Australian Braille Authority Annual Meeting Minutes

Saturday, 4 May 2018

Braille House,

507 Ipswich Rd, Annerley QLD 4103

Chair: Jordie Howell

Minute Takers: Sam Taylor and Leona Holloway

# Welcome and Personnel

## Roll call

**Annette Sutherland** – Sydney Braille Forum (delegate) and NSW Department of Education and Training (observer)

**David Vosnacos** – VisAbility (observer)

**Deb Lewis** – Statewide Vision Resource Centre, Victorian Department of Education and Training (delegate)

**Hattie Lloyd** – South Australia School for Vision Impaired (observer)

**Julie Miles** – Department of Education WA (observer)

**Jordie Howell** – Statewide Vision Resource Centre (observer), Vision Australia (observer); ABA Chair

**Josie Howse** – NSW Department of Education and Training (delegate); ABA Executive member

**Kathy Riessen** - South Australia School for Vision Impaired (delegate); ABA Executive member

**Leona Holloway** – Monash University (observer); ABA Correspondence Secretary

**Maria Stevens** – Braille Authority of New Zealand Aoteaorea Trust (BANZAT) (delegate)

**Marie Shang** – braille consumer (observer)

**Mary Schnackenberg** – Braille Authority of New Zealand Aoteaorea Trust (BANZAT); Accessible Information and Communications Ltd. (observer)

**Mike Dowling** – Federation University (observer)

**Mitzi Raaphorst** – Vision Australia (delegate)

**Nigel Herring** - Pentronics (observer)

**Paul Brown** – Braille Authority of New Zealand Aoteaorea (BANZAT); Office of the Ombudsman New Zealand (observer)

**Ross de Vent** – Description Victoria (observer)

**Sally Balwin –** Braille House (observer)

**Saskia Meulenberg** – consumer (observer)

**Scott Erichsen** – consumer (observer)

**Shirley Henderson** - Department of Education WA (delegate)

**Sonali Marathe** – Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) (observer); Round Table President

**Sondra Wibberley** – Blind Citizens Australia (delegate); Round Table Executive member

Sam Taylor – Pacific Vision (Observer); ABA Minutes Secretary

**Tom Macmahon** – Education Queensland, Narbethong (observer), ABA Queensland Forum

**Tristan Clare** - Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) (delegate); ABA Executive member

## Apologies

**Melissa Fanshawe** – Queensland Braille Authority Convenor

**Christine Simpson** – Information Alternatives

**Sandra Robertson** – Sydney Braille Forum Convenor

## 1.3 In memoriam

### PAM Sandhu

Patricia Agnes Margaret (PAM) Sandhu

Born on 19 November 1939,

Passed away on 16 February 2019

Aged 79 years

PAM was an extraordinarily talented Braille Transcriber, tactile illustrator and teaching assistant. She worked at Townsend House, later Townsend School and then SA School for Vision Impaired in a career spanning nearly 50 years.

In her own words:

“When I left school all I ever wanted to do was be a florist. I was lucky enough to go to the best florist in Adelaide at the time, Sewells on Rundle St. It was very heavy work and in those days we didn’t have refrigerators. Every night we would take the flowers down to the cellar and it was very hard work so I hurt my back and that was the end of me being a florist after two years.

So I thought, ‘well I love dogs’ so I will try to train a guide dog. I learnt they didn’t have female guide-dog trainers. They only could be kennel maids keeping the kennels clean. At the time I had read about a young blind girl in SA, Ruby, the only one with a seeing-eye dog. I thought, I will ring her up and see what she had to say about all this. I met her and the dog and we became great friends. One day she was going to her letterbox and everything was in print and I thought, wouldn’t it be fun to learn braille so I could translate her letters and she could read them. So I decided as a surprise for her I would go off and learn braille.

There was an elderly man that had been wounded in the war and he had a little lane off Grenfell St. I would catch the tram and went to him every week for a braille lesson. I got a job at Townsend School for the Blind and I was the only paid braille transcriber in the state. I was there for 50 years and Ruby and I are still friends.”

I got to know PAM over many years. She was passionate about literacy, not so much numeracy, and she was passionate about braille.

PAM’s transcription career was mostly done on the Perkins. In her later time she developed severe arthritis and fibromyalgia. At this time PAM moved from formal transcription to classroom support, in particular working with our younger braille learners.

It was during this time that PAM developed what we at SASVI affectionately know as “PAM’s Little Books”. These are a series of small books, about 10 cm square, one for each letter of the alphabet. Each book begins and ends with a simple poem which is read with the student. Each page of the book has a word (always contracted) and some form of tactile. Sometimes it is a raised drawing, sometimes a real object stuck in such as a small bell on a ribbon. Sometimes there is a small bag to open, finding a treasure such as a lolly to eat or a cinnamon stick to smell. PAM’s legacy lives on as these books are constantly being renewed and replenished.

PAM spent many years transcribing letters, recipes, notes for her friends and whilst she accepted the adoption of UEB, she was also a strong advocate of BUOC the Braille Users Own Code, for personal use.

A Service for PAM was held at Chapel of Berry’s Funeral Home, 204 Magill Road, Norwood, on Tuesday, 26th February 2019.

- Kathy Riessen

### Dianna Braun

Dianna Braun died in April 2019, aged 81, after a long illness.

Dianna was a long-standing and active member of the Association of Blind Citizens of NSW/ACT and Blind Citizens Australia.  Dianna played a pivotal role with the Association of Blind Citizens of NSW as its librarian, a position she held in a paid capacity for many years). Material in the library was available to blind and vision impaired adults residing in NSW and in the early days was also used by itinerant support teachers for blind school students. Dianna also served on Royal Blind Society of NSW Library Services consultation groups as a consumer representative.

In addition to her duties as librarian, Dianna also transcribed (by hand) some material for access by braille readers. Dianna was a presenter on Outlook (the Association's weekly radio program), served on the organisation's Management Committee after retiring from her paid employment and worked hard to raise funds to support the organisation's work - often opening up her home for this purpose.

In later years, Dianna played a very active role in the BCA Sydney Branch, undertaking fundraising activities and serving as President for at least 2 terms.

Dianna was instrumental in highlighting the challenges unique to blind/vision impaired women in Australia and overseas with her work culminating in establishment of the BCA National Women's Branch.  Some of you may have fond memories of the Branch's inaugural publication - Women in Touch - an audio magazine including interviews on a variety of topics, recipes and other items of interest to female members. Dianna was central to compiling information for inclusion in this publication and interviewing many of its contributors. Concerned to ensure availability of information on home nursing and parenting based on the lived experiences of blind/vision impaired women, she initiated publication by the National Women's Branch of booklets on these subjects which benefited many. The National Women's Branch have named their Aspirations Award in honour of Diana.

Dianna was very supportive of the work of the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Inc in the early years of its existence. She was a member of the ABA NSW Subcommittee and served as a member of the Braille Competition Working Party. She was also a member of the NSW TABMAP committee on Tactual Mapping.

Dianna dedicated much of her life to improving quality of life for people with blindness/vision impairment.  She valued Braille highly and recognised its importance as a key to literacy.  Dianna was an avid reader of Braille and audio books.  She enjoyed sharing her reading experiences with others. Those who knew Dianna were impressed by her passion for whatever cause with which she involved herself.  While at times forthright, she was also very caring. We thank her for her passion, tireless efforts to improve opportunity for people who are blind/vision impaired through promotion of literacy and reading, and support through her fundraising and advocacy work.

– prepared by Sondra Wibberley and read by Josie Howse

# Administration

## 2.1 Meeting arrangements

## 2.2 Arrangements for ABA workshop Monday 6th May

Kathy Riessen will be running the ABA workshop on Monday, launching the ABA Guidelines on Foreign Language Material.

