

Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Inc.

**Information Equity: Empowerment through Technology, Advocacy and Collaboration**

**Sunday, 19 May to Tuesday, 21 May 2024**

Novotel Perth Langley

221 Adelaide Terrace

Perth WA 6000

2024 Round Table Conference
Book of Abstracts

**Please note:** The book of abstracts is current as of 6 May 2024.

# Sunday, 19 May 2024

## Session 1 – Plenary (Ballroom South)

### 1a. Information equity: is AI a blessing or a curse?

10:00am – 10:30am

**Keynote Presenter:** Dr Scott Hollier, Chief Executive Officer, Centre For Accessibility Australia.

#### Abstract

With the arrival of ChatGPT, there has been a lot of discussion about the implications of AI in our everyday lives. For people with a print disability, AI can represent some great opportunities to have online content presented in more accessible ways. However, the trade-offs in privacy and security are notable, and often put the benefits of AI out of reach for people with disability. This presentation will explore the benefits and challenges of AI and consider its implications for the future.

#### Biography

Dr Scott Hollier specialises in the field of digital accessibility and is the CEO and co-founder of the Centre For Accessibility Australia, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to alleviating hardship caused by digital access issues. With a Ph.D. in Internet Studies and senior management experience across the not-for-profit, corporate and government sectors, Scott is an internationally recognised researcher and speaker.

Scott’s other roles and achievements include Finalist for 2022 Australian of the Year, holds academic positions at Edith Cowan University and the University of South Australia, and is an Invited Expert for the W3C Accessible Platform Architectures Research Questions Task Force. In addition, Scott is legally blind and as such has both a professional and personal understanding of the importance of accessibility.

## Session 2 – Concurrent (Ballroom South)

### 2a. Potential Impact of Emerging Technologies on Education of People with Vision Impairment in Pacific Island Countries

10:45am – 11:15am

**Presenter:** Ben Clare, Exemplar International and South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI).

#### Abstract

#### As lovers of technology embrace and explore the seemingly endless capabilities of artificial intelligence (AI,) it is perhaps prudent and hopefully essential to examine how emerging technologies associated with AI can be positively integrated into systems of education, targeting current barriers such as cost, lack of assistive and accessible devices and overall societal inclusion of people with disabilities and other minorities.

#### The Pacific, largely at the very beginning of the AI journey is yet to understand and-or experience the power of AI but excitement about this new phenomenon is building.

#### This presentation will explore current issues related to providing effective and quality education services to blind and low vision people in resource poor environments such as the Pacific, will examine the current developments in the AI space including assistive apps and websites and their potential impact on tearing down accessibility barriers. The audience will be invited to ponder this question. How can AI be implemented in ways that maximise opportunities for people with vision impairment in the contexts of education, employment and general inclusion?

#### This session will also explore implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty in the region and the benefits for existing and potential Braille producers, limitations of the Treaty given changes in access to reading materials since 2013 when the Treaty was created and possible updates that take into account new technologies.

#### Biography

**Ben Clare** has worked in the disability and International development sectors for 20 years. A passionate advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, Ben has worked across several areas of disability inclusive development in a number of countries including Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste. Ben works with organisations of people with disability and service providers, capacity building in areas such as Braille literacy, computer training with voice output software and early intervention programs. He has worked in resource poor environments in extremely remote locales, utilising locally available equipment and personnel to provide education to people with vision impairment and additional disabilities.

Ben currently works for Exemplar International, a development organisation that works closely with stakeholders in the disability sector in Australia and Internationally. He is also an adviser to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is the Vice President and Secretary of South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI) and is an active member of the World Blind Union, Australian Volunteers International and several other organisations including the Australian Braille Authority.

### 2b. Multi-Line Braille Displays: So What? Considering the practical use and ongoing development of multi-line braille displays from a user perspective

11:15am – 11:45am

**Presenter:** Matthew Horspool, Braille and Assistive Technology Consultant.

#### Abstract

Over the past few years, the momentum surrounding multi-line braille displays has increased substantially, from both manufacturers and end users. However, as a blind person myself, my excitement about the concept of a multi-line braille display is juxtaposed by an increasing realisation that I am not currently interested in buying one!

This presentation will explore the reasoning behind this juxtaposition and, in doing so, it will consider the following questions:

* Are manufacturers trying to solve the right problem?
* Are multi-line braille displays always the best solution?
* How can multi-line braille displays evolve to meet more user needs more effectively?
* What other developments are required to ensure that multi-line braille displays reach their full potential?

Whilst this is first and foremost an opinion paper, my training and consultancy work and my involvement with UKAAF and the Braillists Foundation has immersed me in a wide variety of user and professional responses to multi-line braille displays, and this has been an enormous help in shaping my thinking.

#### Biography

**Matthew Horspool** has been blind since birth and fervently believes that braille is an essential tool for all visually impaired people. He makes extensive use of braille both personally and professionally, and his career spans over ten years in the UK visual impairment sector in roles which bridge the boundaries between braille and technology.

In addition to his freelance work training individuals in the use of screen readers and braille devices, he holds several influential positions including:

* General Manager, The Braillists Foundation
* Braille Subject Lead, UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF)
* Code Maintenance Officer, International Council on English Braille (ICEB)

### 2c. Exploring meetings in virtual reality (VR): an assessment of their current accessibility

11:45am – 12:15pm

**Presenter:** David Vosnacos, Advanced Senior Therapist: Assistive Technology, Innovation and Inclusion, VisAbility.

#### Abstract

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic created a rapid transition to online virtual meetings as a means for service delivery and collaboration. Organisations had to respond by adjusting their common modes of practice to fit within the operating boundaries set by platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and others. Two years on numerous studies have commented on the accessibility and limitations of these two-dimensional solutions to service delivery. At the same time, whilst slower in pace, has seen the growth of alternate platforms in the virtual reality space such as Mozilla Hubs, Altspace and Meta. In this presentation we will explore what are the differences of these 3D platforms compared to those solutions adopted by organisations as a reaction to the pandemic; what are their limitations to organisations looking to deliver more interactive and accessible solutions; and how equitable are they as a technology.

#### Biography

**David Vosnacos** is an Advanced Senior Therapist with over 20 years’ experience working with VisAbility specialising in assistive technology, innovation and inclusion.

## Session 3 – Concurrent (Silver Room)

### 3a. Access to service – Department of Education NSW perspective

10:45am – 11:15am

**Presenter via Zoom:** Kim Barber, Manager Braille and Large Print Services, Department of Education NSW.

#### Abstract

Vision support service within NSW Department of Education encompass a wide range of programs and resources designed to assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired. These services are vital for promoting, independence, education, employment and overall inclusivity. Within this presentation we will briefly delve into:

1. The flexible framework to determine hours of support for a student with a diagnosed vision loss. Considerations of the student’s functional use of vision and identified visual support needs.
2. Development of the students Personalised Learning and Support Plans – access to supports ‘Team around the School.
3. Access to Braille and Large Print Services and the alternate formats provided. (Braille formats, large print formats, e-texts and audio, CVI, teaching resources and new technologies 3D prints)
4. The role of SLSO (Vision) Braille Outposts
5. Access to technologies to support access to the curriculum STEPS application process.
6. Telepresence Robots: Building better practice for connecting students with serious Illness or injury to their classrooms.

#### Biography

**Kim Barber** is the Manager of the Braille and Large Print Service within Wellbeing and Inclusion, NSW Department of Education. Braille and Large Print Services provides equipment and alternate format materials to students with vision impairment within the government sector, inclusive of braille, large print, audio and e-text. Braille and Large Print Services is the largest producer of alternate format of student textbooks and examinations in Australia. Kim has over twenty years of experience working in the field of vision impairment both internationally and within Australia. Kim is an executive for the Australian Braille Authority and is the NSW convenor for the Sydney Braille Forum, which brings together anyone with an interest in braille and braille related issues. Kim is passionate about advocating for accessible formats, so students with vision impairment can have independent access to quality education.

### 3b. The braille transformation has begun... meet the Monarch!

11:15am – 11:45am

**Presenter:** Vivian Bell, Regional Account Manager, HumanWare.

#### Abstract

Together with our close partners at the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), HumanWare is working to create and develop the Monarch, a multipurpose, multiline, tactile braille device that can download digital textbooks and access tactile graphics from APH’s TGIL library to significantly reduce the information time to fingertips for blind students.

