Australian Braille Authority   
Annual Meeting Minutes  
Saturday, 5 May 2018  
Rydges Sydney Central, NSW

Chair: Jordie Howell

Minute Taker: Sam Taylor, Leona Holloway

# 1. Welcome and Personnel

David Vosnacos welcomed all to the AGM, and provided room orientation and evacuation procedures.

Jordie welcomed all present and opened the meeting with a poem.

## 1.1 Roll call.

* Sally Balwin – Braille House, delegate
* Stephen Belbin – consumer, observer
* Dinesh Burah – VisAbility, delegate
* Christine Casey – Insight, delegate
* Tristan Clare – Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC), observer
* Brian Conway – South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI), delegate & Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC), observer
* Kirsten Ellis – Monash University, observer
* Scott Erichson – consumer, observer
* Elaine Gilmour – BLENNZ, observer
* Shirley Henderson - School of Special Education Needs: Sensory, delegate
* Nigel Herring – Pentronics, observer
* Leona Holloway (ABA Correspondence Secretary) – Monash University, observer
* Jordie Howell (ABA Chair) – Vision Australia & SVRC, observer
* Josie Howse (ABA Executive member) – NSW Department of Education Large Print and Braille Services, delegate
* Neil Jarvis (Round Table President) – Blind Foundation, observer
* Hiroshi Kawamura – Assistive Technology Development Organization, observer
* Peter Le – Vision Australia, delegate
* Debra Lewis – Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC), delegate
* Ramona Mandy – consumer, observer
* Sonali Marathe – Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC), delegate
* Helen Merrin – consumer, observer
* Julie Miles – School of Special Education Needs: Sensory, observer
* Glen Morrow – Statewide Vision Resource Centre, observer
* Olivia Penna – consumer, observer
* Kathy Riessen (ABA Executive member) – South Australian School for Vision Impaired (SASVI), delegate
* Sandra Robertson (ABA Sydney Forum Chair) – ABA Sydney Forum, delegate; NSW Department of Education, observer
* Christine Simpson (ABA Immediate Past Chair) – Information Alternatives, delegate
* John Simpson – Information Alternatives, observer
* Karen Stobbs – BLENNZ, delegate
* Annette Sutherland (ABA Sydney Forum Secretary) – NSW Department of Education, observer
* Maria Stevens (BANZAT Chair) – Blind Foundation, delegate
* Sam Taylor (ABA Minutes Secretary) – Pacific Vision, observer
* Matthew Trotter – Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC), observer
* Ross de Vent (ABA Executive member) – consumer, observer
* David Vosnacos (MC) –VisAbility, observer
* Sondra Wibberly – Blind Citizens Australia, delegate

## 1.2 Apologies

* Ben Clare
* Bill Jolley
* Tom Macmahon
* Marie Shang

## 1.3 In memoriam

### Remembering Bill Byrne (Sondra Wibberley)

Bill Byrne headed up Library Services at the Royal Blind Society of NSW for many years. He also played an active role in the early work of Round Table.

Bill recognised the stupidity of copyright barriers and their impact on people who are blind in sourcing information and agencies working to assist them in this regard. Much of the pioneering work undertaken by Round Table in trying to effect changes aimed to reduce information access barriers for people who are blind can be directly attributable to Bill's efforts. It is hoped he learned of the recent Australian Copyright Law amendments which, I'm sure, he would have viewed as a realisation of his dream for equitable access to reading materials for people with vision disability.

Bill died at age 84 on 5 August.

Bill made a significant contribution to the vision disability arena through his important work. May he rest in peace.

# 2. Administration

## 2.1 Meeting arrangements

## 2.2 Arrangements for ABA workshop Monday 7th May

The ABA workshop on braille music production will be held on Monday from 3.30-5pm as part of the Round Table Conference.

# 3. Minutes of 2017 Annual Meeting

## 3.1 Tabling of meeting minutes of 6 May 2017

The minutes of the 2017 ABA Annual Meeting were approved by the ABA Executive and have been posted to the ABA website.

## 3.2 Business arising from 2017 minutes not listed elsewhere

Nothing to report.

# 4. Reports

## 4.1 ABA Annual Report—Jordie Howell (ABA Chair)

Refer to [Appendix 1](#_Appendix_1:_Report).

## 4.2 Round Table Update—Neil Jarvis (Round Table President)

Last year's Round Table conference in Perth was one of the most successful.

Round Table have been working on their strategic direction. Round Table is a small organisation with limited resources but is moving to work more with copyright changes. As a result, new organisations are now involved with RT.

Neil was pleased to announce the completion and launch of Round Table's updated accessible e-text guidelines.

Over the last year, Round Table worked with Monash University to support a project looking at 3D printing for accessible material. Funding was obtained from the Australian Research Council. Round Table are honored to take part, along with a number of Round Table members.

The Australian Publishers Association have now become members of Round Table. They have been part of the Accessible Publishing Initiative. It has been working strongly since 2016 to promote accessible publishing, in a much wider spectrum than the Marrakesh Treaty. They are working with the commercial sector to make their materials accessible.

Neil is ending his 6 year term as President of Round Table.

It is a good time to be involved with RT and ABA. The future is bright.

## 4.3 Regional Braille Forum reports

### 4.3.1 Queensland Braille Forum

Refer to [Appendix 2](#_Appendix_2:_Queensland).

The report from Karen Clark was read by Sam Taylor.

### 4.3.2 Sydney Braille Forum

Refer to [Appendix 3](#_Appendix_3:_Sydney).

## 4.4 Music working group report - Ross de Vent

This year the activities of the music working group in many ways stems from work done in previous years. This work also aims to strengthen the connections that already exist in the community of braille music users.

The major piece of work the ABA executive engaged in was the braille music transcriber register.

Discussed in the 2017 annual meeting minutes and leading from the discussion the year previous about facilitating more of a dialog between braille music transcribers, a survey was undertaken to identify said transcribers and make this information available on the ABA website. What came out of this was that each organisation was delivering various services and support related to braille music. This information along with the name of the primary liaison is now available on the ABA website at <http://brailleaustralia.org/finding-braille/directory/#music>. If there are any additions or changes please contact the ABA.

A wonderful week was had by all school students who attended the National Braille Music Camp, in Mittagong NSW, in the 2017 winter school holidays. Along with the obvious social and community benefits, the camp strives to continue to develop and strengthen students' musicianship and confidence when they go back to their mainstream music classrooms.

Documenting local variants to the internationally agreed braille music code, The Australian Braille Music Addendum continues to be a great living resource. As with a wide range of resources, the Ozbrl email list still is the place where organisations go to in order to source braille music scores and ask questions about the music code. Feedback and further discussion of other items that should be included in the addendum are always welcome.

## 4.5 Member reports

### 4.5.1 Queensland Braille Writing Association (Braille House)

Refer to [Appendix 4](#_Appendix_4:_Member).

The Dickinson Memorial Writing Competition has been revised, with slightly different categories. New form such as rap lyrics, blog posts etc. are welcome.

This year, Braille House created their first annual report, which Sally had on hand for people to collect at the meeting. Electronic version will be placed on the website. It includes two stories about the importance of braille to individuals.

### 4.5.2 Vision Australia

Refer to [Appendix 5](#_Appendix_5:_Member).

### 4.5.3 Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC) Victoria

Refer to [Appendix 6](#_Appendix_6:_Member).

### 4.5.4 SPEVI - Brian Conway

The SPEVI Conference which was schedule for 2019 has been postponed to January 2020 and will be held in Adelaide.

