Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays
From all at the Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Great news for Christmas!!!

- Our colleague and friend, Janie McLeod, got news on Friday, December 8 that she is in full remission! We wish you a wonderful Christmas, Janie and we’ll all share in your joy!

ClearNote or Mimio – that is the question…
Many more schools are asking this question so our ever-clever Deb has done a comparison (on page 2) to help us all work out just what these two bits of technology can (or can’t) do. We hope to rope in some canny students to do a hands-on comparison next year.

SVRC Christmas morning tea – a great success
On Wednesday, December 6, plenty of people came along to socialise and indulge. Many commented on the fabulous spread of food and even more on the beautiful decorations. Congratulations, Annette and the various other departments of creativity (and hard labour).

SPEVI Biennial Conference – January 2007
Haven’t planned your Summer holidays yet?? The SPEVI conference will be at the Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, Western Australia for January 7 to 12, 2007. You might even be able to present a paper or poster! Go to the SPEVI website to view the program.
www.e-bility.com/spevi/ and click on ‘events’.

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## ClearNote and Mimio – A Comparison

By Deb Lewis, Co-ordinator Statewide Vision Resource Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ClearNote</th>
<th>Mimio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consists of</strong></td>
<td>Swivel camera on stand with connection to laptop or computer monitor</td>
<td>Capture bar attached to whiteboard, stylus pens and eraser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rechargeable batteries</td>
<td>(optional writing recognition software, carry case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>Video magnifier – view either distance (eg demonstrated items, whiteboard,</td>
<td>Digitally captures penstrokes from whiteboard which can be transmitted to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>blackboard) or near (eg text book) objects</td>
<td>computer via USB cable or cordless connection or saved to the capture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capture unlimited number of selected images for viewing later</td>
<td>bar and downloaded later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screen capture</strong></td>
<td>Auto focus camera – near and distance viewing in real time</td>
<td>Mimio stylus penstrokes recorded by capture bar, frame by frame in real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>via</td>
<td></td>
<td>time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Edit features</strong></td>
<td>Paste images into another program (eg Word) to add notes</td>
<td>Student can add notes or voice recording to each frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>File compatibility</strong></td>
<td>Files can be saved as .jpg or .bmp; printed; emailed; posted on the web;</td>
<td>Files can be saved as .jpg, .bmp, .pict or .ink; printed; emailed;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>exported or copied and pasted into other applications</td>
<td>posted on the web; exported or copied and pasted into other applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>View files</strong></td>
<td>View camera image and computer image in one screen</td>
<td>Replay and review images, notes and audio recording frame by frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Replay and review image by image</td>
<td>Translate handwriting to text (OCR) with optional handwriting recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Features for</strong></td>
<td>Magnification 1.7 – 57 times on a 17” screen</td>
<td>Option to change onscreen pen colour and thickness to optimise print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students with</td>
<td>9 adjustable foreground and background colours</td>
<td>size and contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vision impairments</td>
<td>Brightness, contrast, saturation and hue control</td>
<td>Zoom feature allows enlargement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Portability</strong></td>
<td>Folds up and fits in laptop carry case</td>
<td>Fits in large pencil case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional</strong></td>
<td>Can handwrite or inspect hand-held items under the camera</td>
<td>Can be used to make whiteboard into an interactive touch screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>features**</td>
<td></td>
<td>Windows and Mac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compatibility</strong></td>
<td>Windows</td>
<td>Mimio capture bar, pens, eraser, USB cable: $1,194 Wireless: $509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost</strong></td>
<td>$5,229</td>
<td>Handwriting recognition software $159 Batteries required for capture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bar, eraser and pens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VisionTech Website Updated

Go to: http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au

It’s a mammoth job – but the Vision Technology website (“Assistive Technology for Students with Vision Impairments”) has been updated!!! The Vision Tech website offers information about options for students with vision impairments – from the “high tech” electronic magnifiers, talking software and scanners to the “low tech” such as drawing kits and braille hand frames – including descriptions, prices and suppliers.