Producing braille textbooks demands substantial time and funding, frequently resulting in delayed delivery of information to the students’ fingertips. The Monarch, formerly known as the Dynamic Tactile Device (DTD) is the size of an average gaming laptop and weighs a modest 2kg. It features an 8-dot braille keyboard, zoom in/out buttons, direction pads, up/down arrow buttons and an unheard of 10 lines by 32 cell refreshable braille display that can render multiple lines of braille and tactile graphics using equidistant pins. This highly innovative technology along with the development of a new dynamic file type that will bring braille and graphics together in a navigable file, will bridge the existing educational gap for all blind students.

#### Biography

**Vivian Bell,** who has worked at HumanWare for over six years, combines her expertise in the optical lens industry with a deep passion for the impact of technology on people with low vision. Her dedication to innovation shines through as she strives to improve the lives of others.

### 3c. Introduction of specially developed learning paths in the Netherlands: The transition of a 3D object into a 2D drawing & Draw along, a method to teach blind children how to draw

3:30pm – 4:00pm

**Presenter:** Ans Withagen, Royal Dutch Visio.

#### Abstract

Firstly, the aim of the learning project 3D-2D will be explained, which was to develop a guideline on learning blind children about the transformation of a three-dimensional object into a two-dimensional tactile drawing. Most known for this goal is the ‘Transfograph’ developed by Bob Marek of Hungry Fingers. One of the objectives of the project was to expand this instrument to simpler concepts for younger children and more complicated concepts for elder blind children. Secondly, the theory which we developed will be introduced. We distinguish 19 insights that need to be learned and explained to fully understand the relation between a tactile drawing and a 3D object. The models and drawings which are specially developed to gain these insights will be demonstrated.

During the workshops with the Learning Path 3D-2D we remarked the poor drawings skills of the blind children and realized they weren’t teached to draw in a structured way. For this reason we started the project ‘Draw along’. The objective of this project is twofold:

* On the one had we teach children different drawing skills, so they have a new tool to express themselves
* On the other hand offers these new skills insights for the teacher to observe how these children experience the world, how they perceive concepts.

In this presentation there will be a short introduction of the design of the Learning path.

## Session 4 – Concurrent (Ballroom South)

### 4a. Digital accessibility considerations for social media platforms

1:00pm – 2:30pm

**Presenter:** Vithya Vijayakumare, Senior Digital Accessibility Specialist, VisAbility.

#### Abstract

Social media accessibility has been gaining increased attention in recent years, and it is no longer a niche topic that people can ignore. It is important for everyone to learn and incorporate accessibility into social media platforms as part of their workflow.

Social media has many benefits, but it can be frustrating for people with disability when inaccessible content prevents them from engaging with it. This exclusion from conversations and inability to access critical information can have a significant impact on people’s ability to participate in the world of social media.

In this workshop, you will learn why accessibility is important, the barriers that people with disability may face on social media, and best practices for designing inclusive social media content for all users.

#### Biography

**Vithya Vijayakumare** is the Senior Digital Accessibility Specialist at VisAbility. With 13+ years of experience, Vithya is responsible for ensuring that websites, social media, videos, documents and audio materials are accessible to all users. She has successfully delivered projects for government organizations, businesses, and schools/universities in various accessible formats. Vithya has also conducted several workshops on topics related to digital accessibility, inclusive publishing (EPUB/DAISY), content/document accessibility and future innovation solutions (3D Binaural Surround Sound/360 audio). She is a proud member of the Perth Web Accessibility Camp (PWAC) and Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities.

## Session 5 – Concurrent (Silver Room)

### 5a. Designing multi-sensory accessible materials

1:00pm – 2:30pm

**Presenter:** Samuel Foulkes, Director of Braille Production & Accessible Innovation, Clovernook Center for the Blind.

#### Abstract

This presentation will provide attendees with an overview of Clovernook Center for the Blind's work and design methodology in the provision of multi-sensory materials and accessible print for museums and cultural centers across North America. We will also explore how these same types of materials have been optimized for classroom usage in Clovernook's Tactile Literacy Initiative - which is currently partnered with a number of East African schools. After exploring these various facets of accessible design, attendees will get the opportunity to design their own multi-sensory project, with scenarios and materials being provided.

#### Biography

At Clovernook, **Samuel Foulkes** is responsible for the printing of over 30 million pages of braille each year, most of which is produced under contract with the Library of Congress. He is also responsible for leveraging Clovernook’s strengths to identify and implement inclusively designed initiatives that benefit the national and global population of people who are blind or low vision.

## Session 6 – Concurrent (Ballroom South)

### 6a. Empowering Through Play: Accessible Video Game Design for All

3:00pm – 3:30pm

**Presenter:** Dom Parker, Digital Accessibility Consultant, Intopia.

#### Abstract

#### Join Dom Parker, an audio designer turned digital accessibility consultant, as she explores making video games more accessible for players with vision loss. Learn practical techniques like binaural audio and color contrast optimization to improve game design, with examples of best practices showcased.

#### Biography

**Dom Parker** (she/her) is a digital accessibility consultant at Intopia and a freelance audio designer and gaming consultant. She specialises in adding accessibility features into game design with her audio engineering background and focuses on binaural audio.

### 6b. Optimizing user experience SensusAccess

11:45am – 12:15pm

**Presenters via Zoom:** Lars Ballieu Christensen, Senior Advisor and Tanja Stevns, Director Inclusion Technology, Sensus.

#### Abstract

This session discusses how the user experience in SensusAccess Inside Canvas was shaped through usability testing and input from students and faculty. This led to an intuitive and effective SensusAccess interface in Canvas.

#### Biographies

**Lars Ballieu Christensen** works with technology and design for people with special needs. He advises government, organizations, academic institutions and companies on accessibility and inclusive design. Furthermore, he is the inventor of a range of innovative technologies that support inclusion and self-sufficiency amongst people with special needs, including the award-winning RoboBraille service. Lars holds master’s degrees in computer science and journalism, as well as a Ph.D. degree in computer science, all from the University of Roskilde, Denmark.

**Tanja Stevns** works with education and technology to support inclusion of people with disabilities. With more than 30 years’ experience working at the Danish National Center for Blind and Partially Sighted Children and Youth, Tanja is a special education teacher and speech therapist, specializing in visual impairment and general learning disorders.

#### Biography

**Ans Withagen** has years of experience as a special educationalist at a school for visually impaired children at Royal Dutch Visio. Her expertise lies in the field of the tactual development of blind children. At the beginning of 2000, she and a project group started developing a Tactual Profile for children who have been blind from birth. This instrument is now used worldwide and was validated in 2005. She did a PhD study on tactual functioning of blind children.

Subsequently, she led many projects to stimulate the tactual development of blind children. During the conference new methods will be highlighted

## Session 7 – Concurrent (Silver Room)

### 7a. Development of tactile DNA double helix model for the visually impaired

3:00pm – 3:30pm

**Presenters:** Tetsuya Watanabe and Kazunori Minatani, Professors, University of Niigata.

#### Abstract

The development started when the Japan Retinitis Pigmentosa Society asked us to create a DNA double helix model for a workshop where its members learn their own genetic disease. Retinitis pigmentosa is caused by genetic mutations and is the second most common cause of visual impairment in Japan.

It is crucial for the four types of nucleotides to be identifiable by touch. Though the idea of putting Braille on them is easily hit upon, many late visually impaired people cannot read Braille. Thus, we chose the method of changing the shapes of their cross sections and used the shapes of four alphabet letters (A, T, G, and C) so that the users can easily understand which nucleotide each model represents.

A, T, and C are triangular, T-shaped, and round, respectively, with one side concave, so they are easily distinguishable from each other. The problem was to make touch-sensible difference between C and G: it is hard to perceive the small “whisker” of G by touch. To solve this problem, the angle between the whisker and “C”, the length and the thickness of the whisker were changed little by little, printed, and touched repeatedly without looking. Finally, we made the thin and pointy whiskers.

In order to realize base pairing rules in the model, we differentiated the shape of the binding parts of A and T, from that of C and G.

#### Biographies

**Tetsuya Watanabe** received a M.S. in Biomedical Engineering and Doctor of Engineering in Information Systems from Hokkaido University in 1994 and 2001. 1994-2001: Researcher at the National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation, where he developed the "95Reader" screen reader for Windows. 2001-2009: Researcher at the National Institute of Special Needs Education. 2009: Associate Professor at the Faculty of Engineering, Niigata University, where he developed "tmacs", a tactile map creation system, and operates a tactile map providing service using this system, Professor since 2020.