### 4.5.5 Blind Citizens Australia NSW (formerly Association of Blind Citizens New South Wales) - Sondra

After 100 years, the Association of Blind Citizens NSW has become part of BCA which will allow advocacy to be strengthened by a national organisation. Sondra was pleased to report that the Association of Blind Citizens NSW is now part of a larger organisation. Passion for braille will no doubt be substantially be improved within a larger structure and combined resources across state borders.

Sondra thanked Sally and Braille House for accepting many of the Association's braille books.

## 4.6 Publications

### 4.6.1 ABA Rules and Guidelines for Formatting Braille—Leona Holloway

No changes have been made to the document available from the ABA website at <http://brailleaustralia.org/about-braille/formatting/>. We have added some further resources relating to braille formatting on this page.

Ramona Mandy asked about the difference between rules and guidelines. This was made very clear in the document. There are very few hard and fast rules, which are presented in bold font. The remaining guidelines suggest best practice but formatting may depend on context.

### 4.6.2 Unified English Braille: Australian Training Manual—Josie Howse

Nothing to report.

### 4.6.3 DBT Producers' Manual—Kathy Riessen.

Produced in 2011, the DBT Producers' Manual was based on the Duxbury Braille Translator (DBT) 11.1. Beta Testing of DBT v12.2 was conducted in 2017. 12.2 was released in August, with a service release in December.

On behalf of the ABA, I was fortunate to be involved in the Beta testing, which gave the opportunity to not only test the software, but suggest some new features, and ensure that the Australian Template continues to reflect the ABA rules and guidelines of formatting.

Some of the new features in 12.2 are:

More Word styles now map to the Australian template. This means that most styles in the DBT English (UEB) - Australian formatting template have an equivalent Word style. In particular, TOC (Table of Contents) in Word now maps to the Contents style in DBT.

Improvements have been made to the definition of tabs to allow for leader dots to be included in the tab definition. If so defined, a simple tab character can be used to tabulate columns with leader dots.

The Contents style in the Australian template has been coded so a simple tab character will right align to the page with guide dots. A contents page in Word which uses the TOC styles, will now import without the need to replace the tab characters with the [frp~".] code. Similarly a manually produced contents page in DBT only requires the tab character to get leader dots to the right side.

DBT codes have been added for transcriber defined typeform indicators, [fts~1], [fts~2] … [fts~5] and their equivalent [fte~n] code.

The Global Word Importer under the Global Menu gives the option of defining a particular Word character format to map to script or one of the five transcriber defined typeform indicators. An example may be a script font in Word to a script typeform in DBT, or a particular text colour to a transcriber defined typeform.

More information can be found on the Duxbury website as well as on [brailleaustralia.org](http://brailleaustralia.org).

I would encourage that individuals and agencies regularly update their DBT to access new features, and ensure a good braille product.

I would also encourage that when questions or suggestions arise relating to DBT, these are posted either on the Ozbrl listserve or directed to me personally.

Kathy Riessen

## 4.7 Trans-Tasman Certificate of Proficiency in Unified English Braille—Josie Howse

The most recent Trans-Tasman Certificate of Proficiency in UEB was held in the first and second week of October 2017.

Candidates elect whether to sit the test in week 1 or 2 giving them a full week to complete the examination.

Twenty students registered in 2017; twelve elected to use a Perkins; eight elected to use PerkyDuck. Nine candidates were successful, two of whom were touch readers.

Some candidates were not adequately prepared for examination and it is worth considering a supervised preliminary test to gauge a candidate's readiness.

ACTION: The ABA executive to discuss mechanisms for ensuring that candidates are sufficiently ready before undertaking the test.

Peter Le suggested a mini-test as a qualifier before sending in registration.

## 4.8 Communication with members—Leona Holloway (Correspondence Secretary)

### 4.8.1 Facebook page

For Facebook users with an interest in braille, ABA continues to host its Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Australian-Braille-Authority/149349021763394>. The page provides regular updates with national and international news on braille.

The page has 560 followers. Due to recent changes to Facebook's algorithms, followers of pages like ABA are now less likely to see posts. In order to ensure that ABA's updates appear in your news feed, you may select "see first" under the "following" menu on the ABA page. This will place ABA posts at the top of your news feed, along with up to 29 other pages/friends that you have chosen to see first.

Over the last year, a lot of the most popular posts have been related to celebrations of braille, achievements in braille, or new products and services relating to braille.

For those who do not use Facebook or visit the page regularly, a monthly digest of ABA's Facebook posts is sent to the ozbrl list.

Thanks are extended to our followers and those who have provided suggestions of suitable articles and news items for promotion.

### 4.8.2 ozbrl listserv

The ozbrl listserv is an email discussion list administered on behalf of ABA by Bruce Maguire. Over the last year, there has been increased use of the list by producers to enquire about the availability of braille files. We applaud this positive example of the braille community supporting one another to increase the availability of braille.

The ozbrl list also continues to be a valuable method of communication among members, being used by the executive to conduct official business, make announcements and share news; and by members to ask questions, announce events and discuss matters relating to braille.

To join the ozbrl list, send an email to [ozbrl-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ozbrl-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). The message can be blank, but it must be sent from the email address that you wish to use to send and receive ozbrl messages.

### 4.8.3 Australian Braille Authority website (brailleaustralia.org)

The ABA website is located at <http://brailleaustralia.org>. It provides information for the general public and for the braille community about braille, the activities of the Australian Braille Authority, and resources including ABA documents and guidelines.

Visits to the ABA website have increased somewhat, with over 15,000 visits in 2017. The majority of visitors come through a search engine, however we also receive a significant number of referrals from UEB Online, ICEB, Round Table and Facebook.

The most popular pages continue to be the Directory of Braille Services, the Welcome page, Unified English Braille and the UEB Australian Training Manual download page.

The website is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis. In particular, the welcome page, events page and directory of braille services are constantly maintained and refreshed. In addition, a new page was created in 2017 paying homage to the past figures who have made major contributions to braille in Australia. These include Tilly Aston, R. F. Tunley, Minnie Crabb, Dulcie Magnus, Mercy Dickinson, Joan Ledermann, John Shute and Ian Cooper. The Honour Roll is located at <http://brailleaustralia.org/australian-braille-authority/past-leaders-australia/>.

### 4.8.4 Correspondence

Most correspondence is received through the ABA website, but we also receive direct requests and messages on Facebook. The most common requests relate to where to find braille, and information regarding braille signage requirements.

# 5. International Reports

## 5.1 Braille Authority of NZ Aotearoa Trust—Maria Stevens (BANZAT Chair)

Refer to [Appendix 7](#_Appendix_7:_Braille).

13 people sat the Trans-Tasman Proficiency Certificate and 9 passed. Those who did not pass were not ready to sit the test.

Through her work with ICEB, Maria is working on looking at international braille certification.

ABA Facebook updates are forwarded to BANZAT.

## 5.2 Braille in the Pacific – Ben Clare

Refer to [Appendix 8](#_Appendix_8:_Braille).

Jordie read highlights from Ben's report.

## 5.3 ICEB

### 5.3.1 ICEB Executive—Leona Holloway

The ICEB Executive Committee oversees the work of ICEB and its various subcommittees. It meets in person before and after each General Assembly and at a mid-term meeting two years between General Assemblies. It also meets via teleconference once every three months and operates via a listserv, to which observers are permitted.

Christo de Klerk is the ICEB President and Maria Stevens is our Vice President. Leona Holloway is the Australian representative to the Committee and Jordie Howell has been attending teleconferences to report on the work of the Music Subcommittee.

After each teleconference of the ICEB Executive, a report highlighting the most relevant items is prepared and sent to the ABA executive committee. The country reports are always a highlight, providing news of the work, events and new resources in each of the eight member countries.