## 2.3 Confirmation of meeting agenda

Two additional items to be discussed under “other business”: Nigel to talk about the quality of braille paper, and Jordie to announce Onkyo braille competition.

# Minutes of 2018 Annual Meeting

## 3.1 Tabling of meeting minutes of 5 May 2018

The minutes were passed by the ABA Exec and are available in the materials circulated for this meeting by Round Table and on the ABA website at <http://brailleaustralia.org/archives/>.

## 3.2 Business arising from 2018 minutes not listed elsewhere

None.

# 4. Reports

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

Refer to [Appendix 1](#_Appendix_1:_Report). Jordie Howell read highlights from her report.

Ross de Vent asked about the mini music camp that was recently held in Queensland. Tom McMahon will talk about this under item 4.4.

The report was formally accepted.

## 4.2 Round Table Update—Sonali Marathe (Round Table President)

ABA is a very important subcommittee of Round Table. Sonali congratulated ABA on all of the work you have done, and for the commitment to braille. She acknowledged countless hours dedicated to these activities.

2018 has been very busy for Round Table. At last year’s Conference, there was a record high number of exhibitors and delegates. The Round Table Conference is the organisation’s flagship event, giving member organisations the chance to learn, showcase and network. Another important activity is creation and review of guidelines. Last year, Round Table launched its revised [Guidelines for Producing Accessible E-text](http://printdisability.org/guidelines/guidelines-for-accessible-e-text-2018/). Josie Howse and her working group has completed updated Guidelines for Accessible Assessments. They will be launched shortly. Work has also commenced on updating the Guidelines for Conveying Visual Information, chaired by Annette Sutherland. Thanks are extended to Josie and Annette.

Round Table is a proud partner of a new 3D printing project with Monash University. The project has two components: 3D for mapping and wayfinding, and 3D printed materials for education. A presentation about the project will be given by Matt Butler tomorrow and workshop run by Leona on Tuesday.

Round Table have always wanted a database of all available accessible material. They are now working with the national library to create just such a national record. We used to use the master catalogue from CAL but this is no longer an option due to changes in copyright. Round Table are also working with the Australian Blindness Forum and Vision2020.

Round Table has formed a trusted partnership with publishing entities to ensure that materials are made available electronically for the creation and distribution of accessible materials. They have also engaged with Australian Publishers Association. The Australian Inclusive Publishing Hub will feature a list of trusted entities, with whom publisher files will be made available. Please supply your Round Table Member organisations details to [Marjorie Hawkings](mailto:admin@printdisability.org). This is an initiative of the Australian Inclusive Publishing Initiative, who are also working to ensure that books are first created in a more accessible format right from the start. For example, a lot of books are written that are not meaningful for vision impaired children; authors have been asked to take this into account. A guide on Inclusive Publishing will be launched at the Round Table Conference tomorrow and will be made available at <http://aipi.com.au/>.

Round Table would like to engage more with the tertiary sector. As a first step, RT presented at last year’s ATEND Conference.

Josie Howse commented that she is excited after years of struggle, we are finally starting to break through that wall with acceptance from publishers about the needs for accessible materials. Josie had a full day meeting with Cambridge University Press just recently. They are beginning to better understand what accessibility means and why it is important.

Hattie asked about online learning resources, not just textbooks. Sonali has spoken with Pearson and some other publishers.

Josie would like to develop a “gold star standard in accessibility” that There is an annual award for accessibility and inclusion. Elsevier were a winner.

Sonali reported that in the US, Benetech is pushing for tactile graphics and 3D models to be made available with textbooks.

Sally Balwin commented that Braille House has a lot of books in its library. They approach publishers by first telling them what’s in it for them, and getting a greater level of cooperation. Australian Geographic, Australian Reader’s Digest and Australian Women’s Weekly are now supplied to Braille House on the day that they are released in print. Sonali agreed as RT are taking the same approach. They provide the business case – money from VI market and corporate responsibility.

Hattie Lloyd suggested that we could also offer free proofreading as an incentive for publishers(!)

Breaking news! Sonali Marathe stated that Carol Brown has just announced that Labour have made an election promise to provide $2 million for Australian Inclusive Publishing. They will also put forward 4 million for audio description on SBS and ABC.

## 4.3 Regional Braille Forum reports

### 4.3.1 Queensland Braille Forum – Tom McMahon

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

Tom emphasised that it is important to link braille-using students with one another. Braille Club serves this purpose as well as providing more encouragement and support for braille learning and use. The Forum is also a good opportunity for teachers to get more professional development relating to braille.

Sally Balwin reported that the Braille Club kids held a very successful busking session outside the local Woolworths.

### 4.3.2 Sydney Braille Forum – Tristan Clare

Refer to [Appendix 3](#_Appendix_4.3.2:_Sydney).

## 4.4 Music working group report

Lee Strickland, who coordinated the Queensland Braille Music Camp, will present at the Round Table Conference on Tuesday.

Tom McMahon reported they were lucky to get some funding for the Camp. It was held at St Joseph's Nudgee College with catering and dormitory accommodation. The camp was held over 3 days. It began with O&M introduction to the camp. This also involved tactile map reading. There were braille music workshops at all levels. The focus of music education in high schools has changed a lot in recent years: Today there is less emphasis on reading music scores. Braille music users in high school may now be self-taught. Technology skills are now more important, e.g. access to garage band.

Itinerant teachers, teacher aides and classroom teachers also attended to learn about braille music and how to best support their students in access to music education.

A concert was held on the last night. On the last morning, students spoke up with suggestions with how support in schools could be improved.

## 4.5 Member reports

### 4.5.1 Queensland Braille Writing Association – Sally Balwin

No written report available.

The Children’s Librarywon the “What’s On For Kids” Award for not-for-profits in 2018.

The [Braille House website](https://www.braillehouse.org.au/) was updated last year and is fully accessible. It includes an online shop, as an extension of the Braille House shop.

The Queensland State Library “friends of State Library” chose to produce a 3D replication of RF Tunley’s globe. RF Tunley was “the godfather to blind children” in Queensland, inventing handmade materials for them. The 3D replica is on display at the State Library, close to Rydges. The braille has been sharpened on the replica.

In the Braille Literacy Challenge last year there were 35 entrants, including 5 remotely.

For every 100 books a sighted person can access, a blind person can only access 3-5. Braille House are motivated to improve this statistic.

Mitzi Raaphorst congratulated Braille House on their award.

### 4.5.2 Vision Australia – Mitzi Raaphorst

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

Mitzi added that the library want to convert a lot of their existing braille titles to online so they can be downloaded from the online catalogue.

### 4.5.3 Statewide Vision Resource Centre (SVRC) Victoria – Deb Lewis

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

Deb added that significant funding has been received through the Inclusive Education Initiative. SVRC now have a library of new equipment for use by students.

The “What is music” ABC program still available on iView at <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/what-is-music>.

### 4.5.4 Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children

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

### 4.5.5 SPEVI

Kathy Riessen reported that SPEVI 2020 Conference is in January next year, to be held in Adelaide. The call for papers has just been released.

### 4.5.6 Blind Citizens Australia – Sondra Wibberley

Sondra commented that Labour’s promise regarding money for audio description has resulted from much work by BCA.

There was a forum in Canberra at which people shared their personal stories about their experiences without audio description. There has been a lot of advocacy.

BCA ensures that all of its publications are available in a range of formats, including braille.

BCA had its biennial convention in Hobart recently. It was an AIRA site. They had a number of sessions, including on the future of work. There is a clear link between braille literacy and employment, so BCA has braille usage in the forefront of its considerations.