**Kazunori Minatani** received a Ph. D from Gakushuin University in 2009. Associate Professor at the National Center of University Entrance Examinations, and professor since 2021. From 2017 he has developed a CAD method without GUI for the visually impaired.

From 2019, he is leading a project to develop technology and build a service community to provide models (3D models) to the visually impaired using 3D printers. Starting in 2021, he is researching ways to apply modern testing theory to accurately and easily measure the academic performance of test takers with disabilities.

### 7b. Closing the inclusion gap: AI-powered transcription and captioning for education

3:30pm – 4:00pm

Presenter via Zoom: Vijayshree Vethantham, Senior Vice-President, Growth & Strategy, Continual Engine US LLC.

#### Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping education by offering an innovative solution to transcription challenges. By leveraging proprietary generative AI in a closed environment, we reduce the time and cost of manual transcription, empowering educators to create inclusive content for all, including people with disabilities.

Our presentation will highlight the successful integration of AI into Continual Engine's (CE) proprietary caption management system. Using state-of-the-art video processing modules and custom Natural Language Processing (NLP), CE has achieved unparalleled contextual precision. We will explore how this approach accelerates accessibility across various video types, from lectures to STEM content. This all happens efficiently, within set timelines, and cost-effectively.

Our discussion will explore the factors behind these innovations, ensuring media accessibility for all. We will delve deeper into the key factors behind this widespread success in our presentation.

CE's Invicta™, is crucial for generating precise and accessible closed captions and transcriptions in multiple languages, promising a game-changing impact.

Our proprietary AI framework integrates Invicta™, an alt-text generation platform, to automate audio descriptions for complex images and diagrams. This process includes human experts to ensure content accuracy.

The caption management framework yields output in various formats, including open and closed captions, transcripts, and audio descriptions, meeting diverse accessibility needs.

Continual Engine’s market-tested approaches using award-winning technologies such as Invicta™ for image alt text and video accessibility and PREP for PDF and document accessibility emphasize efficiency and quality control, disrupting learning and education using the power of AI.

#### Biography

With nearly two decades of experience, **Vijayshree Vethantham** excels in leading diverse teams and cultivating vital client partnerships in higher education and accessibility. As part of the founding team of two education-based start-ups she's a pioneer in forging alliances with major educational players and delivering scalable, inclusive learning solutions. Leveraging her expertise in startups, higher education, and custom content, she harnesses AI and technology to create thriving partnerships. In recent years, Vijayshree has dedicated her time to pragmatic educational technology, fostering transformation, inclusion, diversity, accessibility, and affordability for all learners.

## Session 8 – Plenary (Ballroom South)

### 8a. Exhibitor Session

4:10pm – 4:40pm

* Next Sense
* OzeWAI Ltd
* Quantum Reading Learning Vision

### 8b. Round Table AGM

4:45pm – 5:45pm

# Monday, 20 May 2024

## Session 9 – Plenary (Ballroom South)

### 9. Discovery for Disability Audiences: Navigating Your Health

9:30am – 10:30am

**Keynote Presenter:** Professor Katie Ellis, Director of the Centre for Culture and Technology at Curtin University.

#### Abstract

COVID-19 was a watershed moment for inclusive and accessible communication. However, despite 20% of Australians reporting that they have a disability, during the initial stages of the pandemic, Australian Government agencies made no substantial effort to consult with people with disability (PwD) or their representative organisations about their communication needs. This delayed both the development of disability-specific policy and the dissemination of clear, consistent, and accessible information about the pandemic across relevant platforms. As a result, PwD experienced three increased risks - of contracting the disease, of severe disease or death, and of new or worsening health conditions. This omission continued the digital exclusions PwD were already experiencing in Australia and exacerbated existing health concerns. In the absence of timely official health messaging, Australian disability leaders later turned to accessible social media platforms to ensure PwD received information. As the pandemic progressed, innovative digital communication strategies were developed both in Australia and internationally that could inform long-term digital inclusion for PwD. In this presentation I report findings of a project undertaken to help the Department of Health and Aged Care better understand user needs to inform improvements to their health.gov.au user journey, accessibility of the site, the tools used, and the way content and resources are presented for these audiences with disability.

#### Biography

**Katie Ellis** is Professor in Internet Studies and Director of the Centre for Culture and Technology at Curtin University. Her research is located at the intersection of media access and representation and engages with government, industry, and community to ensure actual benefits for real people with disability. She has authored or edited 18 books and numerous articles on the topic of disability and the media, including most recently the monograph Disability and Digital Television Cultures (Routledge, 2019). ORCID: 0000-0001-9560-2378

### 9b. Information equity: balancing the risks and opportunities of information and digital technology

10:00am – 10:30am

**Feature Presenter:** Dr Frances Gentle, Lecturer, NextSense Institute; President, ICEVI.

#### Abstract

In October 2023, the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, convened the 18th annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). Forum delegates included representatives from governments, international organisations, the private sector, civil society and the technical community. The delegates explored the rapid advancements in information and digital technology and the risks and opportunities associated with data governance, artificial intelligence (AI) acceleration, cybersecurity and the environmental impacts of technology. The outcomes of the IGF will frame the creation of a Global Digital Compact that will be presented for adoption at the United Nations “Summit of the Future” in September 2024. It is anticipated the Compact will include shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all, including digital connectivity, application of human rights online, accountability criteria for discriminatory and misleading content online, and options for people on how their data is used.

This presentation will explore the current global discourse on advancements in information and digital technology, and the opportunities and risks to information equity and empowerment for persons with print disabilities. The objectives of this presentation include the following:

* To introduce the eight sub-themes of the 2023 Internet Government Forum in the context of persons with vision impairment and other print disabilities;
* To explore specific examples of the opportunities and risks posed by the advancements in information and digital technology for persons with vision impairment and other print disabilities, including cybersecurity, cybercrime, and online safety; and
* To explore, with conference participants, the implications of rapid development and integration of virtual reality, augmented reality and artificial intelligence for education and employment of persons with vision impairment and other print disabilities.

#### Biography

**Frances Gentle** is a lecturer in sensory impairment with the NextSense Institute and Macquarie University (NSW). She leads the NextSense design team which developed the UEB Online website and literary and mathematics training programs in Unified English Braille. Frances is President of the International Council on Education of People with Visual Impairment and a recipient of Round Table’s Lifetime Achievement award in 2013.

## Session 10 – Concurrent (Ballroom South)

### 10a. Risk reduction, resilience and response

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenter:** Corey Crawford, National Policy Officer, Blind Citizens Australia.

#### Abstract

Emergency events include natural disasters and communicable disease outbreaks. Nearly 70 per cent of Australians were directly impacted by storms, cyclones, floods and/or bushfires in 2022. The lives of all Australians were upended by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The inaccessibility of emergency warnings and directives imperils the lives of many people with a print disability. It is a key reason why people with physical disability are between two and four times more likely to be killed or injured during a natural disaster.

The inaccessibility of Covid testing, QR codes, and the federal government’s vaccine booking website and COVIDSafe app severely marginalised people who are blind, or vision impaired during the pandemic.

Governments, businesses, disability representative organisations and individuals all have a role to play in bolstering Australia’s preparedness for emergency events.

In 2023, Blind Citizens Australia’s policy team devised an extensive policy report and person-centred emergency checklist to address this issue. My oral presentation will convey some of the key findings of these documents.

BCA’s emergency preparedness policy report focuses on the enduring relevance of radio broadcasts; the need for accessible emergency-related television broadcasts, social media posts and smartphone apps; and the importance of governments providing accessible testing and vaccine platforms at the outset of a future pandemic.

BCA also seeks to empower people with disability by encouraging them to complete their own person-centred emergency checklist. By identifying what they may need and building an emergency support circle, people with disability will be better prepared for future emergency events.

#### Biography

**Corey Crawford** has been the National Policy Officer at Blind Citizens Australia since January 2023. He recognises the great privilege he has in striving for positive policy outcomes for people who are blind or vision impaired. Prior to working at BCA, Corey completed a PhD in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Western Australia.

### 10b. How might we start to address the Disability Royal Commission’s recommendation of improved access to information?

11:30am – 12:30pm

**Presenters:** Meredith Prain, National Head of Research and Centre of Excellence – Deafblind, Able Australia.

#### Abstract

Volume 6 of the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) Final report, Enabling autonomy and access, includes a recommendation to develop a national plan to promote accessible information and communications. This would entail recognising the diversity of people with disability and the many formats and languages in which people may require information.

