented in order of difficulty, beginning with the easiest.

The HAPPY FINGERS books are gratefully dedicated to **Louis Braille** and **Bettye Krolick**. In the nineteenth century, **Louis Braille** invented the braille music system so that visually impaired musicians could read, learn, and write music independently.

In the twentieth century, **Bettye Krolick** stabilised and publicised braille music so that braille readers could continue to benefit. Throughout her many years of transcribing and teaching, Bettye insisted that braille music is not hard to learn. She knew that musical fulfilment must be more than mere imitation or rote learning. Bettye helped us understand that braille music skills enable visually impaired musicians to excel as creators and leaders.

Now in the twenty-first century, we are using the computer to share the joys and opportunities that Louis and Betty have given to us." Karen Gearreald & Christina Davidson

For more information visit the website at <http://www.ctdcreations.com/braille/braille-intro.html>

Braille Evening Classes 2012

Attached to this Bulletin is a flier for Braille Classes which will be offered next year. They are being provided mainly for parents but anyone else who would like to learn to be a visual braille reader and producer is more than welcome. If you have a bit of braille under your belt, you could even come along a few weeks into the sessions and learn about the rest of the code. Depending on interest, we may even launch into braille maths after learning literary braille. Who knows, we could even look at music!

The classes will be on Monday evenings at SVRC, and depending on what participants prefer, could start at either 5 or 7 pm for two hours per week of fun! At \$55 for ten lessons, it's a bargain! BYO Brailler, if possible and contact Marion Blazé for information or to express an interest.

Student Poetry: My Bird By Mohamed

The way my bird
screached made me laugh.
He yelled, HELLO.
The day he died
was the day I became
an unhappy boy.
The BrailleNote became
my friend.
But nothing
can replace
my bird.

VCE Students 2012

Now is the time to start preparing for applications for Special Provision for the Victorian Certificate of Education for 2012. Applications for Special Examination Arrangements are due 2nd March 2012. If you have not already done so and would like Deb or Lyn to attend a VCE support group meeting to discuss Special Provision for next year please give us a call on 03 9841 0242. This service is available to all students with vision impairments in government, independent and Catholic education schools. A flyer is attached at the end of this bulletin.

Christmas Tree

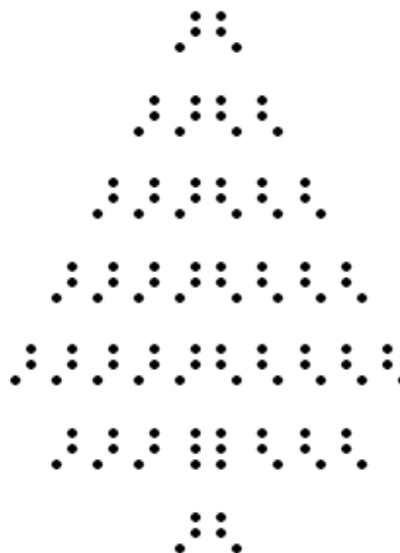
From Brailleables... So What About Drawing?

Instructions for Drawing using a Braille Writer By:
Marie Porter

CHRISTMAS TREE

Directions:

1. Space four, AR, GH.
2. Space three, AR twice, GH twice.
3. Space twice, AR 3 times, GH 3 times.
4. Space, AR 4 times, GH 4 times.
5. Write AR 5 times, GH 5 times.
6. Space, AR 3 times, dots 4-5-6, l, GH 3 times.
7. Space four, AR, GH.



This frilly Christmas tree is drawn using 7 lines down, 10 spaces across. It can be used to decorate a Christmas card or a place mat. The contraction AR and GH form the top of the tree and begin the flaring out of the branches to the left and right. The next 4 lines continue the basic triangular shape of the tree with the branching out of each line. Line 6 brings the branching in on each side and the dots 4-5-6 and the letter l suggest a trunk. Line 7 completes the tree and flares out the trunk a bit. This is an easy tree to draw and a pretty one to look at.

Source: It's Vision Time, Issue: 17; Term 4; 2010

Staff News

- Northern Metropolitan Region recently advertised several positions and the following VTs were successful: **Michael Donnelly** .4 ongoing, **Janene McKinlay** .6 six month contract, **Leigh Morrison** .4 ongoing and **Gayle Skinner** full time ongoing. Congratulations all!
- **Linda Andrea** from Dear Park North PS recently completed the SVRC Braille Course by Correspondence – well done!!!

Finally

And finally thanks to everyone for their contributions to this Bulletin, especially Deb Lewis, Myriam Ash, Kym Gribble, Jane Jensen, Deb Lewis, Leanne Nagel and Phill McKenna.

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>



VCE Students 2012

Dear Visiting Teachers-Vision Impairment,

Could you please fill in the following details if you have a student in VCE who will be applying for special provision in **2012**.

Assistance may take the following form:

- examinations in an alternative format
- additional time
- separate room with individual supervision
- technology e.g. computer

Many Thanks
 Deb Lewis and Lyn Robinson

Student Name:	Year Level:
School:	
School Address & Phone No.:	
VCE Co-ordinator:	
Visiting Teacher:	VT Phone No.
Units 3 or 4	Requirements (if known)

I would like to arrange for a member of staff from the Statewide Vision Resource Centre to attend a VCE Support Group Meeting at the school. Yes / No. Please ring Deb or Lyn on 03 98410242 to make a time when ready from now until applications close 2 March 2012.

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Braille classes for sighted adults



When: Monday evenings in Term 1, 2012
Starting on February 13, 2012
5-7pm or 7-9pm depending on needs of participants

Where: Statewide Vision Resource Centre
370 Springvale Road, Donvale
in the grounds of Heatherwood School
(please park in the **lower carpark** at the Sports Centre next door)

- Want to learn how to (visually) read and produce braille?
- Want to read with your blind child?
- Want to correspond with a braille reader?
- Want to learn a new and 'different' skill?

This braille course might be for you!

Please contact Marion to express your interest and say whether a 5pm or 7pm class would be best for you.

We will run one or the other depending on interest.

Cost: \$55 FOR TEN LESSONS (BYO Braille)
For further details: contact Marion Blazé (03) 9841 0242
or email marionblaze@svrc.vic.edu.au