“BCA: Our legacy” was a series of interviews with blind people recollecting their experiences and advocacy efforts for change. They will be released on the BCA website once the 2RPH broadcast of the 5-part series has been released. Recordings include Joan Ledermann, Dianna Braun, Marie Shang and Sondra Wibberley.

At the BCA Convention there was a policy launched on expectations of blindness agencies. BCA is concerned that if people want materials in braille, they should be able to receive it. We hope that there will be a spike in demand for braille as a result.

## 4.6 Publications

### 4.6.1 Past ABA Guidelines (Formatting, UEB training manual & DBT Producer's Manual)

Nothing to report.

### 4.6.2 Guidelines for the Transcription of Foreign Language Material - Kathy Riessen

Kathy introduced the work done over the last year on documenting guidelines for the transcription of Foreign Language Material.

Kathy has a passion for good quality guidelines that are endorsed and used by all. ABA has developed a series of braille guidelines over the years. For the first time, we now have the ABA Guidelines for Foreign Language Material, available from the ABA website at <http://brailleaustralia.org/unified-english-braille/languages/>.

Over the past year, meetings have been held with a small working party. Kathy emphasised that while she edited the guidelines, the copyright belongs to ABA. Thanks are extended to everyone who contributed to the documents, and particularly to Yuko Kamada who assisted with the segment on Japanese. Kathy extended a plea to all members of ABA to document the processes that you are following to share, standardise and assist those who are working in isolation.

As they worked through the issues, Kathy realised that it would be best to have a series of small documents: One overall document explaining the UEB rules for foreign language and the Australian approach for applying these rules; and a series of documents that are specific to one language. There is not a document on Chinese – this is needed!

Mike Dowling asked about how you distinguish between hiragana, katakana and kanji for braille. That will be covered in the workshop on Monday.

Sondra Wibberley asked whether the PDF versions are fully accessible. Kathy has done her best but invited people to let her know if they have trouble with any elements of them, as the examples are quite complex and best read as braille. Sondra also congratulated Kathy on how much this has progressed in the last year.

Ross de Vent asked whether other countries will implement our guidelines. Kathy answered that UKAAF and BANA have guidelines that are similar to the ABA general guidelines. However, they don’t extend to languages based on a non-latin alphabet.

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

We now have 74 people certified in UEB in Australia.

This year, there were a lot of errors in shortforms, which were missed. Some en and in contractions were back-to-front. These are not UEB errors, they simply reflect a lack of knowledge of the braille code. There were also some fingering errors (braillos).

Thanks are extended to everyone involved in preparing and administering the test in Australia: David … and Amrita Nelson (marking), Kathy Riessen (preparing and distributing materials), Tristan Clare (preparing files for touch readers), and Maria Stevens for collegiality across the ditch. Congratulations are extended to the successful candidates.

Maria Stevens commented that the same kind of errors occur in New Zealand. They are careless errors; people are not checking their work properly. The same mistake is made on one page but not on the next. This year marks 10 years since the Trans-Tasman Proficiency was implemented. Ten of 12 candidates passed in New Zealand last year.

Mary Schnackenberg reported that New Zealand have had 137 passes since 2008 because vision specialist teachers (RTVs) are expected to pass the certificate. They do that as part of their university qualification to teach students with vision impairment. O&M instructors and Blind Foundation staff are also expected to sit the test.

## 4.8 Communication with members

### 4.8.1 Facebook page—Leona Holloway

The ABA facebook page is a friendly space where up-to-date braille news is shared.

The page is located at <https://www.facebook.com/BrailleAustralia/> and has over 750 followers.

The most popular updates this year were as follows. All reached over 1,000 people.

* World Braille Day
* Changes to [Federal Funding for accessible formats in Australia](http://www.proprint.com.au/News/392176,federal-govt-cuts-braille-print-funding.aspx)
* Discussion of braille on lift buttons
* A statement that “[we must continue to invest in braille](https://commonwealthmagazine.org/opinion/we-must-continue-to-invest-in-braille/)”
* Braille music on ABC’s “[what is music?”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaOEkLnqoco)
* A [lunchtime braille club](http://westernweekender.com.au/2018/08/super-cooper-inspires-his-classmates/) at Emu Plain Public School
* The importance of [refreshable braille displays for the deafblind community](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-09/gadget-turns-iphone-screens-into-braille-to-help-deaf-and-blind/10732100) in Australia
* A call for [braille menus](http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-02/braille-menus-needed-to-accommodate-patrons-vision-impaired/9811100)
* Release of the [UEB Math Tutorial](https://uebmath.aphtech.org/) by APH
* [RIDBC video](https://www.facebook.com/ridbcrenwickcentre/videos/599799417067302/UzpfSTE0OTM0OTAyMTc2MzM5NDoxODcwOTEyOTE5NjA2OTg3/) for Global Accessibility Day
* Lego is set to release Lego bricks with braille.

All updates on the ABA facebook pages, along with comments made, are shared through ozbrl as a monthly digest. Note that over the last two months, information in the digest has been shortened to reduce the work involved in its production. Currently, it is sent as both text in the body of the email (without pictures) and an attachment. The meeting agreed that the in-text version (without images) is sufficient.

If you want to see all of ABA's updates throughout the month, you can 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 or friends that you have chosen to see first.

### 4.8.2 Ozbrl Listserv

Ozbrl is the primary official channel for communications from the Australian Braille Authority, as well as a place where anyone can ask/respond to questions about braille and post information about braille-related events. Official messages from Round Table of relevance are also posted to ozbrl.

The ozbrl list is open to anyone with an interest in braille in Australia. To join the 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 at [brailleaustralia.org](http://brailleaustralia.org/) continues to serve as an important means of sharing information about the Australian Braille Authority, offering resources and as a portal to information about the importance of braille and braille standards.

The website is continually updated and maintained. This year, the main updates have included:

* Creation of a news section, so that old news items can be retained in an archive. See <http://brailleaustralia.org/2019/>
* Addition of resources for sighted children to learn about braille. See <http://brailleaustralia.org/about-braille/#kids>
* Mrs May D. Harrison was added to the [Australian Braille Honour Roll](http://brailleaustralia.org/australian-braille-authority/past-leaders-australia/)

The [ABA Braille Services Directory](http://brailleaustralia.org/finding-braille/directory/) is still the most visited page. It lists braille service providers in the areas of braille transcription, music braille transcription, braille equipment sales and repairs, and braille signage companies. A number of providers have been added to the Directory in the last year, including quite a few Perkins Brailler repairers.

The Welcome, About Braille and Unified English Braille pages have each received more than 2000 visits in the past year and the total number of visitors to the site has increased from 15,000 in 2017 to 19,000 in 2018. We are pleased to know that the information and resources offered by ABA are being accessed by so many people. Braille is indeed alive and well in Australia.

### 4.8.4 Correspondence—Leona Holloway (Correspondence Secretary)

The majority of correspondence comes to the ABA email address, [aba@printdisability.org](mailto:aba@printdisability.org), from the website. We also receive some queries through the ABA facebook page. They are usually fairly simple questions that I can answer directly (often by pointing them back to the website) but on some occasions I do consult with the ABA executive or make a public appeal to the group through ozbrl or the facebook page, as necessary. I have made adjustments to the website based on the sorts of questions that people ask so that the next person can find the answer more easily.

# International Reports

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

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

BANZAT have met to discuss the apostrophe issue, confirming that they would like to retain the current rules.

There is a proposal from BANZAT to allow re-sits of the Proficiency Test, to be discussed with ABA.

BANZAT gratefully received a donation of money for prizes for braille competitions.

There is a braille song/jingle.