There remain some key barriers to genuinely addressing information access. Alternative format producers tend to focus on one specific target group, e.g., people who are blind and have low vision, people with intellectual disability, people who are Deaf Auslan users or from other Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds. A more inclusive and coordinated approach is required to address intersectionality, and the needs of for example, a First Nations women who is blind, a man with an intellectual disability with low vision, or a Somalian woman who is Deaf.

This workshop will present:

* Current research regarding best practice and evidence regarding the efficacy of different alternative formats.
* Gaps in current knowledge and recommendations for future research and practice.
* Suggestions on how producers of alternative formats can be more inclusive and ensure information is accessible to a broader audience.

Based on this information, some key questions will be posed for discussion in small groups to encourage all members of the print disability community to reflect upon how they can contribute to improved information access for all.

#### Biography

**Meredith** **Prain** is an experienced speech pathologist and researcher. She has over 25 years' experience working with people with deafblindness and is passionate about making communities more accessible and inclusive for people with communication disability. Meredith is currently the National Head of Research and Centre of Excellence with Able Australia and manages the Deafblind Information Australia project.

## Session 11 – Concurrent (Silver Room)

### 11a. Accessibility Challenges and Solutions for Welsh Language Learners Using Assistive Technology

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenter via Zoom:** Lauren Hayes, Digital and Arts Accessibility Consultant, Lauren Hayes Consulting Services.

#### Abstract

Language education apps are helping to make the process of learning more fun and accessible. But what if you rely on assistive technology to use such apps, and you're learning a minority language like Welsh? While mainstream languages have screen reader support, Welsh has minimal screen reader options and a limited number of speech synthesisers.

In this presentation, Lauren will share her experiences of learning Welsh, highlighting the accessibility challenges she has encountered across various language learning apps. Lauren had barely started her journey into Welsh when she realised that her personal interest and professional work as a Digital Accessibility Consultant would need to intersect. In particular, Lauren found both Say Something in Welsh (SSIW) and Duolingo excellent methods for learning, using SSIW for auditory learning, and Duolingo for understanding written Welsh in Braille. However, the structure of both platforms present a number of accessibility challenges which Lauren will demonstrate. Lauren will share feedback provided by other Welsh learners and native speakers with disabilities who have been using a variety of methods and outline current and potential solutions for improving the accessibility of learning Welsh.

#### Biography

**Lauren Hayes** is a creative and passionate Digital and Arts Accessibility Consultant. Lauren has over 7 years’ experience in collaborating with organisations to review and provide guidance on best practice regarding accessible and inclusive design of products and services. After beginning her accessibility journey at AccessibilityOz in 2016, Lauren decided to try her hand at freelancing, establishing Lauren Hayes Consulting Services in 2019. As a freelancer, Lauren has significant experience in providing technical and advisory support to not-for-profit, disability, arts and community organisations, including Able Australia, Guide Dogs Victoria, Arts Access Victoria, Canva, and the Aotearoa New Zealand Festival of the Arts.

When she’s not auditing websites or helping artists to make their work accessible, you’ll find Lauren checking out live concerts and theatre, learning Welsh, or exploring local cafes and pubs in Wellington.

### 11b. ABA Workshop: Braille – Beyond 200

11:30am – 12:30pm

**Facilitator:** Jordie Howell, Immediate Past Chair, Australia Braille Authority, ICEB Australian Representative.

**Panelists:** Jonathan Mosen, Christine Casey and Matthew Horspool

#### Abstract

Almost 200 years ago, Louis Braille invented the Braille code. Since then, it has become an essential tool to enhance the lives of many blind and vision impaired people.

Our three guest speakers will share their expert opinion on the use and relevance of braille for the next 200 years and beyond. The panel discussion will cover access to braille in schools, community and employment and how the increasing availability of refreshable braille options has impacted the use of braille.

We encourage you to come and hear our expert speakers and ask your own questions.

#### Biography

**Jordie Howell** is a passionate advocate for braille and a lifelong braille user, Jordie really enjoys working with braille and music in almost every aspect of her life.  Jordie is the Immediate Past Chair of ABA, a position she held from 2016 – 2023. She is also the Australian representative to the International Council on English Braille for which she also chairs the music committee. She is a braille music transcriber for Vision Australia and a music teacher with the Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

## Session 12 – Concurrent (Ballroom South)

### 12a. Beyond the shelves: enhancing access to information via public libraries

1:30pm – 2:00pm

**Presenters:** Dr Agata Mrva-Montoya, Lecturer, University of Sydney; Dr Jo Kaeding, Course Coordinator, University of South Australia.

#### Abstract

Public libraries, traditionally hubs of knowledge and community engagement, face evolving challenges and opportunities in serving individuals with print disabilities. As recognised in the “Guidelines on library and information services for people with disabilities” released by the Australian Library and Information Association in 2019, public libraries play a key role in facilitating access to books through provision of accessible formats such as audiobooks, large print books and ebooks, as well as assistive technologies such as screen readers, magnification software and other tools. In addition, public libraries may also offer specialised services and programs for people with print disability. They could potentially perform an important role in fostering skills in reading technologies, and support other programs specifically designed for people with print disability.

Reporting on the results of a survey of public libraries staff, this presentation will provide an insight into the key drivers and barriers to provision of accessible resources and services via the public library system in Australia. The project findings provide benchmark data to help identify the extent to which the needs of people with print disability are considered; gaps in library staff training; the availability, selection and usage of content in accessible formats; and the provision of training in the use of “reading technologies” in public libraries. Understanding key drivers and barriers to provision of accessible resources and services in the public library system has the potential to significantly increase access to books for people with print disability.

#### Biographies

**Dr Agata Mrva-Montoya** is a lecturer in the Discipline of Media and Communications, University of Sydney. Previously she worked at Sydney University Press, where she led the implementation of accessible publishing practices. Her research focuses on innovation, technology and power in the publishing industry. She has published on the impact of digital technologies and new business models on scholarly communication and the book publishing industry in general. She seeks to align her current research projects with her interest and experience with accessibility, design thinking and digital technologies, in the belief that publishing can play an important role in creating a better society.

**Dr Jo Kaeding** has a Doctor in Philosophy from the University of South Australia. Her research focus is inclusive and accessible public libraries for people with disability. Jo is a Course Coordinator in Library and Information Management at the University of South Australia. She is a past recipient of the following awards: South Australian Catherine Helen Spence Scholarship, Public Libraries of South Australia Rod East Memorial Award and the Australian Library and Information Association Twila Ann Janssen Herr Award.

### 12b. Library users’ information needs and experiences: a case study of VisAbility Library

2:00pm – 2:30pm

**Presenter:** Jesse Han Leng Lee, Accessible Information Services - Project Officer, VisAbility.

#### Abstract

The VisAbility Library is located in Perth, Western Australia. It is a specialised library providing fee-free postal services and downloads of audiobooks to the community living with blindness, vision impairment, or a print disability. This paper is based on exploratory interviews with 10 VisAbility library users about their information needs and experience utilising library services. The paper reports a study that explored the information needs of library users with disabilities, with particular emphasis on their experience with library services. Studies on the information needs of people with disabilities are relatively limited and what distinguishes this group of information users from others is the nature of the resources and support services required by the users. This paper was conducted via engagement with library users to better understand their information needs and seek the users’ perspectives on how the library can help enhance their experiences and well-being. The methodology for collecting the qualitative data involved personal interviews with users over the phone. The conversations are recorded and transcribed. All participants' personal details will be de-identified for this study. The findings of the study will help provide the library with a better understanding of the users’ information needs and add to the body of knowledge on the services provided by special libraries serving the community. It will also help highlight the pivotal role the library has in meeting the needs of users with disabilities.

#### Biography

**Jesse Han Leng Lee** is presently working effectively as part of a multicultural library services team at VisAbility in administering various accessible information services to users with print disabilities.

### 12c. Telehealth and Transdisciplinary Collaboration for Print Accessibility in Western Australia

2:30pm – 3:00pm

**Presenter:** Lyn Eagers, Braille Trainer/Access Technology Specialist, Judy Wang, Senior Occupational Therapist and Rachel Williams, Occupational Therapist, Vision Australia.

#### Abstract

Western Australia, encompassing one-third of Australia’s landmass, presents unique challenges in accessibility services due to vast distances and isolation. For clients with print disabilities, including low vision and blindness, these challenges are even more pronounced.