Each of the ICEB's subcommittees operate via dedicated listservs, which are monitored by the ICEB Executive members. Similar to the Executive, each subcommittee has one representative from each member country of ICEB. Observers to the committees are welcome but must be submitted by their country's braille authority.

### 5.3.2 ICEB Mid-Term Meeting (Leona and Jordie)

#### Participants

Committee members: Christo de Klerk (Chair, South Africa), Frances Mary D'Andrea (Secretary, USA), Ilka Staglin (Ireland), Ntshavheni Netshitune (South Africa), Judy Dixon (USA), Maria Stevens (NZ), James Bowden (UK), Jean Obi (Nigeria), Jen Goulden (Treasurer, Canada), Phyllis Landon (Canada), Leona Holloway (Australia)

Observers: Jordie Howell (Australia), Nancy Netshitune (South Africa), Mary Schnackenberg & Clive Lansink (New Zealand), Lorraine Banks (Canada), Mandy White & George Bell (UK), Jim McCafferty & Margaret Bradshaw (Scotland), Pat Farrell & Stuart Lawler (Ireland) and various further observers from Ireland.

#### Events

Participants were welcomed on the Tuesday evening at NCBI. The meetings were held from Wednesday to Saturday morning. We were also treated to a walking tour of Dublin, a dinner, tours of ChildVision and NCBI, and a demonstration of the Canute refreshable braille display.

#### Reports and proceedings

All country and committee reports will be published on the ICEB website at [iceb.org](http://iceb.org/).

#### Country reports

UEB implementation is almost complete in all ICEB member countries.

Ratification and implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty is a common theme. Ireland ratified the Treat this year and New Zealand hope to do so later this year.

New guidelines have been produced by BANA (Guidance for Transcription Using the Nemeth Code within UEB Contexts; and Braille Formats: Principles of Print-to-Braille Transcription), UKAAF (Braille dot dimension standards; Embossing, binding and labelling; Reading electronic braille; Braille formatting guidelines; Maths Autocorrect; Maths practice exercises; and Braille music and UEB) and INBAF (The Irish UEB Guidelines for Technical Materials). Production of a braille version of the French UEB Rulebook is on hold due to funding issues.

INBAF have released the Updated Irish Braille code, which is now in full production. South Africa are updating the braille codes for African languages, incorporating the UEB symbols for diacritics.

The USA, Canada and New Zealand have put further orders of the Orbit refreshable braille display on hold until quality and update issues are resolved. South Africa is ordering a large quantity of BrailleMe refreshable braille displays. The NLS are designing their own low-cost refreshable braille display for distribution to library members.

Nigeria hope to form a Braille Authority in August.

#### Looking forward to 2020

The next General Assembly of ICEB will be held in 2020 in London. Mandy White (RNIB) is overseeing planning of the Assembly and hopes to pair it with a braille conference to attract more attendees.

### 5.3.3 ICEB Music Committee—Jordie Howell (Chair)

The job of the ICEB Music Committee is to align Unified English Braille to the international music braille code to avoid conflicts and highlight minimal ambiguities. We achieve this through charges which have been agreed upon by our committee and approved by the ICEB Executive.

The music committee has made progress in several areas this term:

#### Isolating ambiguities between Unified English Braille and the braille Music Code.

Our latest discussion has concerned UEB brackets within a music context.

The committee has found that brackets within a music score are treated differently by member countries. It is the music committee’s task to formulate a statement that all representatives agree presents how brackets are used in a music context accurately in all countries.

We have created a list of Braille music courses and manuals available in UEB. These are listed on the ICEB website making a one-stop-place for reference materials around music and UEB.

#### Development of the international braille music code

At the 2016 ICEB General Assembly, the music committee submitted two resolutions on the theme of braille music:

This Sixth General Assembly of ICEB resolves to:

Investigate a cooperative project with braille authorities within and external to the International Council on English Braille to update the New International Manual of Braille Music Notation (1996) by Bettye Krolick.

The ICEB Music Committee is investigating contacts internationally who can assist with this initiative through the World Braille Council, the World Blind Union and the US. The US National Library Service has suggested that they can coordinate this initiative. We are now charged with outlining areas of the music code that are not covered in either the International Manual or BANA 2015, which is the most recent and very comprehensive publication around music and UEB.

#### Preserving the heritage of braille music only available in hard copy master format

The committee is following progress in the digitisation of braille music scores as well as encouraging countries to maintain their hard copy resources. There is strong feeling within the committee that hard copy music scores need to be preserved and shared, and through our second resolution to the 2016 ICEB General Assembly, we encourage countries to work towards promoting these precious resources to borrowers and preserve them digitally. The US has made significant headway using Optical Braille Recognition Software to digitise hard copy scores.

#### Monitor the growing use of technology in the production and distribution of braille music

Several of our member countries have online catalogues and library members are downloading scores and using them in rehearsals and educational settings. Braille music translation software is also increasingly becoming a vital part of transcription processes.

The UK has used technology in new ways by conducting trials using both Words and Voice and keyboard music. They produced samples of keyboard music using the Bar-By-Bar system for use with braille displays. A prototype of the Orbit Reader has been used as a means of learning a piano piece. Also recently, a day-long event was hosted at RNIB where the Canute 40-cell line-length nine-line braille display was tested with a braille music score.

ICEB Members have been contacted by Sarah Morley-Wilkins regarding a collaboration between the DAISY Consortium and national organisations around music braille. The first phase of the research is now complete which asked members to draw up a series of questions relating to music braille. These focus on areas such as current groups working on the music braille code, music braille collections available internationally, and the production and use of music braille. Members are now to respond to a survey which will direct the research further.

The current focus of the committee is to create a central location for information sharing across member countries. Committee members have expressed the importance of keeping up to date with initiatives internationally, particularly those countries with fewer resources to draw on. By the 2020 ICEB General Assembly we anticipate a rich list of resources on our webpage for members to access along with progress towards the collaboration on a future edition of the International Manual on Braille Music (1996).

### 5.3.4 UEB Code Maintenance Committee—Leona Holloway

The UEB Codes Maintenance Committee (CMC) is responsible for making recommendations and decisions regarding updates to the UEB code and ICEB's UEB documentation, including the UEB Rulebook. Phyllis Landon (Canada) is the CMC Chair and Leona Holloway is Australia's representative.

There has been extensive exploration and discussion of the representation of the apostrophe and quotation marks over the last year. While print uses the same symbols for the apostrophe and single quote, they are represented by two different symbols in braille, creating a problem for automated conversion (especially on refreshable braille displays). An international survey was conducted, with 733 responses received from individuals and organisations across 14 countries. The most popular options were no change or representing all single quotes as a dot 3. The braille authority of each ICEB member country was then asked to submit a vote, however this too resulted in a tie between the two options. Australia's vote was for no change. After extensive discussion among the CMC voting representatives, it was agreed at the mid-term executive meeting that the rules for quotation marks and the apostrophe should be adjusted to maintain current practice as far as possible while reducing ambiguity for translation. Lower h and lower j will be used for outer quotes, and the current symbol for the single quote will be used for inner quotes. A table mapping Unicode and context to the corresponding UEB symbol will also be produced for distribution to braille translation software developers.

The symbol for the check mark was discussed at length. Formerly represented using the braille sign for the radical without vinculum, the CMC has agreed that it should have its own braille symbol, `% (dots 4-146). The new symbol has been ratified and will be publicised shortly.

Work has continued on a word list, showing contraction use. It should be published in the next few months.

The issue of contractions across prefixes and suffixes has been re-opened. The rules will be tightened to deal more effectively with words such as seminarrative and geofence.