## 5.2 Braille in the Pacific

No report received.

## 5.3 ICEB

The International Council on English Braille (ICEB) oversees the use of braille in countries where English is the predominant spoken and written language. It was responsible for the creation of Unified English Braille, which is used in all member countries.

Australia is a member of ICEB along with Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, United Kingdom and USA.

### ICEB Executive—Leona Holloway

The Executive Committee meets quarterly via teleconference. Leona is Australia’s representative on the Executive Committee and Jordie Howell attends as Chair of the Music Braille Committee. We reported at last year’s meeting about the mid-term executive meeting held in Dublin. The next General Assembly will be held next year from May 10 in London. The week-long Assembly will be hosted by RNIB with most days hosted at their London headquarters. The Wednesday will be held in larger rooms at Quaker House as it will be more open to the public with papers, posters and display of braille technology, products and services. More information should be available later this month and the call for papers will be upcoming.

We have recently updated all of our information for new members, with a new membership category available for organisations and individuals. Nepal have indicated a desire to join ICEB after their recent formation of the Braille Authority of Nepal.

ICEB Committee members serve 4 year terms. The new committee will be elected at the General Assembly next year, after which country representatives and observers for the other committees will also be reaffirmed or changed. Please consider whether you would like to become more involved with ICEB. All appointments must be made through ABA.

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

Refer to the appropriate section in the ABA Chair’s report, Appendix 1.

## 5.5 UEB Code Maintenance — Leona Holloway

The UEB Code Maintenance Committee has the important task of reviewing and updating the Unified English Braille Code and its official documentation. Discussion of the apostrophe and quotation marks has continued over the past year and the issue is still not resolved.

Note that no changes have been made to UEB signs or the rules for their use in the last year. All updates since the second edition of the UEB Rulebook are listed on the ICEB website at <http://iceb.org/ueb.html>.

### 5.5.2 Update to the Guidelines for Technical Material

A subcommittee of the Code Maintenance Committee is dedicated to updating and revising the Guidelines for Technical Material (GTM).

The first section of the revised GTM, has been completed and approved but there has been a delay in its release because it is the first time that ICEB will be releasing its rules in Word format in addition to PDF and BRF.

We have started work on a rule for indicating omissions. Discussions revealed a desire for greater use of the sign for a visible space (dots 346). We will need to change the rules so that the visible space can be used within numeric mode. Use of the visible space indicator does present a problem within roots – solutions are being explored. Phyllis Landon hopes to send out a first draft of the rule next week.

## 5.6 ICEB Braille Technology Committee – Sam Taylor

Refer to the appropriate section in the ABA Chair’s report, Appendix 1.

## 5.7 ICEB Promotions Committee – Leona Holloway

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

The first two quarterly ICEB newsletters have been circulated in December 2018 and March 2019. Leona is always on the lookout for items and articles of potential interest. Please let her know of anything you think may be suitable, even if it is just something you don’t know much about but would like ICEB to find out more.

Refer also to the appropriate section in the ABA Chair’s report, Appendix 1.

## 5.8 ICEB Research Committee – Leona Holloway

The ICEB Braille Research Committee shares information about braille research and presentations at braille conferences via an email list. Emily White is Australia’s representative on the Committee.

One of the most interesting research articles circulated this year was Silverman & Bell (2018) "The Association between Braille Reading History and Well-being for Blind Adults". They conducted a survey of 443 legally blind adults and found that braille reading ability was positively correlated with higher life-satisfaction, self-esteem and employment rates.

## 5.9 World Braille Council – Leona Holloway

Refer to the appropriate section in the ABA Chair report, Appendix 1.

# 6. Other Business

## 6.1 Onkyo Braille Essay Competition – Jordie Howell

The Onkyo Braille Essay Competition will run again this year with submissions from Australia. The coordinating organisation will be announced shortly, and the deadline for entries is 15 June.

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

ANZAGG is a fairly new subcommittee of Round Table dedicated to sharing and developing information about accessible graphics: tactile graphics, descriptions, interactive audio, 3D printing, etc.

ANZAGG is still primarily operating as a group for communication, sharing news and events and ideas and expertise relating to accessible graphics including (but not only) tactile graphics.

We will be holding our annual meeting on Monday at 2pm (sadly at the same time that Frances and Josie will be presenting the launch of UEB Online for Math).

Membership is fairly informal. Please join us at the meeting, on our [listerv](http://www.freelists.org/list/accessiblegraphics), join the [discussion group on facebook](https://www.facebook.com/groups/909719082474080/) or check our [web pages](http://printdisability.org/about-us/accessible-graphics/).

### 6.3 Maps of the Round Table Conference

3D printed maps of the Round Table Conference and surrounds are available. Please see Leona Holloway if you are interested in taking a look outside the workshop.

## 6.4 Braille paper import – Nigel Herring

The quality of braille paper has drastically reduced in recent years.

American Thermoform have the best paper in the world. Paper manufactured by Index embossers in Sweden is also very good. There is no braille paper production in Australia.

Government restrictions now make it illegal to import paper without fulfilling (near impossible) requirements, e.g. the region the tree was harvested. The only loophole is that you can import paper valued at less than $1000.

The only paper coming in to Australia is not the appropriate quality for braille paper.

Nigel would like ABA to lobby for an exemption for braille paper. Nigel is happy to do the work on behalf of ABA with our support.

Josie and Jordie endorsed Nigel’s efforts. Josie has increased paper weight from 150 to 160gsm. Kathy has experienced similar problems and supports Nigel. Mary Schnackenberg said they have the same problem in New Zealand. RIDBC also want to purchase paper from American Thermoform Corporation. Sally Balwin offered to share information about braille paper used at Braille House.

Sondra Wibberley proposed a motion for ABA to work with Nigel Herring on application for an exemption on the import of braille paper, for the positive benefit of people who are Blind or have Low Vision. The motion was supported.

## 6.5 Braille on Webster packs

Ross de Vent thought he had lost his Webster pack and it took his pharmacy 20 minutes to find one with braille on it. The braille was very faint and on the very edge of the lid.

Sondra believes that BCA was contacted by a pharmaceutical organisation to seek input about ensuring braille on webster packs. Some research was undertaken. Different types of information were included on the packs. She suggested that we find out what the outcome of the research was and try to revisit it with the support of other bodies like BCA and Vision Australia.

Action: Ross de Vent to contact Emma Bennison from BCA to find out about past work and the need for further advocacy.

## 6.6 UEB online—Josie Howse

UEB Online is based on ABA’s UEB training 92 countries in the world and thousands of people have completed the course. It has been going for 5 years, since July 2015.

If they were to run an online graduate certificate at the end of the UEB Online course, could ABA endorse this? It is a certificate of completion, not a certificate of proficiency or accreditation. It would not replace the Trans-Tasman Certificate of Proficiency.

Kathy Riessen supports the concept but suggested that the formatting should test only rules, not guidelines. Josie is very conscious of the other 92 countries in the world, who may have other formatting guidelines. She thinks that there should be very little on formatting. Tristan Clare thought that it should not test formatting at all, just knowledge of contractions and rules for braille.

Mitzi Raaphorst asked if the online course involves reading braille. Yes, each lesson requires both print-to-braille and braille-to-print translation.

Hattie Lloyd said UEB Online has been fantastic for her when learning braille.

Deb Lewis commented that SVRC used to have a braille correspondence course but have discontinued it because there is no need now that UEB Online is available.

And in other news…

Josie announced that she will be retiring from the Department of Education and Training NSW on July 19. She will continue to work in the braille world doing consultancy, etc.

Jordie Howell thanked Josie for the incredible amount of work and passion that she has dedicated to braille over many years.