This presentation offers the Vision Australia Perth team’s perspectives on overcoming the challenges of supporting clients across WA using telehealth platforms and a transdisciplinary service model. Lyn Eagers, a Braille trainer and Assistive Technology Specialist joins us from Queensland to share her experiences using telehealth to teach clients Braille and assistive technology for print access.

By showcasing our strategies, we hope to offer valuable insights for addressing accessibility barriers within Western Australia and other regions with similar geographic constraints.

#### Biographies

**Lyn Eagers** lost her vision when she was 11 months old due to retinal blastoma and began learning Braille in grade 1. She obtained an Associate diploma in Information Technology and joined Vision Australia in 2007 as an Assistive Technology Specialist. For the past two years, she has also trained others in Braille. Outside of work, Lyn loves building for Lego and using online accessible instructions for some of her projects.

**Judy Wang** graduated from Curtin University with a Master of Occupational Therapy. She has worked at Vision Australia for nearly two years and is now a Senior Occupational Therapist. Judy is passionate about supporting her clients by utilising her OT knowledge and her lived experience of low vision. Before working at Vision Australia, she had experience in the disability sector and residential aged care.

**Rachel Williams** graduated from Curtin University in 2021 and began her Occupational Therapy career in residential aged care. She joined Vision Australia in 2023 and enjoys using her creative problem-solving skills to help her clients achieve their goals. In her free time, Rachel can normally be found surrounded by half-finished crochet projects or making a mess in the kitchen.

## Session 13 – Concurrent (Silver Room)

### 13a. What happens when you're Deaf too

1:30pm – 2:00pm

**Presenter:** Vanessa Vlajkovic, ABC News Sub-editor.

#### Abstract

In this presentation, I will share my experiences as someone who's not only blind, but also Deaf; the barriers associated with accessing all kinds of information when listening isn't an option. I will discuss my success in higher education despite the myriad setbacks and roadblocks.

The level of braille literacy among people who are blind is very low, and for those that do use it, only 5% know Grade 2. Not enough is being done to encourage people to stop relying on their hearing and to learn actual literacy. As somebody who became profoundly deaf later in life, I took my hearing for granted; I listened to audio books and learnt my multiplications via CD’s. But when my hearing dramatically changed, Braille was the thing that saved me. So, it is my goal to educate people on the usefulness and importance of braille which is a very overlooked area in Australia.

Additionally, I will highlight how mine was the first case that the NDIA has dealt with when it came to funding the translation of books into hard-copy braille, and how I was unable to win the battle against them at the AAT. The fact that nobody has ever requested funding for this is proof that braille seems to be fading into the void of audio-dominated life. By shedding some light on this issue, I hope to open up the conversation about why braille is not more widely used and how we can ensure its presence is not completely wiped out into the future.

#### Biography

**Vanessa Vlajkovic** is a 26-year-old Perth woman living with acquired Deafblindness. Vanessa was diagnosed with optic atrophy at 9 months old, leaving her with 20% vision. She commenced learning Braille at the age of 4, and at age 7 became deaf. Vanessa was mainstream schooled for all 12 years and made the switch to tactile sign language when she was 16 in year ten. Vanessa went on to complete a bachelor’s and then a master’s degree (the latter through Covid) before landing a job at ABC News as a sub-editor.

### 13b. The Australia and New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group (ANZAGG) Annual Meeting

2:00pm – 3:00pm

**Facilitator:** Leona Holloway, Research Assistant, Inclusive Technologies, Faculty of Information Technology, Monash University and Lily Gower, Teacher, SA School and Services for Vision impaired.

#### Abstract

The Australia and New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group is a subcommittee of the Round Table devoted to sharing information and ideas about accessible graphic. This includes tactile graphics, image descriptions, 3D printing, image recognition software, audio labels, sonification, refreshable graphics displays and more.

At this annual meeting we will hear from the ANZAGG Executive Committee and from Round Table member organisations about progress made and issues of concern in the field of accessible graphics over the last year. We will also discuss plans for the coming year.

Anyone with an interest in accessible graphics is welcome to join and actively participate in the meeting, in which open discussion and touch-and-tell samples are warmly invited.

#### Biography

**Leona Holloway** serves as the Chair of ANZAGG, drawing on her experience as a former transcriber and current researcher of new and emerging technology for accessible graphics. Leona is a member of the Inclusive Technologies team and the Monash Assistive Technology & Society Centre at Monash University.

**Lily Gower** is a Nationally Accredited Highly Accomplished Teacher who has been teaching at SA School and Services for Vision impaired since 2010. She has taught in a variety of roles, including as Music and Creative Arts Specialist Teacher. Lily has always had a particular interest in tactile learning and non-visual drawing. She has developed and refined a range of non-visual drawing techniques and activities for her students, including "A sequential guide to teaching portraiture to students who are blind and vision impaired". You may be familiar with Lily's work through her past presentations at SPEVI Conference and articles in the JSPEVI journal.  This is her first appearance at the Round Table Conference.

## Session 14 – Concurrent (Ballroom South)

### 14a. Music braille: empowering the mainstream and specialist sectors with software, good practice guidance, and networking

3:30pm – 4:00pm

**Presenter:** Dr Sarah Morley Wilkins, Project Manager & User Experience Consultant of the DAISY Consortium’s Music Braille Project.

**Co-presenters:** Arne Kyrkjebø - Norwegian Library of Talking Books and Braille (NLB), and Haipeng Hu – DAISY Music Braille Technical Consultant, and BrailleOrch.

#### Abstract

Last year the DAISY Music Braille Project reported the first outcomes of our strategic interventions to secure the future of music braille, through a range of technology developments and international collaboration around standards and good practice.

Our ‘Implementation Phase’ continues these efforts, to empower the sector to take up and embed resources into practice through a range of advocacy activities:

To improve the availability of scores suitable for conversion into music braille and other accessible formats, we are promoting a ‘born accessible’ agenda in mainstream music publishing, working with publishers, composers, engravers, transcribers and end-users.

To facilitate the efficient exchange of music braille files, and the maintenance and development of music braille expertise, we are widening our global Music Braille Production Network. This connects agencies and producers, and promotes production and metadata standards, and the ABC Global Book Service for file-sharing.

To inform music braille production standards, we are helping to prepare an Addendum to the New International Manual of Braille Music. With international Braille Authorities, standards bodies and expert transcribers, we are identifying gaps, developing proposals, and will be seeking agreement for a resulting publication.

To support organizations and end-users in taking up the tools we funded (MakeBraille, MuseScore, SMB) we are developing a range of materials including ‘Getting Started’ guides, video demos, and user groups.

To increase the availability of music braille tuition, we are trying to collate practical methodologies to share with educators, to complement the online resources we already shared.

Find out more, and get involved at [The DAISY Consortium Music Braille: www.daisy.org/music-braille](https://daisy.org/activities/projects/music-braille/)

#### Biography

As an Applied Psychologist, **Sarah Wilkins** is particularly interested in the end-user experience and collaborating with specialists to deliver solutions to meet user needs. With over 30 years in the blindness sector she has participated in and led numerous international accessibility initiatives, including for computer software and accessible information more broadly. Sarah won prestigious awards for her series of ’Windows Explained’ books for blind and visually impaired users. She headed the National Centre for Tactile Diagrams, and then RNIB’s Centre for Accessible Information, and chaired the UK Association for Accessible Formats, before moving to Dolphin Computer Access, and the DAISY Consortium.

### 14b. Creating accessible online and hybrid meetings: providing equitable information access

4:00pm – 5:00pm

Presenters: David Vosnacos, Advanced Senior Therapist: Assistive Technology, Innovation and Inclusion and Vithya Vijayakumare, Senior Digital Accessibility Specialist, VisAbility.

#### Abstract

From an organisational perspective it is difficult to not equate the rapid adoption of virtual meetings with the COVID-19 pandemic. Organisations worldwide needed to change their method of interaction with each other, with stakeholders and clients, to limit face-to-face contact. It saw the rapid development of video conferencing platforms and similar expedient pace of addressing accessibility issues reported by users. Two years on numerous studies have commented on the accessibility and limitations of these solutions to service delivery. Whilst hybrid meetings still exist as a viable mode of interaction and many accessibility challenges have been resolved, virtual meetings are still not the equitable solution to information access such technology can deliver. In this interactive workshop we will look at practical ways of evaluating video conferencing platforms and what needs to be considered to ensure a virtual meeting experience empowers all.