Phyllis regularly receives many questions about UEB rules, and they are also posted on the Australian, Canadian and UK listservs. We will start collating these on a FAQ page for the ICEB website.

#### The Rules of Unified English Braille, 2nd Edition 2013 (Rulebook)

The Rules of Unified English Braille (the UEB Rulebook) is the official and comprehensive publication of the ICEB, giving all of the symbols and rules related to the use of UEB. It is available in French from http://www.iceb.org/ueb.html and translation into Japanese has commenced.

Several updates to the rules made in March and April 2017 are now listed on the ICEB website at <http://www.iceb.org/ueb.html>.

#### Unified English Braille—Guidelines for Technical Materials

A technical codes working group has been formed within the Codes Maintenance Committee to update the Guidelines for Technical Materials. Lorraine Banks (Canada) has been working on the revision with CMC Chair, Phyllis Landon.

A first draft of "Section 3: Signs of Operation and Comparison" has been circulated for feedback and discussion.

In August 2017, a new braille symbol was introduced for the triple vertical line. Meaning "similar to", it is a sign of comparison and should now be represented as #\_l (dots 3456-456-123). This change is listed on the ICEB website at <http://www.iceb.org/ueb.html>.

### 5.3.5 ICEB Braille Technology Committee – Sam Taylor

James Bowden (UK) is the Chair of the Braille Technology Committee and Sam Taylor is the Australian representative.

The executive has approved two new charges for the Braille Technology Committee:

(1) to develop braille tables and improve LibLouis, the open-source braille translator used in various screen readers and braille translation systems.

(2) to look at file formats suitable for use on refreshable braille displays. In particular, there is a need for more easily navigable braille files. ICEB hopes to work with the DAISY Consortium on this issue.

### 5.3.6 ICEB Promotions Committee – Leona Holloway

Leona Holloway is the Chair of the Promotions Committee and Australia's representative.

The Promotions Committee has shared braille and UEB-related first via its listserv and then through the new Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/ICEBbraille/](http://www.facebook.com/ICEBbraille/)) and twitter feed (@ICEBbraille). A new web page will be created to collect the updates/tweets of lasting interest.

Some updates have been made to the ICEB website (iceb.org), with new pages described on the home page. A substantial revitalisation is planned, with a separate page for most subcommittees.

The most important outstanding charge for the Promotions Committee is the creation and distribution of a regular newsletter.

More work also needs to be done on proactively engaging with non-member countries. A flyer about ICEB will be produced for distribution at braille-related events, and letters will be sent to braille authorities.

### 5.3.7 ICEB Research Committee

The Braille Research Committee serves as a means of sharing and collecting information about current braille research. Frances Mary d'Andrea is the Committee Chair and Emily White is Australia's representative. Communication on the Committee listserv has been infrequent but meaningful, with reports of new research papers on braille. Of particular interest were the Symposium of Braille Reading and Writing held at Rice University in March 2018, and a report on Braille Teaching and Literacy for the European Blind Union and European Commission.

The Research Committee has mainly been sharing information regarding published papers on braille. At the mid-term executive meeting, it was agreed that they will begin to also share information from conference presentations and opportunities for braille research funding.

## 5.4 World Braille Council

The World Braille Council (WBC) is chaired by Kevin Carey, who has distributed 3 papers ahead of their first meeting to take place in Ottawa in May 2018. It will be attended by a representative for each of the six WBU regions and Judy Dixon representing ICEB. Bill Jolley will represent the Asia-Pacific region.

More information will be disseminated when available on an update to the World Braille Usage manual.

# 6. Executive Committee 2018 - 2020

The following nominations were received for the ABA Executive Committee, to serve from 2018 to 2020:

* ABA Chair – Jordie Howell
* Members at large – Josie Howse, Kathy Riessen, Leona Holloway, Sam Taylor and Tristan Clare

With no further nominations, we are pleased to confirm the appointment of our new executive.

Special thanks are extended to our outgoing members, Ross de Vent and Christine Simpson.

# 7. Other Business

## 7.1 Foreign language material – Kathy Riessen

Since our last Annual Meeting, Kathy has produced a draft document on the transcription of foreign language material. It covers:

* Foreign language which uses a latin alphabet
* UEB accents and punctuation
* foreign language accents with UEB punctuation
* foreign languages accents and punctuation
* Foreign language which uses a non-latin alphabet
* Code switching
* Appendix on applying the guidelines using DBT

Feedback is now required, particularly from education departments and those producing a lot of foreign language material. Tristan Clare (RIDBC) and Deb Lewis (SVRC) volunteered to assist. Josie Howse (NSW Department of Education) and Peter Le (Vision Australia) will nominate someone from their organisations and a call for further participants will be sent out on ozbrl.

## 7.2 Australia & New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group (ANZAGG)—Leona Holloway

ANZAGG has been functioning as an informal subcommittee of the Round Table since 2016. It has around 100 members with an interest in accessible graphics, who communicate through a listserv and Facebook group.

ANZAGG will hold a face-to-face meeting on Monday 7 May at 2pm. All are welcome.

## 7.3 UEB online—Josie Howse

UEB Online is running healthily with many students applying to do the course from all over the world.

The accessible version has opened the course up to touch readers.

Some of these students have had no contact with braille at all, while others have been using their country's braille code.

## 7.4 Department of Education NSW

The Department of Education NSW accessible formats production team have relocated. Both their address and phone numbers have changed. Contact details will be sent out via ozbrl.

## 7.5 Victoria Braille Forum

Ross is hoping to start a Braille Forum in Melbourne. He invited people to speak with him about it and urged other states to do the same.

# 8. Meeting Close.

As Chair, Jordie Howell extended her sincere thanks to:

* the outgoing executive.
* the Sydney Braille Forum for their generous donation of $1000 towards our work with ICEB.
* Round Table for their ongoing support.
* everyone involved in braille for your hard work in making braille available.

# Appendix 1: Report of the Chair

**Australian Braille Authority** **Report of the Chair**

## Introduction

My first term as Chair of the Australian Braille Authority (ABA) has been a terrific learning experience and with an executive committee as strong as the current membership, leading the ABA has been a rewarding process. The ABA has continued to promote braille nationally through the work of our regional braille forums and demonstrate best practice in braille production by continuing to administer the Trans-Tasman Certificate in Unified English Braille. This year we have not published new guidelines. Instead, our focus has been on implementing our previous work and increasing our social media presence. Our Trans-Tasman Certificate on Unified English Braille boasts nine new successful holders of the certificate including two of our executive. On the international scene, our contribution to the International Council on English Braille is well-regarded with wonderful work by our Australian representative to ICEB, Leona Holloway, and our members of ICEB committees. Their contributions ensure that Australia has a strong voice on discussions and decisions pertinent to braille and braille technology.

## Structure and Accountability

The purpose of the ABA is to oversee the maintenance and development of braille codes and standards and best practice across Australia; as well as to promote an awareness of braille as the primary literacy medium for people who are blind, deafblind or who are severely vision impaired. The ABA is one of four subcommittees of the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities, however it is unique in that it holds its own National Meeting under its own structure.

The executive committee meets monthly by teleconference. It consists of the Chair and five members, elected at the national meeting. Two additional members are the convenors of our Regional Braille Forums and attend executive meetings as "members in attendance". Regional Braille Forums provide ABA with direct contact with individual members: braille users, teachers, parents and braille producers. At present we have forums in Queensland and New South Wales. They meet at least three times per year and report to the executive via their Convenor at our monthly phone meetings.