The website is constructed around subheading as follows:

- **Audio Players and Recorders**
- **Braille Embossers**
- **Calculators and Maths Solutions** for Low Vision and Blind Students
- **Computer Access for Students with Vision Impairments**: Accessible Games; Braille Access; Checklist for Choosing Appropriate Assistive Technology; Computer Skills and Keyboarding; Enlargement; Fun Activities for the Reluctant Typist; Improved Access for the Internet; Improved Access for Windows; Keyboarding Pre-requisites, Skills and Strategies; Personal Organiser / Mobile Phone; Scanning Software, Scanners and Personal Readers; Voice Output; Windows “Cheat Sheets”
- **Curriculum Access for Low Vision and Blind Students**: Alternative Format Materials: Available for Purchase (or Free); Atlases and Maps; Computer Skills and Keyboarding; Curriculum Access for Brailling Students: Tactual and Auditory Output; Curriculum Support Materials eg Literacy, Maths etc; Dictionaries; Electronic Texts (E-text); E-Text Storage and Access; Environmental Considerations; Newspapers
- **Electronic Magnification Unit** (eg Closed Circuit Television)
- **Lighting**
- **Magnifiers**
- **Personal Organiser / Mobile Phone**
- **Stands** - Reading Stands, Writing Stands, Typing Stands and Document Holders

Take a look!
Excursion to Cerberus

Report by Robert Aaltonen, Visiting Teacher, Catholic Education Office

It was towards the end of second term and it was suggested by Jack’s school that it would be a good idea for Jack to arrange a get together with his pen-pals who are of a similar age. He had already been to visit Nikita at his school and had spent some time there and later going to a big park nearby for lunch and playing on the equipment with Nikita. The only problem was working out where to go and Jack took an active role in working out where, ways to get there and the best way to get there.

Jack’s town of Somerville had only a limited range of attractions to interest the group and not enough to keep us going for the day. Together we looked at Hastings; there were certainly heaps to do there and we could possibly travel there by public transport. It has one of the best bakeries in Melbourne where we could have lunch. There was a great park and a nice walk that we could take along the beachfront. I had thought about the nearby naval base of Cerberus and gave them a ring to see whether they could assist our group with an excursion. The base was very positive about a visit and outlined what they could provide for us. Jack and I discussed this and he decided that a visit to the naval base would be by far the most exciting. Our work then started. I had to write a letter to the Base Commander for permission, letters had to be sent to schools and also to Jenny, Nikita’s Visiting Teacher. Jack had to make up invitations to his friends and use the Internet and JAWS to decide the best way to get there. Amid great excitement the big day arrived and with perfect weather being provided!

After a meet and greet session with his friends and integration aides there was a tour of the school before departing for the base. The staff at Cerberus demonstrated great hospitality and all those we met went out of their way to ensure that that this day would be an outstanding success. The excursion provided a huge array of exciting, varied activities. The main ones are as follows:

The Museum: The students were introduced to the staff of Cerberus who would be attending our needs. A video was played describing the history of the base and this was followed by an exciting, hand on activity where the students were able to feel a helmet, flare gun and other items. They were made to feel part of the Navy with their very own cap to wear! The base is huge and so we were transported to the sights by Tarago van and also a utility. This presented the group with the challenge of opening sliding doors, finding a seat and moving to the back of the van.

The Band: The group was treated to our own special performance of an orchestra and a rock band! Individual instruments were discussed and the children were
invited to try out on an instrument. There were a lot of orientation and mobility skills used included going up and down stairs, down a descending aisle to reach seats and through various sized doorways.

**Lunch:** This involved buying a meal ticket and receiving change and, if possible identifying coins received. Lunch was a scrumptious, extensive meal where the students could choose from a huge variety of hot or cold dishes.

**Seaman’s School:** This was a hand on experience where the students experienced what it would like to be at sea adrift in a life raft. The staff demonstrated an inflatable life jacket on Sam; much to his astonishment as it inflated up to his chin.