## Session 15 – Concurrent (Silver Room)

### 15a. Rapid design and production of educational tactile materials for VI-learners

3:30pm – 4:00pm

**Presenters:** Ruben Brandsma, Project innovation lead – teacher and Evert Rasing, Project Manager, Royal Dutch Visio.

#### Abstract

Tactile materials have always been a staple in the education of persons with a visual impairment. Unfortunately, these materials often are difficult or expensive to produce, especially in large quantities. What is the best way to approach this?

At Royal Dutch Visio we have been trying to figure this out for several years. In these years we have done a lot of research. We rounded off several successful projects that produced a lot of tactile educational materials and made designing and producing them a core part of our education.

We achieved this by doing several things:

* Focus on vi-learners and teachers in the classroom and the problems they face or possibilities they see.
* Use an iterative design process that is focused on the end-user.
* Use different types of production techniques depending on the situation.
* Make several prototypes and test with end-users.
* Make sure the result is easy to reproduce.

In this presentation, I will elaborate on this by taking you through several projects and show you materials we have developed at our schools in The Netherlands. For example, the Braillebox that teaches young learners how to read and calculate with braille, a tactile ruler for low vision and blind users, and a new way approach to dice. Lastly, we want to share our international work on this topic with our 3D4VIP EU project, where we developed a platform for these models with several partners from Europe.

#### Biographies

After graduating on 3D printing for the education of VI-learners at the Hogeschool Utrecht, **Ruben Brandsma** worked for several years at the Accessibility foundation as digital accessibility expert and project lead on innovation of tactile materials for VI learners. Ruben currently works at Royal Dutch Visio as a project lead on innovation. He also teaches at the Visio school in Amsterdam teaching children ages 6 -18 several subjects ranging from digital literacy to technology. Ruben also leads the Visio 3D team where they develop and produce educational tactile materials for VI learners.

**Evert Rasing** is a Project Manager in the Education department of Royal Dutch Visio. He works in several innovative projects improving accessibility for blind and low vision students.

He works on the accessibility of math and calculators for VI. He co-developed the award-winning iOS app SenseMath. But also, his focus is on 3D printing and designing and other modern production techniques for VI education. In this context he leads several sub projects like the Visio Braille Box and a new tactile ruler.

### 15b. ANZAGG workshop on tactile drawing techniques

4:00pm – 5:00pm

**Facilitator:** Leona Holloway, Monash University.

#### Abstract

Drawing is a fun, active and essential component to learning about spatial relationships and meaning can be represented using graphics, regardless of whether they are visual or tactile in nature. However, the tools and techniques for creating a tactile graphic are much less well-known and can be more complicated than simply picking up a pen and piece of paper.

In this hands-on workshop, we will share and try out a range of techniques for tactile drawing by people who are touch readers, ranging from quick methods using everyday objects to more accuracte and complex methods such as writing SVG code. The workshop will include an open discussion of the relative merits of each approach and the contexts in which they are most suitable.

Attendees are invited to please bring along any tools that you use for tactile drawing and be ready to try something new.

The workshop will be hosted by the Australia and New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group (ANZAGG).

#### Biography

Leona Holloway is the Chair of the Australia and New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group, a subcommittee of the Round Table devoted to sharing information and ideas about accessible graphics. She is a member of the Inclusive Technologies research group at Monash University, where she explores new methods for accessible graphics, such as refreshable tactile displays.

# Tuesday, 21 May 2024

## Session 16 – Plenary (Ballroom South)

### 16a. Access, Autonomy and Liberation: Lessons from the Disability Royal Commission

9:30am – 10:00am

Keynote Address: Senator Jordon Steele-John, Senator for Western Australia, Australian Greens Party.

#### Abstract

The Disability Royal Commission received thousands of submissions from disabled people all around the country. Its final report made 222 recommendations on how to improve policy, laws, structures and practices.

In this keynote address, Greens Senator Jordon Steele-John will pinpoint the recommendations most closely aligned with improving information access and accessible communication. While sharing his personal insights into addressing barriers to information access and why this is an essential step towards achieving justice and liberation for disabled people.

#### Biography

**Jordon Steele-John** grew up in Perth, Western Australia, having immigrated from the UK as a young child with his family. Early on, Jordon witnessed his family navigating government support systems, and saw firsthand the fierce self-advocacy and determination required to do so.

Through his family's resilience and support for one another, Jordan witnessed the power of community in action. This experience, combined with the lived experience of being a disabled person, fueled Jordon’s desire to become an advocate for others navigating similar circumstances. In 2011, Jordon became a member of the Australian Greens, and his passions for advocacy and systemic change quickly aligned with the grassroots community activism the Australian Greens Party is built upon.

In 2013, at the age of 23, Jordon was elected to the Senate in a whirlwind. As the first wheelchair user ever elected to the Senate, his appointment drew immediate attention to the inaccessibility of Parliament House. Jordon has been a loud champion for improving disability access in Parliament House and public spaces since.

Over his six years as a Senator so far, Jordon has used his position in Parliament to spearhead the Disability Royal Commission, launch Senate inquiries into dental care and ADHD assessment and treatment, fight for climate action, and bring the rights of young people, queer people, and disabled people to the forefront of political discourse.

### 16b. Talking books in the mainstream – where are we headed?

10:00am – 10:30am

**Q&A with Panellists**
Nigel Waring, Head of Technology and Accessibility Blind Low Vision NZ
Sarah Bloedern, Manager of the Vision Australia Library service, Vision Australia
Vithya Vijayukumare, Senior Digital Accessibility Specialist, VisAbility

#### Abstract

Hoopla. Libby. Audible. Spotify.

Public libraries and commercial streaming services are making audiobooks available to all borrowers without any eligibility criteria to prove you have a print disability.  Audiobooks are common in public libraries: in the 2023 survey of public libraries 100% of respondents reported having audio on CDs in their libraries, and 98% reported having audiobooks in digital format.

#### Biographies

**Nigel Waring** is a passionate advocate for technology accessibility and inclusion. As the Head of Technology and Accessibility at Blind Low Vision NZ, Nigel leads the initiatives and development aimed at leveraging technology to empower individuals with visual impairments. With a background in Engineering and Project Management, Nigel brings a unique perspective to the intersection of technology and accessibility. He is dedicated to breaking down barriers and ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability, has equal access to information and the digital world.

**Sarah Bloedorn** has worked in libraries for her entire career, with a focus on literacy for children and young people. In her current role she oversees the delivery of accessible collections and programs to library users across Australia. She also lives up to the stereotype that librarians have a lot of cats.

**Vithya Vijayakumare** with 13+ years of experience, is responsible for ensuring that websites, social media, videos, documents and audio materials are accessible to all users. She has successfully delivered projects for government organizations, businesses, and schools/universities in various accessible formats. Vithya has also conducted several workshops on topics related to digital accessibility, inclusive publishing (EPUB/DAISY), content/document accessibility and future innovation solutions (3D Binaural Surround Sound/360 audio). She is a proud member of the Perth Web Accessibility Camp (PWAC) and Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities.

## Session 17 – Concurrent (Ballroom South)

### 17a. Accessible workplaces – smart adjustments can improve recruitment, productivity and retention

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenters:** Damian McMorrow, National Access Technology Manager, Vision Australia and Rebecca Clark, Vision Technology Specialist, Quantum RLV.

#### Abstract

With the move away from paper-based to digital systems in the workplace, we have seen some significant steps forward in terms of career opportunities, and accessibility in general. However, technology and digitization has created some challenges that didn’t exist previously. Employers therefore need to consider how their employees with vision impairment will manage complex digital workflows. Accessibility is not merely a WCAG 2.0 tick box, or the purchase of screen reading software. It is important to confirm that workflows are “accessible” with products like JAWS and ZoomText; but also important to assess whether they are “practical”. Does it take ten steps to execute a function that sighted employees can instantly complete with a single mouse click? Should we modify our systems? Or, the employee’s access tools?

To attract the best staff, to get them up and running quickly, and to allow them to thrive and work alongside their colleagues as equals, is the ultimate goal; but it takes a mix of assistive technology, training and smart, sensible adjustments. This presentation will explain how Vision Australia’s Assistive Technology, Training, Employment Services, and Digital Access divisions are internally coordinating this consultancy, in tandem with JobAccess Assessors, and equipment specialists like Quantum RLV so that a seamless process can be offered to businesses and government departments. Some case studies will be presented, with examples of adjustments that have led to successful outcomes with collaborative planning.