Sondra would like to move a motion of commendation and acclamation of the lifetime work of Josie Howse in the field of braille production and standard setting. Through her work, a lot of landmark changes have been achieved for the positive benefit of people who are blind.

# Feature Session: Tour of Braille House

QBWA was started by Lady Lamington 122 years ago. In the 1950s, QBWA moved in to Braille House, a classic Queenslander.

Only 33.5% of Australians make donations (including blood), apart from disaster relief. The not-for-profit sector is therefore very competitive. 97% of Braille House staff are volunteers.

# 7. The Brailler Boys

The Brailler Boys are Ian Newham and Kevin Partridge. In July last year they went to Boston for a 2 week course and completed the level III training. They are now the only warrantee-approved Perkins repairers in Australia.

They operate Australia-wide.

They have put together an international forum of Perkins repairers. The community is very responsive in answering queries regarding difficult problems.

# 8. Meeting Close

As the Chair of ABA, Jordie Howell extended her thanks to:

* Sally Balwin and her team for hosting our meeting today.
* The Round Table Executive and Marjorie Hawkings for their continued strong support of ABA and our activities.
* The ABA executive for their work during the year and at the meeting today.
* Regional Braille Forum convenors Sandra Robertson (NSW) & Melissa Fanshawe (Queensland)
* Sam Taylor and Leona Holloway for taking minutes.
* Josie and her team for coordinating the Trans-Tasman, and Tristan for formatting the examination for touch readers.
* David Vosnacos for being MC and to the mic runners.
* All who attended. ABA is an organisation of its members and depends on you for its success.

# Appendix 1: Report of the ABA Chair 2019 Report of the Chair—Jordie Howell

## Introduction

The ABA has enjoyed a fulfilling year of braille promotion, developing guidelines and maintaining high standards of braille across the country. At our last national meeting, all committee positions were up for election. Jordie Howell was the only nomination received for the position of Chair, and remains in this position for a second term. Two of our members did not re-stand. Ross de Vent chose to increase his involvement with other areas of accessibility, and Christine Simpson completed her term as Chair and also 25 years serving on the ABA executive; a tremendous effort which we acknowledge with deep appreciation. We welcomed Tristan Clare to the Executive, and welcomed back the remaining committee members and Regional Braille Forum convenors. Our Regional Braille Forums continue to run meetings, fun activities and host guest speakers to inspire members. Internationally, the work of ABA committee members features particularly in the promotions and public relations arm of ICEB with the publication of ICEB's first newsletter and continued updates to the ICEB website. Braille increases to be recognised internationally by the United Nations General Assembly which has adopted WBU's Resolution recognising the World Braille Day January 4 as a UN International Day. Member organisations have submitted reports featuring ways in which they have promoted braille through braille restaurant menus and other initiatives, we have an Order of Australia Medal to celebrate to recognise the achievements of a well-known music teacher and transcriber, and last year Australia added one more bank note in the new series of notes that display tactile markings.

## Structure and Accountability

The ABA oversees the maintenance and development of braille codes and standards and best practice across Australia; as well as promoting an awareness of braille as the primary literacy medium for people who are blind, deafblind or who are severely vision impaired. The ABA is a subcommittee of the Round Table, however its national meeting is held separately as the first day of the Round Table Conference each year. The executive committee is made up of the Chair and five members who are elected at the national meeting every two years. The convenors of our Regional Braille Forums attend executive meetings as “members in attendance”. Regional Braille Forums are a direct link between the ABA executive and individual members such as braille users, teachers, parents and braille producers. Our two forums operating currently are 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 which 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.

## ABA Executive Committee

The executive committee for 2018–2020:

**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 work with ABA includes assisting with developing braille formatting guidelines as well as running numerous workshops on the Duxbury Braille Translator and ABA guidelines. Kathy's thoroughness and attention to detail enables her to troubleshoot Duxbury queries and find answers to complex braille matters. Kathy is a skilled music transcriber. She co-wrote the Braille Music Australian Addendum which is published on the ABA website and is currently coordinating the development of the ABA Guidelines for Transcription of Foreign Language Material.

**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 assists with updating formatting guidelines. Josie answers queries received from the UEB Online website and many both in Australia and overseas have benefitted from Josie's support and tuition in braille.

**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 represents Australia on the ICEB Technical Committee.

**Tristan Clare**—Tristan has worked as a Braille Transcriber and proof-reader for the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children for 10 years. Tristan brings a detailed knowledge of UEB, braille maths and language to the ABA executive. In 2018, Tristan assisted with the development of ABA's Foreign Language Guidelines. She also undertook the task of marking up materials for touch readers for the 2018 Trans-Tasman Proficiency exam. Tristan has held the position of Secretary for the Sydney Regional Braille Forum for the past year.

**Sandra Robertson** (Sydney Braille Forum Convenor) and **Melissa Fanshawe** (Queensland Braille Forum Convenor) attend executive meetings and we are most grateful for their contributions and updates on forum activities each month. Thank you to this highly motivated and dedicated executive for your work and support this year.

## Regional Braille Forums

The Regional Braille Forums in Sydney and Queensland continue to promote braille by running a wide range of exciting activities.

In 2018, Sydney RBF invited several guest speakers to their meetings, including Rebecca Clark, who demonstrated new reading magnification software and braille notetakers. the group also had fun experimenting with the OrCam—an artificial vision device to help understand text, recognise faces and identify objects through audio feedback. Tricia D'Apice attended a meeting and fostered a lively debate concerning braille reading speeds evidenced in her research project and some teaching strategies to improve the statistics. The Braille Competition Award night hosted Susanne Gervay, a teacher, a specialist in child growth and development, an accomplished author. Some of her books were transcribed into braille as awards.

Queensland RBF is held in conjunction with Braille Club. This is gaining momentum with some amazing activities in 2018 such as Commonwealth Games Focus, Braille Busking and Hands on Maths with Professor Bob Marek. In 2019 the focus is on games and social interaction with an excursion to the Ekka!

As a committee, the forum decided to branch out to include an activity for adults. They held a Technology, wine and cheese evening in May. This was amazingly pulled together by Tom MacMahon where six companies came in and showcased their products!

## Communications

### ABA Website

The ABA website is the go-to place for braille producers, signage companies and individuals looking for braille guidelines, specifications or services.

It is located at [brailleaustralia.org](http://brailleaustralia.org/) and continues to serve as an important means of sharing information about the Australian Braille Authority, offering resources and as a portal to information about the importance of braille and braille standards.

The website is continually updated and maintained. This year, the main updates have included:

* Creation of a news section, so that old news items can be retained in an archive. See <http://brailleaustralia.org/2019/>
* Addition of resources for sighted children to learn about braille. See <http://brailleaustralia.org/about-braille/#kids>
* Mrs May D. Harrison was added to the [Australian Braille Honour Roll](http://brailleaustralia.org/australian-braille-authority/past-leaders-australia/)

The [ABA Braille Services Directory](http://brailleaustralia.org/finding-braille/directory/) is still the most visited page. It lists braille service providers in the areas of braille transcription, music braille transcription, braille equipment sales and repairs, and braille signage companies. A number of providers have been added to the Directory in the last year, including Perkins Brailler repairers.

The Welcome, About Braille and Unified English Braille pages have each likewise received more than 2000 visits in the past year and the total number of visitors to the site has increased from 15,000 in 2017 to 19,000 in 2018. We are pleased to know that the information and resources offered by ABA are being accessed by so many people. Braille is indeed alive and well in Australia.

### Facebook page

The ABA facebook page is a friendly space where up-to-date braille news is shared.

The page is located at <https://www.facebook.com/BrailleAustralia/> and has over 750 followers.