As Chair of ABA, I am a member of the executive committee of the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Inc. The Round Table is an umbrella organisation: members are organisations rather than individuals. These organisations work in the area of alternative formats including Braille and are spread across both Australia and New Zealand. Round Table publishes guidelines and promotes best practice in alternative format production. The executive committee meets monthly by phone and holds two face-to-face meetings annually. At each meeting I deliver a monthly report on ABA activities as well as contribute to the general work of the Round Table committee. I extend my thanks to this group of hard working and passionate people. Lead by the Round Table President, Neil Jarvis, the executive committee and our administrator, Marjorie Hawkings have provided helpful guidance and support to me personally and to ABA.

## ABA Executive Committee

The 2016 – 2018 executive committee comprises:

* **Leona Holloway** (Correspondence Secretary) – Leona has over 15 years’ experience in the field of accessible information. She administers the ABA webpage and Facebook page; as well as helped develop guidelines, updating ABA publications and answering numerous queries through the ABA website. Leona is Australia’s representative to the International Council on English Braille.
* **Kathy Riessen**– Kathy’s involvement with the ABA Executive has seen her assisting with developing braille formatting guidelines as well as running numerous workshops on the Duxbury Braille Translator and ABA guidelines. She always knows how to resolve that difficult-to-find braille or Duxbury query. Kathy is also a skilled music transcriber and she co-wrote the Braille Music Australian Addendum which is published on the ABA website.
* **Josie Howse** – Josie has developed and taught many braille training programs both within Australia and abroad. Each year, Josie works tirelessly marking and coordinating the Braille Proficiency Examination for Australia. She co-edited the UEB Training Manual – Australian Edition and continues to update formatting guidelines as required.
* **Christine Simpson** (Immediate Past Chair) – Christine served three terms as Chair of ABA. During that time, Christine took on the mammoth task of editing The Rules of Unified English Braille – Second Edition; a publication jointly produced by the Round Table and the International Council of English Braille. This facilitated Christine’s work on the ICEB Code Maintenance Committee. Christine is a highly skilled DBT user and her attention to detail is incredible to witness. The ABA Executive thank Christine for staying on the committee as Immediate Past Chair this term.
* **Sam Taylor** (Minutes Secretary) – Sam is a lifelong user of braille and braille technologies. He has worked as a braille transcriber specialising primarily in music and is highly proficient in the braille music code. Sam has also worked as blindness products specialist for two major adaptive technology companies and now represents Australia on the ICEB Technical Committee.
* **Ross de Vent** – Ross is a skilled braille music transcriber and has a very detailed working knowledge of all aspects of the braille music code. His long history of performance in singing, piano and trumpet gives him a wide experience in a variety of braille music application.
* The convenors of our Regional Braille Forums contribute to executive meetings as members in attendance and we very much appreciate this direct connection to our membership. The Sydney Braille Forum has been led by Sandra Robertson and we are grateful for her contribution to ABA meetings and updates on the work of the forum each month. Queensland RBF welcomed Melissa Fanshawe to the position of convenor after the resignation of Julee-anne Bell. We are delighted the Queensland Regional Braille Forum is continuing in its promotion of braille with strong new leadership.

My thanks to this very skilled and dedicated executive for your work and support over this term, and thank you to the new members who have stepped up so quickly and volunteered to take on tasks or projects.

## Regional Braille Forums

At present the ABA has two active forums holding regular meetings, promoting braille and running fun and exciting activities. Sydney holds regular meetings featuring a guest speaker, the final gathering being the popular awards night to complete the year. Queensland has had a change of convenor since our last national meeting with Melissa Fanshawe now leading the forum. It is wonderful to see Braille Club continue and our Queensland forum grow and strengthen this year. Reports from both Sydney and Queensland forums are included The ABA encourages other states to establish braille forums to involve individuals in the work of ABA as well as increasing the awareness and promotion of braille throughout Australia. I would love to hear from anyone who feels they could coordinate a forum in your state.

## Communications

### ABA Website

The ABA website continues to be a terrific resource for both braille transcribers, teachers and organisations looking for braille specifications or services on our directory. Leona is extremely efficient and keeps the events page current and it is exciting to see how much is happening in the area of braille nationally.

The ABA website is located at [**brailleaustralia.org**](http://brailleaustralia.org). It provides information for the general public and for the braille community about braille, the activities of the Australian Braille Authority, and resources including ABA documents and guidelines.

Visits to the ABA website have increased somewhat, with over 15,000 visits in 2017. The majority of visitors come through a search engine, however we also receive a significant number of referrals from UEB Online, ICEB, Round Table and Facebook.

The most popular pages continue to be the [Directory of Braille Services](http://brailleaustralia.org/finding-braille/directory/)**,** the [Welcome](http://brailleaustralia.org/)page, [Unified English Braille](http://brailleaustralia.org/unified-english-braille/) and the [UEB Australian Training Manual](http://brailleaustralia.org/unified-english-braille/unified-english-braille-australian-training-manual-2013/) download page.

The website is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis. In particular, the welcome page, events page and directory of braille services are constantly maintained and refreshed. In addition, a new page was created in 2017 paying homage to the past figures who have made major contributions to braille in Australia. These include Tilly Aston, R.F. Tunley, Minnie Crabb, Dulcie Magnus, Mercy Dickinson, Joan Ledermann, John Shute and Ian Cooper. The Honour Roll is located at [brailleaustralia.org/australian-braille-authority/past-leaders-australia/](http://brailleaustralia.org/australian-braille-authority/past-leaders-australia/)**.**

### ABA Facebook page

For Facebook users with an interest in braille, ABA continues to host its Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/pages/Australian-Braille-Authority/149349021763394](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Australian-Braille-Authority/149349021763394). The page provides regular updates with national and international news on braille.

The page has 560 followers. Due to recent changes to Facebook's algorithms, followers of pages like ABA are now less likely to see posts. In order to ensure that ABA's updates appear in your news feed, you may select "see first" under the "following" menu on the ABA page. This will place ABA posts at the top of your news feed, along with up to 29 other pages/friends that you have chosen to see first.

Over the last year, a lot of the most popular posts have been related to celebrations of braille, achievements in braille, or new products and services relating to braille. For those who do not use Facebook or visit the page regularly, a monthly digest of ABA's Facebook posts is sent to the ozbrl list.

Thanks are extended to our followers and those who have provided suggestions of suitable articles and news items for promotion.

### Ozbrl

The ozbrl listserv is an email discussion list administered on behalf of ABA by Bruce Maguire. Over the last year, there has been increased use of the list by producers to enquire about the availability of braille files. We applaud this positive example of the braille community supporting one another to increase the availability of braille.

The ozbrl list also continues to be a valuable method of communication among members, being used by the executive to conduct official business, make announcements and share news; and by members to ask questions, announce events and discuss matters relating to braille.

To join the ozbrl list, send an email to [ozbrl-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ozbrl-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). The message can be blank, but it must be sent from the email address that you wish to use to send and receive ozbrl messages.

## Publications

### DBT Producer's Manual

The DBT Producer's Manual (2011) was published after the release of DBT 11.1. With DBT 12.2 now in beta testing, there are some aspects of the manual which are out-of-date. We have started noting these items on the ABA website at [brailleaustralia.org/about-braille/duxbury-braille-translator-producers-manual-2011/](http://brailleaustralia.org/about-braille/duxbury-braille-translator-producers-manual-2011/) and hope that DBT users in Australia will notify us of any further changes.

## Proficiency in Unified English Braille

The Trans-Tasman Proficiency Certificate was conducted in the first two weeks of October. It consists of three sections: a proofreading passage containing errors to find, translation from print to braille and translation from braille to print.