#### Biographies

Since graduating with a Bachelor of Information Technology from Griffith University **Damo McMorrow** has spent over 24 years in the IT industry in a variety of roles, from running his own adaptive technology business, to managing technical and service delivery teams across the Education sector. During this time, he has relied upon adaptive technology and equipment to help overcome a wide range of barriers and issues. Damo then brought his experience and passion for technology to Vision Australia, previously as an Access Technology Specialist, where he assisted clients in the use of technology for work, education, travel and leisure, and currently as national Access Technology Manager, leading Vision Australia’s Access Technology Service. In his spare time, he is a broadcaster on the internet radio station Mushroom FM, a keen cook, amateur radio operator, and 4-wheel-drive and camping enthusiast.

**Rebecca Clark** is a Vision Technology Specialist with QuantumRLV working with Assistive Technology for people with blindness, low vision and other print disabilities. She has over 20 years of experience, working with people who are blind or vision impaired, first at VisAbility in Perth and for the last 11 years in Sydney with QuantumRLV. She has a particular interest in braille and its importance in literacy. Currently her role involves working with individuals and organisations to find Assistive Technology to suit their needs and provide training in the use of these devices and software, as well as facilitating QuantumRLV’ s regular webinars.

### 17b. Making tourism accessible for blind and low vision visitors

11:30am – 12:00pm

**Presenter:** Margo Carwardine, Project Coordinator - Accessible Tourism Enabler Grant, and Executive Assistant, Queensland Braille Writing Association.

#### Abstract

In 2023 Queensland Braille Writing association (known as Braille House) was one of only five successful applicants to be awarded an Accessible Tourism Enabler Grant by the Queensland Government (as part of its 2023 Year of Accessible Tourism).

Since September 2023, Braille House has been advancing the project, engaging in a collaborative process amongst stakeholders to ultimately enable people who are blind or have low vision to function more independently and with equity and dignity in the tourism and visitor setting.

The focus of the project is around delivering a package of resources through numerous websites to accommodation, hospitality and tourist destination providers. The materials are designed to assist these businesses to:

* better understand the blind and low vision visitor business case
* undertake a self-assessment audit of facilities, staffing, procedures, customer experience, and marketing and communication to identify barriers, gaps and areas for improvement
* develop their accessible tourism business strategy
* enhance their provision of accessible information and marketing, particularly to blind and low vision visitors.

This presentation will explore elements of the project in more detail, including anticipated outcomes, as well as provide information on how presentation participants can encourage accommodation, hospitality and tourist destination providers can access resources and explore opportunities.

#### Biography

**Margo Carwardine** came to Braille House as a volunteer late in 2021 during a break from a background in education and school leadership spanning nearly four decades. Margo’s interest and involvement in the inspiring work of Braille House grew, as did the roles she held. In mid-2023 Margo was appointed as the Project Coordinator of the Accessible Tourism Enabler Grant received by Braille House as part of the Queensland Government’s Year of Accessible Tourism. Margo holds a Dip Teach, B.Ed., Grad Dip Arts and MEd.

### 17c. It feels like people with disabilities are excluded from all those kinds of things.

12:00pm – 12:30pm

**Presenters:** Madhuka De Silva, Doctoral Candidate, Monash University.

#### Abstract

Participation in expressive physical activities like dance can be challenging for people who are blind or have low vision (BLV). Traditional teaching methods heavily rely on visual demonstrations. Furthermore, there are limitations in using verbal instructions and physical manipulations as alternatives to visual demonstrations when educating BLV people on body movement, as identified by our previous work. Recent research highlights the potential of technology to enhance body movement education for the BLV people. However, there is a lack of engagement with the community and their educators to understand their specific needs. Through a co-design approach of conducting preliminary surveys, interviews, focus groups and ideation workshops involving BLV people and their teachers, this study uncovers key challenges and potential solutions to improve contemporary dance education for BLV adults. We encourage the assistive technology community to focus on accessible education of “all these kinds of things” (body movement including dance), contributing to improving the quality of life of BLV people.

#### Biography

**Madhuka De Silva** is a PhD candidate at Monash University. She brings over 3 years of industry experience as a business analyst specialising in requirement identification and product design. She has designed accessible voting tools in previous research. In her current PhD research, she is focused on the accessible representation of spatial and dynamic body movement data for people who are blind or have low vision. Her research interests include accessible design, user experience and embodied design methods. As for her other interests, she is an avid dancer exploring different dance forms in various cultures.

## Session 18 – Concurrent (Silver Room)

### 18a. Enhancing blind people’s experience with productivity applications

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenter:** Minoli Perera, PhD Student, Monash University.

#### Abstract

Productivity applications, such as word processors, spreadsheets, presentations, and video conferencing platforms, have become indispensable tools in the workplace, higher education, and personal settings. However, blind people encounter numerous accessibility and usability challenges when working with these applications, which often result in reduced productivity and independence.

In this talk, we will delve into the findings from a web-based survey and an exploratory study, conducted to understand the blind users' experience with productivity applications. Our studies reveal that accessibility and usability issues in these applications have an alarming adverse impact on users' productivity, task performance, independence, and emotional well-being.

Through this presentation, we aim to ignite a call to action for more research and development in this area. We will explore the potential role of AI-based assistants in enhancing the experience of blind users, shedding light on the promising possibilities that technology offers to bridge the accessibility gap and improve quality of life for individuals with visual impairments.

#### Biography

**Minoli Perera** is a second year PhD student at the Inclusive Tech group at Monash University Australia. She brings over five years of industry experience working as a software engineer specialising in user experience and user interface design. Minoli holds a bachelor’s degree in Software Engineering from University of Westminster, UK. She is interested in the domain of workplace accessibility and her project aims to build a technology based inclusive work culture for employees who are blind.

### 18b Braille music our way: introducing a new and unique approach to music literacy through braille

11:30am – 12:30pm

**Presenter:** Chantelle Griffiths, CEO, Tactile and Technology Literacy Centre and Dr Wendy Richards, Braille Music Specialist. Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ).

#### Abstract

The Aotearoa Braille Music Initiative (ABMI) represents a unique and practical approach to learning Braille music, designed and led by blind musicians, for blind musicians. Through our lived experience, we recognise that Braille music does not merely parallel print music and is not just a means to an end. Braille music is itself a dynamic music learning medium which connects a blind musician with music notation. It is steeped in a rich and fascinating history, and we believe that Braille and music is an essential and valued part of the blindness community and culture.

Braille creates opportunities in all aspects of life and builds transferrable skills and strong, resilient communities. Music transcends language, cultural and societal barriers and plays an integral part in the lives and wellbeing of blind and sighted musicians. Together, Braille and music are a potent combination that changes the lives of participants and communities alike. Long-term, the skills and connections created through Braille music have flow-on effects for all of society.

It became apparent that in New Zealand, opportunities for blind adults to access and/or participate in music making experiences were limited at best and inaccessible at worst. The ABMI represents a first step toward supporting active engagement in musical activities for Braille-reading musicians. This interactive workshop will demonstrate our unique approach to music literacy through Braille. We will also discuss the background of the initiative, the philosophies that guide its development, and the pedagogical principles that sit behind the teaching and learning programme.

#### Biographies

**Chantelle Griffiths** has been vision impaired since birth and is a lifelong Braille reader. She is a keen musician who is actively involved with music programmes at BLENNZ and the wider blindness community. Her career to date has centred on teaching literary and music Braille to adults, Braille proofreading and transcription, and as an adaptive technology instructor. In 2021, she co-founded the Tactile and Technology Literacy Centre (TTLC) specialising in Braille teaching and learning, comprehensive haptic skills for understanding, and tactile design.

**Dr Wendy Richards** started working with young learners who are blind in 1999 teaching piano and Braille music. She soon developed a passion for music literacy through Braille and recognised that a unique set of skills and cognitive functions are necessary for successful music making through Braille. This led her to pursue further study in this area and in 2020 she completed doctorate research with a thesis titled Music Braille Pedagogy: the Intersection of Blindness, Braille, Music Learning Theory, and Laban.

