The Bulletin
Statewide Vision Resource Centre

| Number 2 | Monday 18th February 2013 |

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

Professional Development Activities for 2013

New Visiting Teacher Orientation Day 9.30am to 3.00pm	Monday 25 February
Educational Support for Students with Low Vision – Offered twice 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 26 February & Monday 4 March
Visiting Teacher Professional Learning Day – Term 1	Tuesday 12 March
Dot Power Literacy-based activities for braille readers from pre-school to grade 3	Tuesday 19 March

The **program for 2013** is available from this link: http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/PL.shtml

More Support for Students with Disabilities National Partnership

National Partnership funding has been used this year to roll out an iPad, external keyboard, cover/stand and $20 iTunes card for purchasing educational apps to 28 students around the state.

Shortly BrailleNotes, JAWS and ZoomText will also be available for students as we move towards successfully achieving the 1st March National Partnership benchmark. Teacher training has been conducted for BrailleNote, JAWS, ZoomText, Perkins, iPad accessibility etc. and development of online training videos is well underway.

We look forward to receiving feedback as to how these items are improving the student learning experience.

We take this opportunity to thank Visiting Teachers for their hard work in helping us determine the best technology options for students and for chasing paperwork from schools. We are more than pleased with the outcomes to date and look forward to continuing to work closely with members of the Working Party to deliver more technology to more students during 2013.

Inside This Issue

Insight Education Centre Opens its Doors

Source: http://www.insightvision.org.au/

Insight Education Centre for the Blind and Vision Impaired (Specialist Primary School), located in Berwick in Melbourne's south-east opened on 4th February 2013. In addition to the Primary School with an enrolment of approximately 17, Insight also offers a range of services including:

- Curriculum coaching for secondary students
- Hugh Williamson Foundation Life Management Program
- Insight Support Skills
- Early Learning Program for 0-6 year olds
- Life Transition Program
- Parent Support Program
- Professional development for teachers/aides

For further information please contact: info@insightvision.org.au

Bookshare Launches New eBook Tools for Kids with Print Disabilities

Source: http://www.thedigitalshift.com/2013/02/k-12/bookshare-launches-new-ebook-tools-for-kids-with-print-disabilities/

Bookshare has announced the launch of two new additions to its product line, the Bookshare Web Reader and Bookshelf. Bookshare Web Reader allows readers to directly open books with a browser without requiring them to download the book or utilize separate software, while Bookshelf allows readers (or their teachers) to organize selections by any system they choose.
For example, teachers can place books on a Bookshelf to be downloaded later by students, or give direct access to students with individual memberships so they can log in and read using the Web Reader. Selections can be organised by interest, author, or subject, or educators can devise their own systems.

The Bookshare Web Reader is compatible with Chrome, Firefox, Safari, and IE 9.0 and above. It allows readers to adjust font size, colors and display format, and takes advantage of Google Chrome's features to allow students to read books multi-modally, with word-by-word highlighting and text-to-speech.

Program for Students with Disabilities

Source: S020-2013 Program for Students with Disabilities – 2013 Annual Round Application and Funding Allocation Processes

Applications for students entering a government school for the first time in 2013, including Preps beginning in 2013, must be received by Thursday 28 February 2013. After this date, applications for 2013 funding will only be considered for:

- students transferring from other school systems that provided individual support for the student's additional learning needs (applications for this group of students must be submitted within ten weeks of their enrolment date)
- students with a seriously deteriorating medical or behavioural condition.

For further information please contact your principal or Visiting Teacher

Educational Support for Students who are Blind

Without the usual assistance of Marion Blazé who is off work during term 1, the team wrangled the 60+ participants on the "Educational Support for Students who are Blind" day this week.

Yes! 60+

The "Educational Support for Students who are Blind" day generally attracts around 35 participants from around the state and we were delighted to meet such a large group of staff who are supporting students who are blind.

Here is a smattering of comments, some emailed in by excited participants after the event:
- It was a fantastic day yesterday, and I really learnt a lot about how to approach (my student's) learning needs.
- Spot on … Well done.
- Fantastic day! Very informative.
- Thoroughly enjoyed the session as it's my first time working with a blind boy. Very interesting and informative. Well done!!
- Thank you so much. I go back to school with some great strategies and new opinions with how to allow independence to grow.

Thanks to the staff here for a great day – and in particular our "behind the scenes" staff who, again, cheerfully arranged registrations, moved furniture, organised coffee/tea/lunch and answered a multitude of questions from participants – well done and thanks.

Thanks to principals for releasing their staff to attend this program – and in many cases, several teachers and ES staff were able to attend from one school

And a special thanks to the Visiting Teachers for promoting the event so successfully!!!