## Braille Music in Australia

The Australian Braille Authority has developed a register of braille music transcribers to aid communication between braille music specialists and provide contact information for individuals or organisations seeking braille music transcription or advice. This register can be found on the ABA website under our Directory of Services, at [brailleaustralia.org/finding-braille/directory/](http://brailleaustralia.org/finding-braille/directory/).

This initiative was as a direct result of discussions held at our 2016 National Meeting and I thank Ross de Vent for coordinating this initiative. We hope to strengthen connections between braille music transcribers in Australia and those who utilise their services.

## International Involvement

## International Council on English Braille

### ICEB Executive Committee

The ICEB Executive Committee oversees the work of ICEB and its various subcommittees. It meets in person before and after each General Assembly and at a mid-term meeting two years between General Assemblies. It also meets via teleconference once every three months and operates via a listserv, to which observers are permitted.

Christo de Klerk is the ICEB President and Maria Stevens is our Vice President. Leona Holloway is the Australian representative to the Committee and Jordie Howell has been attending teleconferences to report on the work of the Music Subcommittee.

After each teleconference of the ICEB Executive, a report highlighting the most relevant items is prepared and sent to the ABA executive committee. The country reports are always a highlight, providing news of the work, events and new resources in each of the eight member countries.

The ICEB Executive Committee will meet in Ireland in April, after which much more information about ICEB's work will be available.

Each of the ICEB's subcommittees operate via dedicated listservs, which are monitored by the ICEB Executive members. Similar to the Executive, each subcommittee has one representative from each member country of ICEB. Observers to the committees are welcome but must be submitted by their country's braille authority.

### UEB Codes Maintenance

The UEB Codes Maintenance Committee (CMC) is responsible for making recommendations and decisions regarding updates to the UEB code and ICEB's UEB documentation, including the UEB Rulebook. Phyllis Landon (Canada) is the CMC Chair and Leona Holloway is Australia's representative.

There has been extensive exploration and discussion of the representation of the apostrophe and quotation marks over the last year. While print uses the same symbols for the apostrophe and single quote, they are represented by two different symbols in braille, creating a problem for automated conversion (especially on refreshable braille displays). An international survey was conducted, with 733 responses received from individuals and organisations across 14 countries. The most popular options were no change or representing all single quotes as a dot 3. The braille authority of each ICEB member country was then asked to submit a vote, however this too resulted in a tie between the two options. Australia's vote was for no change. The CMC voting members are now discussing further options.

The symbol for the check mark was discussed at length. Formerly represented using the braille sign for the radical without vinculum, the CMC has agreed that it should have its own braille symbol, `% (dots 4-146). It is expected that the new symbol will be approved in April 2018.

### UEB Rulebook

The Rules of Unified English Braille (the UEB Rulebook) is the official and comprehensive publication of the ICEB, giving all of the symbols and rules related to the use of UEB. It is available in French from [www.iceb.org/ueb.html](http://www.iceb.org/ueb.html) and translation into Japanese has commenced.

Several updates to the rules made in March and April 2017 are now listed on the ICEB website at [www.iceb.org/ueb.html](http://www.iceb.org/ueb.html).

### Guidelines for Technical Materials

A technical codes working group has been formed within the Codes Maintenance Committee to update the Guidelines for Technical Materials. Lorraine Banks (Canada) has been working on the revision with CMC Chair, Phyllis Landon.

A first draft of "Section 3: Signs of Operation and Comparison" has been circulated for feedback and discussion.

In August 2017, a new braille symbol was introduced for the triple vertical line. Meaning "similar to", it is a sign of comparison and should now be represented as ⠼⠸⠇ (dots 3456-456-123). This change is listed on the ICEB website at [www.iceb.org/ueb.html](http://www.iceb.org/ueb.html).

### Braille Technology Committee

James Bowden (UK) is the Chair of the Braille Technology Committee and Sam Taylor is the Australian representative.

The executive has approved two new charges for the Braille Technology Committee: (1) to develop braille tables and (2) to look at file formats suitable for use on a refreshable braille display.

Information is regularly shared regarding the new cheap refreshable braille displays the Orbit, BrailleMe and Canute.

### Promotions

Leona Holloway is the Chair of the Promotions Committee and Australia's representative.

The Promotions Committee has shared braille and UEB-related first via its listserv and then through the new Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/ICEBbraille/](http://www.facebook.com/ICEBbraille/)) and twitter feed (@ICEBbraille).

Some updates have been made to the ICEB website ([iceb.org](http://iceb.org)), with new pages described on the home page. A substantial revitalisation is planned, with a separate page for most subcommittees.

The most important outstanding charge for the Promotions Committee is the creation and distribution of a regular newsletter.

### Research Committee

The Braille Research Committee serves as a means of sharing and collecting information about current braille research. Frances-Mary d'Andrea is the Committee Chair and Emily White is Australia's representative. Communication on the Committee listserv has been infrequent but meaningful, with reports of new research papers on braille. Of particular interest were the Symposium of Braille Reading and Writing held at Rice University in March 2018, and a report on Braille Teaching and Literacy for the European Blind Union and European Commission.

### Bylaws Committee

Nothing to report.

## Conclusion

My first term as ABA Chair has been a rewarding experience, however with my supportive and hardworking executive, the transition has been a smooth one. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all the executive for your contributions, hard work and initiative with projects and opportunities to publicise and promote the work of ABA. My deepest thanks to Christine for her mentorship this term. She has always made herself available for a phone call to chat about ABA matters and I am grateful for her time and guidance. Christine has served over 25 years on the ABA executive which is a tremendous effort. She has decided not to stand for re-election this year. Thank you Christine for your work and dedication to ABA.

The ABA has promoted braille across Australia through our Regional Forums, we have more people accredited with the Trans-Tasman Certificate in Unified English Braille and we have represented Australia at the international level. It is much easier to find a Braille Music Transcriber in your area with the new Braille Music Transcribers Register on our webpage, and this will encourage more discussion and networking around braille music nationally. I am preaching to the converted when I say that Braille is still as relevant as it ever was, and the last two years witnessing the active braille communities in Australia illustrates that we are heading in the right direction.

**Jordie Howell  
Chair  
Australian Braille Authority**

# Appendix 2: Queensland Regional Braille forum

Braille club in Brisbane continues to run efficiently with a number of extremely gifted and dedicated professionals at the helm.

There were 12 children present at our October Braille Club ranging from grade 1 or 2 to high school students. Technology allowed a regional student from Cairns to visit via FaceTime. A parents' conference was also held concurrently on the topic of NDIS through the ZOOM conferencing platform.

First term of 2018 focuses on the commonwealth Games for students and parents will be learning about Braille Music. We have technology set up to enable students and parents to link in from anywhere in Queensland.

We are looking at funding sources to try and secure some students flights to Brisbane during Braille club.

## Braille club Dates for 2018

* Term 1 - 17th Feb Commonwealth Games activities (with Queensland Blind Cricket)
* Term 2 - 28th April Boguslow Marek (Bob) special guest from Poland. – Adults, youth and children
* Term 3 - 28th July
* Term 4 - 20th Oct

After ensuring the continuation of Braille Club our next focus will be adults and what we can do to support their Braille in the Community.

At the recent AGM, all positions were re-elected –

* Melissa Fanshawe, convenor
* Karen Clark, secretary
* Sue, treasurer
* Karen Clark will represent the Queensland group at the Annual meeting.

After ensuring the continuation of Braille Club our next focus will be adults and what we can do to support their Braille in the Community.