**The Patrol Boat:** This was a boat ride out on Westernport Bay heading towards French Island. The students enjoyed socializing with the sailors and with our hosts. The students were able to explore the boat including the below deck living quarters. They were also given the opportunity to drive the boat using all the controls that the boat’s captain uses! Orientation and mobility skills were thoroughly tested here as on the boat there were many different surfaces to identify and contend with, narrow spaces to negotiate, ascents and descents and steep steps. At the end of the activity the students were given a show bag to keep as well as an authentic sailor hat with Cerberus on it.

By the end of the day everyone was left with some extraordinary memories. In fact we can’t wait for another opportunity to go back to Cerberus and experience more of the base.

Even as a day to get together and enjoy ourselves, the excursion proved an outstanding success but it also promoted an enormous amount of follow up work which could lead to a wealth of braille promoting activities. Language activities from the day included Jack and I making up word lists to describe the varied events we did. I then used ideas and words about particular activities and events to braille small readers. We also brailled and typed letters to the key personal who went out of their way to ensure that this would be an unforgettable day. (Unfortunately it wasn’t going to be possible to write letters of thanks and appreciation to everyone involved though.)
Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness online

The November 2006 issue of the Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (JVIB) is live online! You may access the issue by logging in to your subscription at http://www.afb.org/jvib/jvib0011toc.asp. This month's issue includes the second installment of a new JVIB feature that is available exclusively to readers of JVIB Online. Introduced in the summer of this centennial year, "This Mattered to Me" features a classic article from 1976 that was selected by Amanda Hall Lueck of San Francisco State University. In an introductory essay, Dr. Lueck writes about the ways in which the article on functional vision screening for severely disabled children influenced her early in her own career.

This month's articles and features include:
Learning and Using Print and Braille: A Study of Dual-Media Learners, Part 2
Academic Achievement and Personality in University Students Who Are Visually Impaired
Braille Literacy Skills: An Analysis of the Concept of Spelling
Research Report: Improving the Usability of a Mainstream Cell Phone for Individuals with Low Vision

Readers are encouraged to share their thoughts on this issue of JVIB by sending an e-mail message to jvib@lions.med.jhu.edu or to voice their opinions on the JVIB message boards, http://www.afb.org/jvib_message_board.asp.

Driving Camp 2006

Report by Helen Caldow
This year’s driving camp was held at the Charlton Driver Education on Thursday the 30th and Friday the 1st of December. Nine students & 4 Visiting Teacher’s attended & had a terrific time. We arrived around mid-day & had lunch in the main street. Then we went off to the closed track for 3 hours of driving. There were 3 students in each car with an instructor. The cars were manual & without duel controls. Some students had attended before & some were first timers. In a very short time, the students were moving remarkably smoothly around the track.

After the morning session, we went to the Cricket Arms Hotel to check in. The motel we were booked into had closed down & the hotel took us in at short notice for the same price. They were great people & we were made very welcome. It was hot so we took off to the local pool for a swim before tea. Dinner was at the Cricket Arms Hotel. We all agreed the food was fantastic! The evening was spent on the balcony, chatting in the lounge or in groups in the rooms.

The next morning we had brekky & headed off to the track again. The students did hand brake starts, parallel & angle parking & three point turns. They negotiated roundabouts & got into 5th gear. For the first time ever, they also did overtaking.

Many thanks to our instructors Brian, Ian & Joyce. They were patient, helpful & funny. Good times included:
“If you want the car to go, you have to take your foot off the break!”
“We’ve had worse drivers with vision than these VI students.”
“Check your blind spot has now become check over your shoulder!”

Aaron offered to drive home if his VT home if she was tired, as he was now a competent driver. Aaron also did the best burn out.

Luke was so good at hand brake starts that he did one on a hill, in second gear without stalling! Brian joked that a student had just hit his grandma. The student came back with “That’s OK, she was really annoying me anyway!”

“I only took my hands off the wheel for a little while!”

Raj was on the look out for his first kangaroo. Unfortunately, the only one he passed was a dead one!

Next years camp will be on Thursday the 6th and Friday the 7th of December.