Braille Music for School Music Teachers

Lea Nagel (left) is keen for more Victorian students to learn to read and write braille music.

Lea comments, "Braille music is not a difficult code and once the student's music teacher understands the basics of braille music, he or she can work together with the student in a more meaningful way. I am sometimes asked when the blind student should be introduced to braille music and my answer is: at the same time as their sighted peers. When the teacher is introducing print music notation to the class, the blind student can have the braille music notation under their fingers."

Lea has offered a number of 1:1 sessions with school or private music teachers where she explains the principles of braille music. This has worked very successfully meaning that these students can now be taught to read braille music and not simply "learn by ear".

Another support for students wishing to learn braille music is the annual Braille Music Camp in Mittagong. This camp will be held this year from Saturday afternoon/evening 22 June to breakfast Saturday 29 June (with the concert on Friday 28 at 7.30pm). The Registration Form is attached.

For braille music resources on the SVRC website: http://svrc.vic.edu.au/CUbrlmusic.shtml

Kick Start Program and Student Blog by Cassie

Source: http://blennzonline.edublogs.org/2012/01/21/kick-start/

The Kick Start Experience provides an opportunity in New Zealand for young adults who are blind or low vision to live in a supported flatting situation as they make the transition to tertiary, the workplace or independent living. The programme takes a holistic view focusing on living and working as a member of a team. The Senior Teacher, Teacher and two Adaptive Daily Living Instructors work closely with the students to support the development of individual goals and achievement. The programme includes development of:

- Independent living skills
- Careers options and pathways
- Social / personal skills

The programme aims to develop skills in the Expanded Core Curriculum areas of:

- social interaction
- daily living
- recreation / leisure
- independence
- management of finances
- organisation
- special interests
- orientation and mobility
- vocational
- tertiary training

Former Victorian VT student **Cassie** (photographed on the right with Lea Nagel on the left) is enrolled at the Kick Start Program in New Zealand and she plans to write a blog about her experiences during the year. Here is part of Cassie's blog:

> "Why am I writing this? A number of reasons. Firstly, I like to think that me attending Kickstart will benefit others as well as me, primarily through this blog. I would feel like it is worthwhile if only one person gains something from reading it. As there is nothing remotely like Kickstart for blind and VI people in Australia I hope that I will be able to share some of the tips and tricks that I learn with my friends back home. Secondly, my ultimate dream post Kickstart is to set up something similar in Melbourne and eventually other capital cities in Australia. I think it will be an amazing experience and for a lot of people the best way to learn the skills required to live successfully out of home. This blog could act as a means of proving to people how valuable my year at Kickstart was."

Check Cassie's blog: http://cassieembling.wordpress.com/

Guidelines for the Design of Accessible Information and Communication Technology Systems

UK-based John Gill Technology specialises in the needs of disabled and elderly people, including assistive technology and inclusive design. John has developed Guidelines for designers of information and communication technology (ICT) and these provide advice and recommendations on accessibility issues for all types of disabilities.

Visit: http://www.johngilltech.com/guidelines/guidelines_list.htm

Access Technology: 2012 in Review

Adapted from article by J J Meddaugh: http://www.afb.org/afbpress/pub.asp?DocID=aw140203

One of the overarching themes present in recent years has been the shift from specialized devices toward mainstream technology. While an argument can still sometimes be made for a stand-alone note-taking solution designed specifically for a person who is visually impaired, more and more consumers are shifting toward mainstream devices. The iPhone is the obvious example as it has quickly gobbled up market share once held by the likes of Freedom Scientific and HumanWare.

However, a quick glance at a user's typical list of apps gives a reminder of just how many devices are being duplicated or often supplanted by the mobile device. Currency identification, which used to cost $100 or more, can now be accomplished with free or low-cost apps. GPS navigation for travel, optical character recognition for reading printed materials, and even a simple light probe? The list is virtually endless. It's easy to account for thousands of dollars of dedicated technology that is now potentially replaced by a single device.

But do consumers benefit more from a single device that does a lot of things but not very well, or is it still worth it to pay a premium for specialized software that is specifically designed to meet their needs?

Apple's iPad models have also been much talked about by agencies and consumers, especially when it comes to the low vision market. A near limitless supply of books can be read using the eyes or ears, and pairing a device with a braille display allows for all of this without losing the skills of braille literacy, which are still vitally important to today's students. The biggest weakness to this point has been the productivity tools, such as word processing, spreadsheets, and databases. However, as more tools are developed, the realm of what can be accomplished on one of these devices will continue to increase.