# Appendix 3: Sydney Regional Braille forum Report

We meet in one of the function rooms at Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club and usually average between 20 to 30 people in attendance. While we have a number of blind citizens we also encourage ISTVs from DoE, RIDBC and the Catholic Education System as well as representatives from organisations such as Vision Australia and assistive technology providers. The first half of the meeting follows a business agenda discussing events in the field, summary of ABA and Roundtable meetings, accessibility issues, new resources available and braille-related questions. In the second part of the meeting we invite a guest speaker to discuss a topic of interest relevant to the group.

Last year three meetings were held as well as a very successful Awards Night celebrating our students’ achievements in the Braille Writing Competition at Burwood RSL. This annual competition is designed to promote braille literacy among our students and is continuing to grow in popularity every year.

Our first guest speaker was Galiema Gool, winner of the Premier IOOF Centre for Educational and Medical research Itinerant Support Teacher (Vision) Scholarship. She discussed the findings of her research and it was generally agreed that we need more structured programs for introducing Tactile Graphics to students. In our second meeting we had Blake Ison and Louie Tan from HumanWare demonstrating the BrailleNote Touch and in our third meeting Michelle Manea talked about her work in Vanuatu.

At the Braille Competition Award night we were privileged to have Kate Forsythe, an internationally bestselling and award winning author of almost 40 books. She kindly contributed a story starter for the competition and spoke about how she started writing from a very early age using her daily family experiences as springboards for her imagination. Kate also assisted with presenting the awards to our successful entrants. Some of her books were transcribed into braille as awards. The theme this year was ‘Space’ and we had 37 students who participated in the competition. We had entrants from both public and independent schools. Some student’s travelled long distances to attend the Award’s Night. The standard of their braille including correct use of contractions and formatting was very pleasing. The recognition of their efforts, to not only their parents, but also their teachers, ISTVs and wider school community raises the awareness of the importance of braille reading and writing skills for vision-impaired /blind students.

We were extremely fortunate to have very generous sponsors from DoE (State Braille & Large Print Services), Quantum RLV, Humanware, Pacific Vision and Guide Dogs. A range of assistive technology which will equip our young students for the future, was also gratefully provided. Donations to our popular raffle was extremely well supported. We are looking forward to another exciting year for the Sydney Braille Forum in 2018. The dates will be Tuesday 20th March, 15th May and the 18th September. The Awards Night for the braille competition will be 20th November.

Sandra Robertson – Convenor, Sydney Braille Forum

# Appendix 4: Member report - Braille House

2017 brought more change and growth for Braille House amongst a changing environment so there was no resting on our laurels. Having bedded down the General Manager role for the organization, the Council worked throughout the year focusing on the strategic issues for the organization leaving the day to day to the GM. One of the major exercises for the Council was to instigate and lead Braille House’s most extensive Strategic Planning process to date. The process commenced with the Council discussing and articulating its proposed strategic direction for the organization for the next 5 years (2018-2022). This information, including Vision, Mission, Values and Key Outcomes formed the basis of a survey which was sent to some 400 stakeholders in our community. We were happy to see a good response was received from all groups of stakeholders to the survey.

From this information Key Strategies were developed to support the Key Outcomes and so was finalized the Braille House Strategic Plan 2018-2022. In late March, the Council was joined by staff, volunteers, clients and other stakeholders to take this plan and discuss how we are going to achieve it. Many great outcomes came from the workshop and the challenge for the organization is to implement strategies and activities to achieve our goals, continue to service our clients at a very high level and to remain relevant and contemporary.

Another major initiative in 2017 was the development and implementation of our Braille Awareness Program. The program commenced as a box of fun games and activities that can be undertaken by children ages 2 to 15 to give them an awareness of what it is like with impaired sight and braille. Our little boxes became a hit very fast and with the help of a volunteer who is a children’s performer and armed also with our twin-vision picture books, we have spent time with many children in schools, kindies, early childhood centers etc exploring their magic fingers which help them to read braille. Our program is ever expanding with the recent introduction of a Corporate Library Membership for organisations which want to borrow our books to have as part of their libraries and resources (we can lend all over Australia).

2017, amongst many other things, also saw the introduction of e-braille books into our library and our library catalogue being available on-line. Our book selection process was also reviewed in the hope that the titles going into our library align with what readers and prospective readers want. Our library resources are continuously growing and everyone is encouraged to pop on-line and borrow.

Since we last reported to the ABA AGM, we have also experienced a growth in our braille production including restaurant menus, business cards and brochures. These activities are a key focus for Braille House in the coming years.

2018 brings another exciting year for Braille House. We look forward to reporting again next year on our advancements and successes.

# Appendix 5: Member report - Vision Australia

Braille statistics from the library: in the 2016-17 financial year the following braille was loaned:

* 2356 literary braille titles in hardcopy.
* 103 music braille titles in hardcopy.
* 324 print braille titles in hardcopy.
* 221 braille music titles were downloaded.

The percentage of hard copy titles borrowed was approximately 38%.

Adults learning braille are still attending The Braille users support Telelink group which meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month.

The Feelix Library enjoyed a great story morning with our patron Sigrid Thornton in September 2017. About 12 families attended. In July we ran another story morning for a smaller group with a story “Wiggly Worms”. We had 5 families attend, of whom 2 were very new clients. One was only 4 weeks old and the other just recently diagnosed with a brain tumour.

We ran a tactile book workshop for the Kimberley Clark sales Group. The objective was to give them an understanding of how tactile materials enhance a blind child’s understanding of experiences. There were 10 groups of 5 people each. Five groups produced a tactile mat entitled “A Day at the Beach” and the other five made tactile mats called “A Day at the Farm”. As well as making the mats, sewing on cow noisemakers and so on, they were supported in writing braille on them and developing sound tracks to go with them.

We worked with channel 9 and one of our young clients in our Santa letters campaign. She had written her braille letter to Santa via the Feelix Library.

The family came to our Kooyong office for the film shoot and Santa arrived to deliver her braille reply from him. This was a news event that week on Channel 9.

We passed our membership total of 1500 children having been serviced by Feelix since 2003. At present we are servicing 470 children.

# Appendix 6: Member report - Statewide Vision Resource Centre

The Statewide Vision Resource Centre is the Department of Education and Training (Victoria) facility that supports students who are blind or have low vision. We provide alternative format materials on request as well as running programs for teachers, students and families. We support students with vision impairments anywhere from Prep to year 12, in any school.

By the end of the 2017 school year, we had filled over 1,000 requests for braille and tactile materials. One student about to make his transition to the tertiary education world kept us busily Brailling all year. One of his maths textbooks, translated into 52 volumes of braille!! And that’s only one of the books he needed. We hit the record for the most number of pages of braille to translate one page of a print maths books – it took 81 braille pages!!! All the effort was well worth it when this student scored a 95+ ATAR in his final year.

2018 has seen an unusually high number of braille-reading students start school in Victoria. We had eight little braille-users start in Prep (or Foundation) in eight different schools. The second half of 2017 saw us inviting these youngsters, their families and teachers in to SVRC for several sessions developed to assist their transition into school. Each school received technology specific to their child’s needs, including braille writers, embossers, Duxbury, PIAF machines and more. They also started the school year with a large collection of braille and tactile materials. Whatever was requested by one school was duplicated for the others.

SVRC also developed additional books and activities to supplement our Ozzie Dots braille reading program. Ozzie Dots is a ‘reading resource’ developed by SVRC to assist students to learn the UEB braille code. There is a set of more than 60 books which allows for practice of each of the abbreviations and contractions found in braille. For example, there is a set of books that allow for practice of “can” in braille, which appears as the letter “c”. There is another set for the special sign “the”. With this cohort of students new to braille, we developed some books and exercises to be help introduce and practice the braille alphabet. These will be used alongside the school resources, the bulk of which are also translated by SVRC, or by Education Support Staff in schools.