Many thanks to Rita, Jenny Williams & Denise for their support.
Charlton driving instructor Brian (left) with students Luke, Rhys and Aaron

**Tandem Bike Riding at Kooyong**

Attached to the print copy of this Bulletin is a flier about the Tandem bike ride ‘Come `n Try’ day at Vision Australia, Kooyong. It’s on Wednesday, February 7th with a RSVP by Feb 2, 2007. For further details, contact Di Hayward on 03 8872 7000.

**Job for vision impaired person**

Also attached to the print copy of this Bulletin is information about a position available for a person with a vision impairment. Further information can be obtained on 03 9389 9942.

**Eccentric Viewing Assessment and Training**

Eccentric viewing is a technique that can be taught to help those who have no central vision, to utilise their side vision more effectively. It involves an assessment to work out the best eccentric viewing point and then a training program to follow. This is part of the role of the orthoptists who work with Vision Australia. So please feel free to call 1300 847 466 to find your nearest friendly Vision Australia orthoptist!
PictureBraille for Windows

Pentronics is pleased to announce the release of PictureBraille for Windows tactile graphic creation software. PictureBraille for Windows is the successor to the original DOS program.

PictureBraille allows the importation of most major Windows graphics formats and provides direct scanner support. Images can also be pasted from any Windows drawing program. Images are automatically converted to a Braille dot equivalent and displayed on screen for editing or labelling purposes. Tools for re-sizing, filtering and drawing are provided.

PictureBraille graphics can be sent directly to most Braille embossers. PictureBraille files can also be imported directly into Version 10.6 of the Duxbury Braille Translator, providing a single source document for text and tactile graphics.


For more information contact Nigel Herring on (02) 4735 7355 or support@pentronics.com.au

Vision Australia Education Seminars - 2007

Attached to the print copy of this Bulletin is the program of seminars offered by Vision Australia in 2007. Topics in Term I include ‘Students who are blind or vision impaired: Prep – 4’, ‘Students who are blind or vision impaired: Yrs 4 – 8’, and the topics in Term III are ‘Including students with a vision impairment in PE programs’, ‘Students who are vision impaired with additional disabilities’ and ‘Towards the VCE or VCAL – for students with a vision impairment’. These are whole-day sessions and cost $80. For further information or bookings, contact Arlene Pacheco on 03 9808 6422.

Reminder about a great Summer activity

In Bulletin 15 we advertised a ‘Discover Snorkelling’ day run by Vision Australia on January 17, 2007. The flier is attached to the print copy of this Bulletin or phone 03 8872 7000 for more information.

Want to recycle your old laptop?

Do you have an old laptop hanging round that you no longer need? If so, perhaps you'd consider donating it to the SVRC for use as an audio recorder by volunteers in their homes. The quality is much better than audio tape and will allow us to produce resources off-site!

Ideally the laptops would be Pentium 3 (minimum) with USB connection - but if yours is more ancient than this, please call and have a chat with Michael or Deb on 03 9841 0242.

Thanks!

Renwick Centre courses - 2007

The Renwick Centre is again offering professional education in Vision Impairment Education. Courses include a UEB workshop on March 23, Support Teachers’ Conference on March 30, ‘Technology Teasers’ on July 23, Braille for Educators Feb 12 to July 13 (by distance mode), Teaching Braille (TBC) and Medical Aspects of Children with VI and Additional Impairments on May 2. Check out the details at [www.ridbc.org.au/renwick/courses/](http://www.ridbc.org.au/renwick/courses/) Courses cost $120 for one day and enrolments can be arranged by calling (02) 9877 0207.
The following six snippets are from the Vision Australia, Client Update newsletter – thanks to Bruce and Suzanne Gould for sending it my way!

**Vision Australia Carols by Candlelight®**
This happens every Christmas Eve at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl starting at 7pm. For tickets, call Ticketmaster on 1300 136 166.

**Sunnies for Sight Day**
Sunnies for Sight Day is on Friday, February 23, 2007. Organise your work, school or community group to wear sunglasses, donate a gold coin and money goes to the International Centre for Eyecare Education’s blindness prevention projects. For information, go to [www.sunniesforsight.org](http://www.sunniesforsight.org) or call 1300 664 233.