The most popular updates this year were as follows. All reached over 1,000 people.

* World Braille Day
* Changes to [Federal Funding for accessible formats in Australia](http://www.proprint.com.au/News/392176,federal-govt-cuts-braille-print-funding.aspx)
* Discussion of braille on lift buttons
* A statement that “[we must continue to invest in braille](https://commonwealthmagazine.org/opinion/we-must-continue-to-invest-in-braille/)“
* Braille music on ABC's “[what is music?”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaOEkLnqoco)
* A [lunchtime braille club](http://westernweekender.com.au/2018/08/super-cooper-inspires-his-classmates/) at Emu Plain Public School
* The importance of [refreshable braille displays for the deafblind community](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-09/gadget-turns-iphone-screens-into-braille-to-help-deaf-and-blind/10732100) in Australia
* A call for [braille menus](http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-02/braille-menus-needed-to-accommodate-patrons-vision-impaired/9811100)
* Release of the [UEB Math Tutorial](https://uebmath.aphtech.org/) by APH
* [RIDBC video](https://www.facebook.com/ridbcrenwickcentre/videos/599799417067302/UzpfSTE0OTM0OTAyMTc2MzM5NDoxODcwOTEyOTE5NjA2OTg3/) for Global Accessibility Day

If you want to see all of ABA's updates throughout the month, you can 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 or friends that you have chosen to see first.

### Ozbrl

Ozbrl is the primary official channel for communications from the Australian Braille Authority, as well as a place where anyone can ask/respond to questions about braille and post information about braille-related events. Official messages from Round Table of relevance are also posted to ozbrl.

The ozbrl list is open to anyone with an interest in braille in Australia. To join the 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. Now that DBT 12.3 has been released, there are some aspects of the manual which are out-of-date. We have started noting these items on the ABA website at <http://brailleaustralia.org/about-braille/duxbury-braille-translator-producers-manual-2011/> and encourage DBT users in Australia to notify us of any further changes.

## Guidelines for transcription of foreign language material

A number of teleconferences have taken place on this new document, and Kathy has worked very hard to write the base document which will be presented at the upcoming Round Table Conference and in more depth at the ABA workshop.

## 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.

In 2018, we congratulated seven new holders of the Proficiency Certificate. This year, Tristan Clare took on the task of formatting the exam for touch readers which included mark-up and page formatting. Kathy Riessen through SASVI undertook to collate packages and send to candidates. Josie Howse and her team coordinated the marking of the papers when they were returned. Truly a national effort.

## Braille Music in Australia

On the ABA website with our directory of products and services, we have a list 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.

In January this year, braille music users from Australia and New Zealand came together in Auckland to enjoy a long weekend of music making at the Braille Music Retreat. Four musicians attended from Australia and we had a thoroughly fulfilling weekend of singing, making friends, and recording some choral pieces for distribution. Two of our pieces were recorded in the “Pool Cathedral” where we made use of the swimming pool acoustic complete with flowing water!

A successful National Braille Music camp was held in the June July school holidays with 32 students in attendance. We had Many Sydney teachers connected with specific students visit the camp who came for 1-2 days to see how the program ran.

### Dorothy Hamilton receives OAM

Many of you will know Dorothy Hamilton, long time braille music transcriber and teacher. In 1986, Dorothy, along with other key people in the braille music community, established the first National Braille Music Camp. Dorothy also pioneered braille music transcription using the computer with a refreshable display and the assistance of volunteer readers. In this year's honours list, she was awarded a medal in the order of Australia for her services to music. We congratulate Dorothy on this well-deserved award.

### Another tactile bank note in circulation

Australia added a new tactile bank note to our currency. The $50 displays three small tactile dots along both edges running lengthwise. It is the third in our new series to be recognisable by touch, a truly exciting addition, allowing blind and vision impaired people to identify their notes independently.

## International Involvement

## International Council on English Braille

The International Council on English Braille (ICEB) oversees the use of braille in countries where English is the predominant spoken and written language. It was responsible for the creation of Unified English Braille, which is used in all member countries.

Australia is a member of ICEB along with Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, United Kingdom and USA.

ICEB last met in person at the mid-term Executive Committee meeting in Ireland in April 2018. It will next meet at its 2020 General Assembly in London from Monday 11 to Friday 15 May at RNIB offices. On the Wednesday, the Assembly will be held at Quaker House and be open to the wider public, with displays and key presentations.

### ICEB Executive Committee

The ICEB Executive Committee coordinates the work of the subcommittees. The Executive Committee meets quarterly via teleconference. Leona is Australia's representative on the Executive Committee and Jordie Howell attends as Chair of the Music Braille Committee.

Christo de Klerk from South Africa is the ICEB President and Maria Stevens from New Zealand is our Vice President.

The ICEB's subcommittees operate via their own listservs. 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.

This year, Nepal joined ICEB as its ninth country member.

### ICEB Music Committee

The ICEB Music Committee has been consulting with other international work coordinated by DAISY and RNIB by Dr. Sarah Morley Wilkins. In summary, this project aims to designate a good source file for the automation of music translation from print to braille. Formats being discussed at present are XML and MNX. The DAISY Music Braille project spans more than English speaking countries, and it is the first time in several years that the braille music community has collaborated, so this is quite exciting.

The braille music translation packages on the market need to be flexible in rendering a music score so that it is readable in whatever country specifications are put on it. It is therefore our duty to make sure we articulate these specifications. The ICEB Music Committee webpage is a place to find such resources.

The ICEB braille music page can be found here: <http://iceb.org/music.html>

### UEB Code Maintenance

The UEB Code Maintenance Committee has the important task of reviewing and updating the Unified English Braille Code and its official documentation. Discussion of the apostrophe and quotation marks has continued over the past year and the issue is still not resolved.

A subcommittee of the CMC is dedicated to updating and revising the Guidelines for Technical Material. Work has been completed on the first section, Signs of Operation and Comparison, which will be published very soon. Work has begun on the next section, on Signs of Omission.

Phyllis Landon (Canada) is the CMC Chair and Leona Holloway is Australia's representative.

### 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 at <http://www.iceb.org/ueb.html>

### Braille Technology Committee

James Bowden, Chair of the Braille Technology Committee from the UK, has been hard at work identifying problems in the LibLouis braille translation table for UEB. The work of correcting these issues has now been distributed among a number of volunteers. Liblouis is a free open-source braille translation table and is used in BrailleBlaster, Bookshare, JAWS, NVDA and more.

ICEB members have reported on sales of the Orbit Braille Reader and the Braille Me. These two low-cost refreshable braille displays have enabled ready access to braille by people who thought they would never be able to afford a braille display.

### Promotions Committee

The first quarterly ICEB newsletter was circulated in December 2018.

A new listserv has been set up for one-way announcements from ICEB. It will be a low-traffic list to distribute the newsletter, announcements about updates to UEB, information about the General Assembly and mid-term meetings, and other important announcements. To join, send an email to [iceb-announce+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:iceb-announce+subscribe@groups.io)

We continue to send out regular updates about braille through the ICEB facebook page facebook.com/ICEBbraille/ and twitter account @ICEBbraille.

### Research Committee

The ICEB Braille Research Committee shares information about braille research and presentations at braille conferences via an email list. The most interesting of these are also shared on twitter and facebook. The Committee will collate a report for the General Assembly.

### World Braille Council

ICEB is a member of the World Braille Council. A meeting was held in May 2018, at which a number of position statements were made. More recently, WBC has commissioned the production of some documents on learning braille to be distributed in developing countries.