In a year in which more companies are taking notice and improving accessibility for their products, it's sad that we continue to have major failures by companies we thought knew much better. Who would have thought that Microsoft would provide the only major smartphone operating system with no access?

Luckily, our top story of 2012 involves a formerly little-known app called Fleksy and its rise toward prominence and mainstream acceptance. When the designers of Fleksy introduced a new way to type using gestures, the idea sounded pretty novel though some questioned if it would really work. However, after people tried the app hands-on at the summer shows, doubters were turned into believers.

Fleksy quickly became one of the most talked about apps for the blind, but that's not entirely what pushed it to the number one story. Over the past few months, Fleksy has gone from cool tool for the blind to actively pursuing the definite possibility of gaining mainstream acceptance. How often do you see a blindness-specific app receive venture capital funding?

For more discussion of the best of 2012, listen to the SeroTalk podcast SeroSpectives: This Year in Assistive Tech for 2012: http://serotalk.com/2013/01/04/serospectives-this-year-in-assistive-tech-for-2012/

Contacting Organisations About Website Accessibility

Source: http://m.mediaaccess.org.au/online-media/policy-and-web-accessibility/contacting-organisations-about-website-accessibility

Many organisations fail to consider how people with a disability interact with their websites. As this is a large number of potential customers and audience members, website owners often work towards improving web accessibility. If you encounter a site that has accessibility issues you can contact the website owners and let them know how they can improve their sites.

Top 5 tips for contacting organisations about website accessibility

People with disabilities often find it frustrating when inaccessible websites prevent them from finding information or completing a task. If you find an accessibility issue on a website, it may be worth contacting the website owner to see if the problem can be resolved.
Consider the following tips when going through this process:

1. Make sure that the issue is a website accessibility issue

Difficulties in using the Internet are not limited to web accessibility. Before contacting an organisation about website accessibility, make sure that the problem is not isolated to your particular assistive technology product or device.

2. Identify the best way to make contact

While people often contact the Webmaster using the 'webmaster@organisationname' email address, these addresses are often not monitored. Before lodging the issue, investigate who may be best suited to address the website accessibility issue so that you know there is a physical person responsible for providing you with a response.

3. Be specific: assume little accessibility knowledge and carefully outline the issue

Organisations that have website accessibility issues are often not aware of how people with disabilities use the Internet so some additional information may be needed. Consider the following questions when explaining the problem:
- How can I best describe to the organisation the way in which I access their website?
- Where is the problem?
- What is the problem?
- Where can the organisation find out more information?

4. Follow up

Once your accessibility concern has been lodged, keep in regular contact with the person addressing your concern. Incorporating accessibility changes can be a slow process, so be patient but vigilant.

5. Take it higher

If all else fails, consider contacting the Human Rights Commission (AHRC). The AHRC is responsible for complaints relating to inaccessible websites. If all other avenues have been exhausted, they may be able to help: http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/research-policy/complaints
As recommended by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), it is important to provide both positive and critical feedback on an organisation's website: http://www.w3.org/WAI/users/inaccessible. Additional information can be found in the W3C's Contacting Organizations about Inaccessible Websites: http://www.w3.org/WAI/users/inaccessible
Your experience of contacting organisations is likely to be of interest to other people so feel free to connect with the Media Access Australia community on Twitter (@mediaaccessaus) and the Media Access Australia Facebook page: http://facebook.com/mediaaccessaustralia.

ZoomText for Mac

Source and download trial from: http://aisquared.com/zoomtextmac

I am sure that everyone is aware of ZoomText for Windows – well ZoomText for Mac is now available also and features (in brief):
- magnification to 36x
- font smoothing and image sharpening
- tracking: as you move the mouse, type text, and navigate menus, dialogs and other program controls, the zoom window automatically scrolls around to keep what you're trying to see in view
- adjustable windows – full screen and variable sized lens
- customizable pointers and cursors

Perky Duck: New Version

Source: OzBrl listserv

Perky Duck is a simple six-key braille editor intended for people learning the braille code. Perky Duck is provided at no cost without telephone or email technical support from Duxbury Systems. A new version of Perky Duck is now available.

Improvements include:
- support on Windows 7 and 8
- JAWs Scripts
- an improved Document menu
- expanded Help content

Please note:
- There is a conflict between previous versions of Perky Duck and Perky Duck 11.1. If you have an older version of Perky Duck, please remove it before installing Perky Duck 11.1.
- If you have accidentally installed both versions, simply remove both, then install only Perky Duck 11.1.