**Exhibition by artists with vision impairments**
Madeleine Popper is seeking expressions of interest from artists who are blind or vision impaired and would like to take part in an exhibition. Call Madeleine on (03) 9502 7356 or 0417 304 579 or send an email to madeleine@ronpopper.com.au

**Google ranks accessible sites**
Web-users, have you tried Google Accessible Search? Specially designed for people who are blind or vision impaired, it ranks search results according to accessibility. It examines the HTML markup found on a web page and favours sites with few visual distractions and which are more easily navigated with a keyboard. To access it, visit [http://labs.google.com/accessible/](http://labs.google.com/accessible/)

**Free magnifier**
The latest Microsoft mouse driver, Microsoft IP 55_32ENG.EXP, has an in-built magnifier that can enlarge text on the screen. You can download the driver for free from [www.microsoft.com/hardware/mouseandkeyboard/Download.mspx](http://www.microsoft.com/hardware/mouseandkeyboard/Download.mspx)

**Tried and tested dictionary**
Here’s a handy software tip from Claire Hogan from Bellingen, New South Wales: “I’d like to recommend Macquarie Dictionary software called MegaLex (now sold under the title Macquarie Word Genius). It’s JAWS-compatible and very easy to use. You simply highlight a word with one key and it provides the definition. It’s paradise for a word-lover.”

Macquarie Word Genius has a recommended retail price of $19.95 (concise) and $49.95 (unabridged). Available from Dymocks, ABC Shops or by calling 1300 889 978. You can also order online at [www.wordgenius.com.au](http://www.wordgenius.com.au)

**Vision Australia Study Group**
The next Vision Australia Study Group for 2006 will be held on Wednesday 20th December 2006. Bookings are essential so please RSVP to advise whether you wish to attend.

Topic: “Where to from here? Transitioning beyond school and tertiary studies toward employment.”
Vision Australia’s Employment Manager Robyn Mckenzie will discuss the 'Chaos Theory of Employment' having just returned from Pathways 8, a disability conference about education and employment. As it is our last session for the year, it will be a chance to celebrate your achievements and afternoon tea will be served.
Time: 1.30 - 4pm
Venue: 201 High St Prahran in the Board Room

For more information, contact Renée Williamson on 03 9520 5555 or via email at renee.williamson@visionaustralia.org

Kickstart – preparing for further studies
Vision Australia is running a day for current and prospective tertiary students who are blind or vision impaired. The flier is attached to the print copy of this Bulletin or call Renée Williamson on 03 9520 5555 or via email at renee.williamson@visionaustralia.org

Student News

- Meredith Walsh's year 7 student Cassie, from Diamond Valley SC has had some great results this year including:
  - achieving a Credit for the Westpac Mathematics Competition
  - participating as a member of a team in ‘Tournament of Minds’ which came second in the English Literature section
  - winning the junior secondary writing competition at Diamond Valley SC

  Go girl!

- Prue's student Lindsay is one of the lucky recipients of the JAWS scholarship - and he has also been granted an equity scholarship to RMIT! He is currently in Pakistan playing international blind cricket and made 51 not out as the opening batsman! Go Lindsay!

Some of our VCE Results

- Faye's student Nicole achieved a 99.3 and plans to study physiotherapy in Wodonga next year.

- Marina at Melbourne Girls’ Grammar gained scores of 33 for Maths Methods and 47 for Literature.

- One of Denise Probert’s students attained 82.6.

Finally
Thanks to Deb Lewis, Janie McLeod, Robert Aaltonen, Helen Caldow, Bruce & Suzanne Gould, Mike Steer, Melissa Bryant, Nigel Herring, Prue Kilpatrick, Annette Godfrey-Magee, Faye Squires, Meredith Walsh and Diana Hayward for contributing to this edition of The Bulletin. Thanks also to our fabulous proof-readers, stuffers and mailers.

If you have something you would like included in ‘The Bulletin’, please contact:
Marion Blazé (who can be emailed at marionblaze@svrc.vic.edu.au).