## Session 19 – Concurrent (Ballroom South)

### 19a. Using language rights to advocate for greater braille access

1:30pm – 2:00pm

**Presenter:** Jodie Lea Martire, PhD candidate, The University of Queensland.

#### Abstract

Language rights refer to someone’s human rights in relation to their ancestral or preferred language. Language rights are a subsidiary of broad-based communication rights (Lee et al., 2007), which are most strongly anchored by Article 19 on “freedom of expression” in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). Language rights go by other names – linguistic rights, linguistic human rights, minority-language rights – but each framing agrees on the fundamental demands: the right of language communities to exist, and of the language to be used freely and openly, in public and in private, and in daily life, education, politics and artistic representation (Council of Europe (COE), 2023; PEN International, 2011; United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, 2017; Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights Follow-up Committee, 1998).

This paper will explore how the discourse of language rights can strengthen advocacy work for greater access to print and digital braille materials for the print disabled. While braille is vital for blind and low-vision readers to gain both literacy and independence, text-to-speech software and digital audio recordings offer effective solutions for many everyday information needs. For certain braille users, however, the writing system proves simply irreplaceable. It is an essential information tool for deafblind users and for those studying or enjoying music, STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths), languages, chess, knitting and crochet.

By considering braille as a minority script or writing system used by print-disabled readers, I will locate braille within influential language rights frameworks and identify relevant terminology and approaches for advocacy work. I will also contextualise language rights advocacy, movements and organisations at a national and international level.

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#### Biography

**Jodie Lea Martire** is a PhD candidate in the Centre for Communication and Social Change at The University of Queensland. Her doctoral research focuses on minority-language publishing in Australia and its role in communities' defence of their linguistic human rights. Jodie recently learned braille for print users at Braille House in Brisbane, and she comes to her research on publishing after 20 years' professional experience in the book trade (as a writer, editor, translator, foreign rights manager, publishing manager, bookseller and trained librarian). She worked in human rights for 5 years in Australia, Colombia and Mexico, and her research interests centre on justice, representation and power in the contemporary publishing industry.

### 19b. Print Disability Radio – Future directions for radio reading services and distributed audio

2:00pm – 2:30pm

**Presenter:** Barry Melville, General Manager, 2RPH.

#### Abstract

Based in Sydney but with broadcast coverage of more than 75% of the New South Wales population, Radio 2RPH has been providing radio reading services for the print disability community for more than 40 years. We are part of Disability Media Australia (formerly RPH Australia) whose membership consists of 17 stations providing services across regional and metropolitan Australia.

Radio 2RPH is intent on plotting its future directions for improving and diversifying audio-based reading support for our unique audience. 2RPH General Manager, Barry Melville will address a range of issues including evolving technologies, new content opportunities, access and inclusion, copyright reforms, empirical research challenges and funding support for vital audio-based media services.

Barry has said “We are interested in deepening our understanding of the needs and interests of the print disability community. To do this we are seeking new opportunities for collaboration, relationships with a wide circle of organisations and research partnerships.”

The presentation will include a basis slide presentation but will be weighted towards an inclusive and open discussion.

#### Biography

Since October 2021 **Barry Melville** has been General Manager of 2RPH, a multi-platform radio service for those with print disabilities. Over 30 years his experience has spanned public administration, academia, strategic communications, policy and regulation, and consumer advocacy.

For 5 years he was with the Digital Switchover Taskforce of the Department of Broadband, Communications, and the Digital Economy where he worked as Director of Industry Engagement.

Barry has senior management experience in the public, private and community sectors. This includes Account Director in a leading Government Relations firm and General Manager of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia.

## Session 20 – Concurrent (Silver Room)

### 20a. Playground for blind and low vision children

1:30pm – 2:00pm

**Presenter:** Leona Holloway on behalf of Dr Dagmar Reinhardt, Associate Professor, The University of Sydney.

#### Abstract

Playgrounds and Play are an essential part of childhood and outdoor play supports the development of physical skills such as strength, coordination, and balance as well as cognitive and emotional skills. Play environments can encourage children to be problem solvers, social, imaginative, creative, and collaborative - play is worldmaking.  However, often playgrounds are not equipped for BLV access; retrofitting is highly desirable, but few strategies exist to date; and there exists little knowledge of what BLV users like or want. With input from early childhood educators, BLV educators, touch access designers, architects, and interaction designers, this paper presents research into playgrounds, and how play, tactility and mobility for parents/carers and blind and low vision children and their parents/carers in cities can be improved. We present initial findings from the currently ongoing survey on accessible playgrounds, an online auditing of playground access through websites across VIC and NSW, and our studies and first approaches into co-designing with BLV children and their parents. We also discuss limitations, challenges and overcoming barriers, and our ongoing work with the recent ARC DP24 grant.

#### Biography

**Dr Dagmar Reinhardt** is a researcher and educator at the School of Architecture, Design and Planning, The University of Sydney. Reinhardt’s research focuses on the intersection of architecture, body, space and the senses, by integration of advanced data retrieval and fabrication methods, including photogrammetry and robotics. A practising architect, her built works, competitions and installations are research-based, widely published and have received numerous recognitions and awards for affordable and multi-generational residential works [Architecture and Design in theory and practice: www.reinhardtjung.de](http://www.reinhardtjung.de/).

### 20b. Wesseling Awards: celebrating braille music

2:00pm – 2:30pm

**Presenters:** Neil Jarvis, Dr Wendy Richards, Braille Music Specialist, BLENNZ and Chantelle Griffiths, CEO, Tactile and Technology Literacy Centre.

#### Abstract

For any musician, knowing what notes a composer actually wrote is the only way to make independent and informed artistic decisions for oneself. This statement was made by Lisette Wesseling, a professional musician and Braille user, and is true not only of western classical music but of much contemporary music also. For a musician who is blind, achieving musical independence, autonomy, and equity often requires incorporating Braille music into one’s broad repertoire of skills.

Louis Braille’s unique tactile system for reading and writing music was published in 1829 and has been in existence longer than many of the well-known international music examination systems currently available. However, these are performance and/or print focused examination systems and an equivalent system to assess musical knowledge and skills embedded with Braille music learning culture has not been available.

This presentation will introduce a new award system developed by Braille music users for Braille music users. Wesseling Awards represent a formal platform through which we celebrate Braille music, encourage the active pursuit of Braille music skills, and acknowledge the individual effort required to achieve this element of musical literacy. They have a key focus on assessing the practical application of Braille music rather than theoretical understandings. This presentation will discuss key features of this award system, how it meets the needs of Braille music learners, assessment processes, and the unique tactile award design.

#### Biography

**Neil Jarvis** is a blind, Braille-reading music enthusiast. He had the good fortune of being married to Lisette Wesseling and was therefore closely connected to her music and ongoing passion for access to music through Braille. Promoting the causes which mattered to Lisette has been important to Neil since her death. He views it as continuing the role of supporting her work while she was alive. Neil shares Lisette’s deep commitment to enabling blind musicians to have the opportunity to shine and believes that a full understanding of Braille music is one of the keys to success.

## Session 21 – Plenary (Ballroom South)

### 21a. Accessible Procurement and the Disability Royal Commission

2:45pm – 3:15pm

**Feature Presenters:** David Swayn, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) and Jonathan Craig, Vision 2020 Australia.

#### Abstract

The implementation of Australian Standard EN 301 549 (Accessibility requirements for ICT Products & Services) has been an ongoing advocacy item for the Australian accessibility community. Once there is broad use of the standard in public & private procurement processes, AS EN 301 549 has the potential to shape the Australian vendor market toward creating & selling accessible technology. In this presentation we will give an overview of known efforts underway to further the adoption of AS EN 301 549 in Australia and celebrate the gains made already. Then, we will move to discussing options for collaborating on relevant Disability Royal Commission recommendations which may provide opportunities to strengthen requirements for accessible procurement in Australia across a broad variety of markets including Telecommunications, banking, self-service, payment and check in terminals and other every-day necessities.

#### Biographies

**David Swayn** currently leads the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)’s policy work for people with disability. His previous experiences have included coordinating national advice for universities to adopt accessibility standards in procurement policy, trialling telepresence robotics as reasonable adjustments in tertiary settings and developing and implementing a national careers service for university students with disability. David represents ACCAN on the Standards Australia IT-040 ICT Accessibility committee, is a committee member of the Australian Web Accessibility Initiative (OzeWAI) and a content contributor to the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET).

**Jonathan Craig** is a policy and advocacy advisor for Vision 2020 Australia, the national peak body for the eye health and vision sector. From 2018 to 2021 he was editor of Blind Citizens News. He also works as a freelance writer and accessibility consultant.