Download from: http://www.duxburysystems.com/products.asp#freeware

Louis Braille Touch of Genius Prize

This prize was developed to inspire an innovator to continue the promotion of braille literacy for blind people worldwide. Each year, NBP puts out a call for applications and receives a wide variety of projects ranging from educational methods to tactile literacy products to high-tech solutions. This past year was no different with NBP receiving twenty competing applications.

This year, one of the Honourable Mentions was awarded to an Australian project: "GraVVITAS: Graphics Viewer using Vibration, Interactive Touch, Audio and Speech" which is being developed at Monash University. Congratulations to the team of Cagatay Concu, Kim Marriott and John Hurst for their submission.

For more information: http://nationalbraillepress.wordpress.com/

Student News

Source: Herald Sun, 22 December 2012

One James has just completed Year 12 at Emmaus College and another James is just beginning at Year 7. "As part of his work experience for his Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, (the older James) became a buddy for the younger boy, meeting with him regularly to introduce him to life in secondary school."

Younger James' mother said, "Since the two boys were paired up, (my) usually shy son has become much more confident."

A photo of both James's from the Herald Sun appears right.

VT News

- **Rachel Bowen** begins VT work in North-Eastern Victoria Region next week.
- **Lee Clarke** will be working as a VT in South-Eastern Victoria Region three days a week and two days in North-Eastern Victoria Region.
- **Lee Philp** has retired from VT work. Lee has had a long association with Visiting Teacher Service and students with vision impairments and we will all miss her – but hope that she enjoys her retirement.
- **Sharon Saunders** is back up to 0.8 in South-Eastern Victoria Region (Gippsland).

Finally

And finally thanks to everyone for their contributions to this Bulletin, especially Maria Elford and Lea Nagel.

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

NATIONAL BRAILLE MUSIC CAMP ASSOCIATION Inc.
2013

A Camp for Braille readers who love music and want to learn, improve, transcribe or teach Braille music

The 28th Camp will be held at Frensham, Range Road, Mittagong NSW 2575
From: **Saturday evening 22rd June to breakfast Saturday 29 June 2013**

Please return:
- application form
- completed medical information form.
- a crossed cheque or postal order made payable to National Braille Music Camp, or transfer to BDCU BSB 802 101, Account no 51675, Braille Music Camp. Be sure to put your name as reference.
    - $280 for N.S.Welsh folk
    - $200 for Victorians and you buy the train ticket
    - $350 for Queenslanders, South Australians, Tasmanians and Westralians. (Music Camp then pays the airfare.)
    - New Zealanders and other international campers: no camp fees required if your air fare exceeds A$350

To **Roma Dix, 11 Bourne Close, Mittagong NSW 2575** Ph: 02 48 711 086
romad@westnet.com.au

(Please cut along this line) ....

Application form for the 28th National Braille Music Camp 2013
To Roma Dix 11 Bourne Close Mittagong 2575

Name: _____ age: _____

Address: _____

State _____ Post code _____

Email _____

Telephone: _____ Mobile: _____

I understand that there is adequate supervision, and further I agree that in case of any accident or illness, where it is not possible to obtain my consent, that any medical assistance, nursing or surgery required can be administered, and I accept the responsibility of any expenses thus incurred.

Signature of parent or guardian: _____

Please complete and return the medical information form.

Any problems don't hesitate to contact me. We can often help. Roma (at above address)

Statewide Vision Resource Centre

presents

Professional Development Forum for Visiting Teachers (DRAFT)

When: Tuesday 12th March 2013 from 9.30am to 3.30pm
Where: Statewide Vision Resource Centre, 370 Springvale Rd Donvale
Parking: Lower carpark of the Sports Complex next door – thanks!
Cost: $44.00 includes a light lunch – please contact us for an invoice if required

9.00	**Registration and Catch-up Time**
9.30	**Maths and Science: A Great Option for Students!** Daniel Dalton who completed VCE in 2012 (with an outstanding score!)
10.15	**VT Forum: An opportunity to share with the group!**
10.30	**Employment Support for Students with Vision Impairments** SensWide
11.00	**Morning Tea**
11.20	**iPad Accessibility** Lyn Robinson, Statewide Vision Resource Centre
11.40	**Space Camp** Rory Fraser and Sue Matthews, Visiting Teachers
12.05	**VT Forum: An opportunity to share with the group!**
12.30	**NAPLAN: Access for Students with Vision Impairments** VCAA
1.10	**Lunch**
2.00	**Thinking Skills** Rachel Morgan, Guide Dogs Victoria
2.30	**SPEVI 2013** Sam Oxley, Visiting Teacher
3.00	**SVRC Update including SPEVI 2015, National Partnership, Support Skills Program, Dot Power etc** Staff of the SVRC
3.30	**Close**