## Conclusion

The ABA has made great progress in continuing to promote and champion braille through the work of our Regional Braille Forums. Executive committee members have taken on new roles, developed guidelines and organised workshops as well as kept up to date with the queries that come to us via the email address and website. Our directory of services on the ABA website is highly utilised by people searching for braille producers and products. We also congratulate seven new holders of the UEB Trans-Tasman Certificate in UEB. Braille Music had a national focus last year with the program *What is Music?* Produced by the ABC. Globally, there was increased recognition for braille with World Braille Day adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

I would like to thank the ABA executive for your contributions during meetings and your support and hard work throughout the year. We are blessed with a strong group of people who support each other and produce really fantastic work as well as responding quickly to queries and new initiatives. I would also like to thank the President of the Round Table, Sonali Marathe, the Administration Officer, Marjorie Hawkings and the Round Table Executive for your support of ABA and to me personally as Chair. We feel very much part of the broader focus of Round Table in the field of Information Access and know that braille is highly valued as the vital literacy medium for people who are blind or have low vision.

Jordie Howell

Chair, Australian Braille Authority

# Appendix 2: ABA Queensland Forum Annual Report 2018

Melissa Fanshawe, convenor

Braille club in Brisbane continues to gain momentum with some amazing activities in 2018 such as Commonwealth Games Focus, Braille Busking and Hands on Maths with Professor Bob Marek. This year the focus is on games and social interaction with an excursion to the Ekka!

### 2018 Committee

* Convener: Melissa Fanshawe
* Treasurer: Sue Wagner
* Secretary: Karen Clark

### 2018 Braille Club activities (students)

* Term 1—parent/teacher Braille Music, student Commonwealth Games theme. This session was very interactive and hands on. Students were put into teams representing countries and had to read information about the Games and how they run, their history and the medals. We also had Ray Moxley from Blind cricket come and talk about how he represented his country.
* Term 1—Parents were offered a session on Braille Music with Lee Strickland and Tom MacMahon, due to their requests, but then we did not have any attend.
* Term 2—Professor Boguslow (Bob) Marek was visiting for the Round Table Conference and we paid for him to come to Braille Club. He showed his product “Hungry Fingers” tactile graphics and the students were engaged in Maths! We had advisory teachers also come to watch and share. This was the largest braille club with 35 in attendance. We also had 3 attend remotely through Zoom.
* Term 3—Busking. This amazing day organised by Lee and the committee, found about 15 youth busking at the local shopping centre. Not only did we raise over $440, the community were just so impressed and wanted us to have more!

### 2018 Braille Club events (adults)

As a committee, we decided that we would like to branch out to include an activity for adults. We held a Technology, wine and cheese evening in May. This was amazingly pulled together by Tom MacMahon where six companies came in and showcased their products! Despite this amazing offer, the night was not well attended (20 people) and focus will be on communicating this through more channels to increase attendance.

### Tactual Mapping Committee Report: Tom MacMahon

* The group have changed name—tactile maps solutions; for people with low or no vision
* Met three times in 2018
* Committee to remain as advisory group but no person power for production of maps
* Discussions about many technologies. What sort of ways they are set up. Despite audio people like to feel.
* Committee will be in touch with ABA to get clear guidelines set for going forward

### Our future dates for 2019 will be

* General meeting and AGM - 21st February, 2018
* Braille Club (Students)

\* Term 1: Saturday 9th March 1-4pm (Braille games)

\* Term 2: Saturday 25th May 1-4pm (Coding & Planning Excursion)

\* Term 3: Saturday 17th August 1pm—(Ekka Excursion)—Rural discovery day (interacting with farm animals, cooking (fresh food),

\* Term 4: Students to decide

* Queensland will hold its first braille music camp 5-8 April. Lee Strickland is organising and most of our committee will attend as helpers.
* Braille club (Adults)

\* Saturday 25th May—5-8pm (pizza and games)

A focus on 2019 is growing our database of students and adults and looking for ways to include rural participants through technology and grants.

Braille Club: Click the following link for more information about Braille Clubs <http://brailleaustralia.org/australian-braille-authority/aba-regional-braille-forums/>

# Appendix 3: Sydney Braille Forum Annual Report 2018

Sandra Robertson—Convenor SBF

Last year three meetings were held on the Tuesday evenings of 20th March, 15th May and 18th September 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.

The first half of our 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. We welcomed Tristan Clare as our new elected secretary and thanked Annette Sutherland for her tireless efforts as an integral part of the SBF for many years. In the second part of the meeting we invite a guest speaker to discuss a topic of interest relevant to the group.

Our first guest speaker was Rebecca Clark, who demonstrated new reading magnification software and braille notetakers. In our second meeting we had fun experimenting with the OrCam—an artificial vision device to help understand text, recognise faces and identify objects through audio feedback. In our third meeting Tricia D'Apice fostered a lively debate concerning braille reading speeds evidenced in her research project and some teaching strategies to improve the statistics.

We were fortunate to have the Roundtable Conference on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities in May in Sydney including the ABA workshops and general meeting which provided not only the chance to expand social networks but embrace the expanding communication and learning opportunities available to people with vision-impairment.

At the Braille Competition Award night we were privileged to have Susanne Gervay. She is a teacher, a specialist in child growth and development, an accomplished author and a very proud mother of two children. She treated our students to some amusing tales about her son Jack when he was growing up. Her books are driven by the rights of children and families, partnering them in good times and bad and writing for inclusion and respect for each other. Some of her books were transcribed into braille as awards.

The theme of the competition this year was inspired by the “Chinese Year of the Dog” and we had 41 students participate from NSW. We had entrants from Department of Education, Catholic Education, Independent schools and the RIDBC Tele-School. The Braille marking committee should be commended for all their hard work in organising such a wonderful event.

The standard of their braille seems to improve every year and it is wonderful to recognise our students' efforts to not only their parents, but also their teachers, ISTVs and wider school community raising 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, DoE Braille and Large Print Services (who donated braille books as Awards), Quantum RLV, Vision Australia, Humanware and Pacific Vision. A range of assistive technology, which will equip our young students for the future, was also gratefully provided. Donations meant our popular raffle was extremely well supported.



We are looking forward to another exciting year for the Sydney Braille Forum in 2019. The dates will be Wednesday 20th March, 19th June and 21st September. The Awards Night for the braille competition will be 20th November 2019.

# Appendix 4: Vision Australia Braille Annual Report 2018

## Braille Training

Vision Australia continues to provide adults with Braille Training. Courses include Grade I and Grade II for people who are blind or vision impaired and Grade I for Sighted people. Those who are sighted and want grade II we refer them to the internet or RIDBC.

Courses are available through face to face group and individual session, however at present there are not many groups being held due to a lack of number requiring training at the same time. For those who will be touch readers courses are also available via correspondence. The course for sighted people is only provided via correspondence.

Eligibility includes people living throughout Australia. We have had an increase in the past year of people from SA, WA and TAS undertaking or enquiring about the correspondence course.

Other events braille training services have been involved in include Education sessions for NDIS staff, braille promotion and increasing Braille awareness as well as a Braille Games Day.

The Vision Australia braille correspondence course materials for Grades 1 and 2 were made available for library members to borrow through the online catalogue.

## Library

The Library catalogued 39 Feelix kits, 37 print braille titles, 526 music braille pieces and 1,319 braille titles. Over 1,100 of the braille titles were for preschool and early primary school level reading.

The Library is working towards acquiring electronic files for as many braille titles currently in the collection as possible. This gives members the option to download braille to read.

Vision Australia hosted the accessible format launch of The adventures of Kenzie-Moo at Kooyong on December 14, along with special guests author Tanya Savva and her daughter Mackenzie. The book follows Kenzie-Moo on her Australian Adventure and sees how she experiences the world around her without vision. Brailled copies of the picture book were available for sale on the day and Tanya signed copies.