The Christmas school holidays are our peak production time with every student with a vision impairment making the transition to their next school level. We supply any braille materials requested and, in the case of the many students who use an electronic note-taker with a refreshable braille display, we might supply an electronic version to read on their device.

- Marion Blazé

# Appendix 7: Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT) Update

The New Zealand Code Maintenance Committee (NZCMC) has met and discussed the apostrophe issue and is still supporting Option one.

The Australian Braille Authority and BANZAT continue to work in partnership to set and mark the Trans-Tasman Certificate of Proficiency in Unified English Braille, Candidates for the examination are drawn from teachers studying to become resource teachers vision, classroom teacher aides supporting braille using students, parents of braille students and staff of the Blind Foundation teaching braille to adults. Candidates who sat 12, candidates who passed 10, including one braille user. This will be the 10th year this examination has been done jointly and NZ sets this one.

BANZAT received a donation of $3,000 towards the cost of prizes for braille reading competitions for children. Plans are underway for a competition in September of this year.

Strategic Framework for the Provision of Braille Services initiated by Blind Citizens NZ: BANZAT has participated in discussions to develop this Strategic Framework which is expected to be presented to the Boards of the founding bodies later in 2018.

Accessible Signage Guidelines Version 3 are in the process of review to align more closely with the Australian Wayfinder Guidelines.

BANZAT administers its website, the New Zealand braille email discussion list, a Facebook page and a Twitter feed that promote literacy through braille including articles of interest about teaching braille and new braille technology.

# Appendix 8: Braille Literacy, Pacific Island Countries

This brief report, produced by Ben Clare on behalf of the Australian Braille Authority details the current status of Braille literacy in several Pacific Island nations as well as highlighting some Braille related activities which are directly and positively impacting the increasing awareness of Braille and the adoption of UEB amongst blind readers and writers, ranging from student learners to professional employers and employees.

This report is a brief record of the Braille related activities I have been involved in over the past twelve months and I am honoured to be able to share this information with AGM attendees for informational purposes. In my absence, I humbly ask that a representative read this information on my behalf. Thanks!

## Introduction

Braille literacy continues to expand across the Pacific. While accurate statistics are not currently available, several major donors who work in the education sector, including UNICEF, Christian Blind Mission, the Canada Fund and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are focusing on increasing access to Braille resources and training of both teachers and students which is having a positive impact in at least four countries in the region, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Kiribati. These four nations have recently adopted extensive inclusive education policies which recognise every citizen’s right to quality education, including students with disability. To this end, Ministries of Education and their funding partners have made it a priority to make alternative formatted texts available to whoever requires them, along with training of teachers and equipment for production of these materials.

## Country Overviews

### Fiji

In Fiji, the Special Education Unit within the Ministry of Education possesses Braille embossers which are used to produce national school exams for 15 blind students who are fluent Braille readers and writers and who are studying at the Fiji Society for the Blind and regular schools throughout the country. I have worked with Ministry of Education staff on exam production using Braille embossers and DBT translation software and this has been very successful with exams being produced and made available to students at the same time as their sighted counterparts, something that was a challenge in previous years. The importance of introducing Braille to children as soon as possible after birth is also recognised and teaching Braille has been incorporated into early intervention programs that are run by the Ministries of Education and Health respectively. Three early intervention specialists are Braille literate with training provided by myself and the Fiji Society for the Blind with more expected to undertake training later this year.

The United Blind Persons of Fiji advocacy group continues to promote Braille literacy with several members training adults who are blind and who were not enrolled in school previously. The use of UEB in Fiji is now widespread although texts in the older English Braille still exist, owing to the fact the country receives donations of books from Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere.

### Samoa

In Samoa, the newly formed Samoa Blind Association is working on devising a Braille code for the Samoan language, similar to what was done with the Maori language in New Zealand some years ago. A small committee of Braille literate members has been formed and many ideas on the layout of the Samoan Braille code have been discussed and experimented with and I am encouraged by the group’s progress although obtaining consensus on some aspects is difficult to obtain. The Samoan Ministry of Education has promised the Samoan Braille code, along with Braille as a form of writing will be formally recognised and endorsed once the Samoan Braille code has been finalised.

### Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, the number of young Braille learners appears to have decreased with the numbers of available teachers declining. This is being addressed by the Ministry of Education in partnership with Callan Services, a nongovernment organisation working in the disability sector nationwide, Save the Children Australia and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT.) As part of the ultimate goal of rapidly increasing the numbers of students with disability enrolling in school, the multi-year project will seek to make Braille equipment and training opportunities available to teachers who can then work with blind students and others in the rural village environment.

Meanwhile, Braille literate people in PNG continue to excel with seven students currently studying at the University of Goroka and three more who graduated last year and are now working as secondary school teachers in the Ministry of Education. All these students and teachers used Braille as their primary reading and writing method, backed up with computers with voice output software and Braille is produced by the Mount Sion Centre for Disabled Persons, also located in Goroka.

In June last year, I attempted to address the all too common issue of Braille machines malfunctioning and the lack of repair options. Worldwide, this issue often results in people missing out on getting access to Braille as machines are simply stored or thrown away with the prospect of receiving new equipment an expensive one for individuals and-or service providers.

As part of my role as Pacific Regional Chairperson with ICEVI, I partnered with Perkins Solutions in the United States to offer Braille repair training workshops to technicians in the Pacific. My first country was Papua New Guinea. Perkins provided me with online training as well as the equipment needed to disassemble Perkins Braillers and make repairs, mostly through cleaning damaged internal components but also replacing parts as required. This training also focused on how local hardware stores and other suppliers could be used to gather necessary materials to carry out Braille machine repairs, thus making the project more sustainable.

With funding from Christian Blind Mission, I gathered 8 trainees, including one totally blind technician together for the training program which ran over a 1-week period. The trainees came from the Ministry of Education, Callan Services and St John Centre for the Blind in Port Moresby. During this program, 20 previously unusable Braillers were repaired and are now being utilised by blind users once again. As part of Perkins Solutions ongoing partnership, technicians are required to train others and to continue repairing Braillers where needed. This is continuing and my last report from Papua New Guinea suggests more than 60 Braillers are now back in service, a great achievement!

I am planning to roll out similar projects in Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, subject to available funding.

### Kiribati

Exciting things are also happening in Kiribati. The Kiribati Teachers College is responsible for training and certifying all teachers who work in the education system in Kiribati. In line with their recently adopted inclusive education policy, all student teachers are required to undergo a relatively extensive course on inclusive education. Furthermore, the college in partnership with the Australian funded Kiribati Education Improvement Plan (KIEP) has devised a separate 12-month course, specifically aimed at support teachers, also known as visiting or itinerant teachers who are guaranteed employment with the Ministry of Education and who will be deployed to schools where students with disability will be enrolled. Amongst the various components of this course are several units on the production of alternative formatted text, including Braille, large print and accessible electronic texts using a scanner, pearl camera and smart phone apps such as KNFB Reader. I produced this course component and will be delivering it for the first time to students in June this year.

At this time, the Kiribati School and Centre for Children with Special Needs is the only facility where Braille literacy is taught and there are six fluent Braille readers and writers studying there at this time. Having more Braille teachers and the possibility of making Braille training available to adult learners is hoped to be addressed by the teacher aid course.

One of the fluent Braille readers from the Special School has just commenced working at ANZ Bank Kiribati and his knowledge of Braille has helped him immensely. Working in Reception, it was necessary for him to have the various extension numbers written in Braille for quick reference and this works very well for him. This student is the first ever blind person to have fulltime employment in the country.

If you have any questions or are interested in assisting me in my work, I would love to hear from you!

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