## Production

From February 2018 to February 2019, the VA Transcription team converted 64,000 print pages into braille. The total braille pages produced was 118,000 pages.

We also transcribed 2,600 pages of music braille and 3,200 tactual diagrams.

The Vision Australia Transcription Team comprises of 12 staff members and 1 team leader. We have a dedicate team of specialist transcribers experienced in STEM and Music production. VA offers a free personal support service to our clients funded by the Print Disability Grant from the Federal Government. We produce work for people of all ages, with a large amount for Tertiary students, and fee for service work for government and corporates.

Braille music: The Team is actively involved with the National Braille Music Camp. We have been working with the DAISY Music Braille Project to create a more automated way of producing braille music. We are also researching use of mainstream software such as Sibelius and Photoscore and integrating with GoodFeel for a more efficient braille music transcription process. Ria Andriani has written a number of Magazine Articles about how braille music is used plus having an interview on the ABC. Christina Christensen and Ria Andriani presented a webinar on braille music, it was an intro on what braille music is and how software can be used to produce it

Tactual Diagrams: The transcription team was involved with James Day Photography to make tactile photos for a blind bride. We are researching other machines which are capable of producing tactile images … Watch this space.

ABC TV: Peter Le was on the ABC Breakfast Show talking about how technology has helped increase the use and diversity of braille.

Epub conversion processes: Our STEM transcribers are currently looking at using epub3 files as a pathway into automated braille book production.

# Appendix 5: Statewide Vision Resource Centre Braille-related activities in 2018

Marion Blazé

Statewide Vision Resource Centre continues to be the braille production house for students with vision impairments in all sectors of schooling in Victoria. In 2018, we produced 1,160 braille books, 80,000 plus braille pages, 5,500 tactile diagrams and 350 pieces of braille music. Keeping up with production of maths and music is a constant challenge, especially when expert transcribers retire!!

In 2018, the biggest textbook we produced in braille was a Year 12 maths text. This braille book resulted in 56 volumes, 2,740 braille pages and included 502 tactile diagrams!!

SVRC is also continuing to develop and expand its “Ozzie Dots” series of braille books. This series introduces and reinforces contracted braille in a sequenced manner, including tactile graphics to developmentally introduce tactile “graphicacy”. There are (or will be) between 6 and ten books for every abbreviation and contraction in braille, and we are currently working on books to introduce the alphabet. The style of the books varies hugely from stories, to recipes, or even instructions. Overall the theme is fun, with some naughty humour thrown in.

SVRC also runs a regular program called “Dot Power” for students who read braille from pre-school to Year 3. This program brings together the students, their families and support networks for a day each term of braille-related activities. It not only offers the opportunity for students to read braille along-side their peers, but provides professional learning opportunities for their networks.

# Appendix 6: RIDBC Report

The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) has always been a leader in the field of braille production. We offer a range of alternative format materials, including braille, large print and eText. Our main clients are students within the independent school system, but we also do outside transcription jobs such as cards, menus and other documents. We also produce children's books in dual media format and are making inroads into the production of 3D-printed material.

The braille students on our service are a broad mix of ages and braille proficiencies. We are able to liaise closely with vision support staff to tailor material to the individual needs of the student, while staying firmly within best practice guidelines for formatting of braille materials.

Among our older and more proficient braille students, there is a growing trend towards electronic documents accessed using refreshable braille displays and notetakers. However, hard copy braille is still the format of choice for most of our students. All technical materials such as Mathematics and languages, plus work for lower primary school students, is produced in hard copy braille.

In the field of education, RIDBC is excited to announce the up-coming UEB Mathematics Online course. It is written by Josie Howse of the NSW Department of Education, with Simbraille by one of our experienced transcribers. This course will be administered through the Renwick Centre by Frances Gentle. It will offer a comprehensive guide to the UEB Maths code for teachers and transcribers of UEB Maths braille.

Accessibility will be built into the course from the ground up. This means it will be available to both blind and sighted participants at the same time.

We at RIDBC are committed to the production of top-quality alternative format materials. Innovations in access technology, which some may see as the end for formats such as braille, are actually enhancing the braille experience and making it more portable and accessible to the next generation. We are committed to incorporating these advances into the way we produce braille, without sacrificing the quality of material that we produce. It is an exciting time to be involved in the production of alternative format material.

# Appendix 7: Report from The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT) to the Australian Braille Authority Annual Meeting, 4 May 2019

Maria Stevens, Chair

The New Zealand Code Maintenance Committee continues to meet and consider the decisions made by ICEB.

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. New Zealand candidates for the examination are drawn from teachers studying to become resource teachers vision, trainee Developmental and Orientation and Mobility specialists, teacher aides, parents of braille students, staff of the Blind Foundation teaching braille to adults and adult braille users themselves. There were 21 candidates who sat the exam with 15 passes. Six were unsuccessful. Since the first joint ABA/BANZAT Certificate exam was issued in 2008, a total of 167 New Zealand candidates have sat 11 papers. Of the 167 candidates who have sat the papers, 137 have passed, an 82% pass rate for New Zealand candidates.

At its November 2018 meeting, BANZAT was asked to offer a re-sit option for unsuccessful candidates. A component of the New Zealand teacher qualification is passing the Certificate. Our proposal is to offer one re-sit per unsuccessful candidate per annum. Candidates seeking a re-sit would have to complete the paper by Christmas in the same year with results available early in the following year. At the time of writing we haven't finalised the wording of our proposal. However, we expect to put our proposal before ABA immediately following the next meeting of BANZAT on 12 March.

In 2017 BANZAT received a donation of $3,000 towards the cost of prizes for braille reading competitions for children. Two competitions to celebrate Braille Literacy Day on 7 September were run. Primary and Intermediate aged students were asked to make up a name for the New Zealand Braille Literacy Kiwi Mascot and collage a picture of it (A4 size). Individuals or groups of Secondary School or BLENNZ Transition students were asked to write a jingle for the BANZAT literacy competition using one/some or all of the following themes: Braille, Literacy, Conservation or Kiwi. At the time of writing we are not in a position to advertise the results, but we expect to do this by the ABA Annual Meeting.

The Strategic Framework for the Provision of Braille Services, initiated by Blind Citizens NZ, was launched in October at Blind Citizens NZ National Conference. It has been adopted by the boards of BLENNZ, the Blind Foundation and the trustees of BANZAT. The Vision Statement is: “Recognising braille is a primary literacy and numeracy tool for blind people, that anyone who needs or wishes to learn braille, receives teaching and all materials they require to meet their needs, on time.” Divided into seven areas it considers the promotion and awareness-raising of braille as the primary literacy and numeracy tool, resources and tools, teaching of braille, production of braille, tactile graphics, distribution of braille in electronic and hard-copy options, and growth and development of braille library collections.

The revised Accessible Signage Guidelines are now on the website of the Blind Foundation.

Two BANZAT trustees, Mary Schnackenberg and Paul Brown, are leading a workshop at the Round Table entitled “Is our data safe in the hands of accessible format producers?” The workshop will cover some considerations of privacy and confidentiality. It will also look at some words in the New Zealand legislation that allows New Zealand to accede to the Marrakesh Treaty which expect accessible format producers to have “taken all reasonable steps to ensure that the copy respects the integrity of the original work, as far as is reasonably possible taking into account changes needed to make the work accessible in the alternative format”.

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. Our social media presence has grown significantly. The 12 days of Braillemas song recorded by trustees Chantelle Griffiths and Paul Brown was viewed by 3,480 people on our Facebook page in several countries.

The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust, 8 March 2019