

WISCONSIN BRAILLE

Volume 19, Issue 2

Spring 2018

Dear Wisconsin Braille Members,

This newsletter focuses on an issue dear to all our hearts: braille literacy. We open it by honoring those who have been with Wisconsin Braille since its inception. That piece is followed by a story about how vision teachers and braillists work together remotely in an effort to provide regular education teachers the braille they need for braille readers in their classrooms. Those of you who are connected to the world of braille through parenting and other networks may find these "behind the scenes" stories quite interesting. And while Wisconsin Braille and Wisconsin vision teachers work hard to enhance the literacy of the braille readers in our state, there are other organizations and individuals who can help us with our journey along this path. For those of you who would like to expand braille reading opportunities for your children and students, especially the youngest ones, a listing of places to order free braille books is offered. Of course, not all of us are working with our youngest readers. For those working with older students, Ms. Perkins offers parents, teachers and transcribers information about computer code in UEB. Certainly this is a form of braille literacy not to be forgotten in this age of computers. Finally, while much of the work done to provide braille to children is freely volunteered time and work, parts of our production costs cannot be done without your membership dues. A note from our membership chair briefly explains what some of those costs are.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Wisconsin Braille,

Alison McKee

A Salute to Our Founding Members

In 1998 a handful of forward thinking individuals became the first members of Wisconsin Braille. They saw the need, and continue to see the need, to actively promote braille literacy across the state of Wisconsin. We are proud to thank these members for their support for the past 20 years:

Mary Ann Damm and Constance Risjord - founders

Sandy Adams, Kathleen Belongia, Clair Egan, Audrey Hemmer, Vonna Johnson-Porter and Kevin Jones

Getting Braille into the Hands of Braille Readers, the Vision Teacher's Side of the
Story

By Alison McKee

I was working as a vision teacher when decisions about braille, its access and instruction, were becoming part of the IEP process. The intent of putting braille instruction and its access into the IEP was to be sure that braille literacy was not overlooked. The law came to stipulate that visually impaired students were to have braille in their hands at the same time that their sighted peers had print. No longer was it acceptable to have a braille reader sit in class for two months without the braille text book when their print reading peers had print textbooks from the first day of school. In fact, the intent of the law was to level the playing field, giving equal access to all, no matter the reading medium.

It may seem to some that having braille available to braille readers at the same time as their sighted peers have print is not that difficult a task to accomplish. Step behind the scenes, however, and the complexity of this "simple" task is revealed.

First, the textbooks. It is commonly misunderstood that if a book exists in print it is also available in braille. This simply is not the case. Braille textbooks are made available on an as needed basis and this takes long hours of preparation to accomplish. It would seem that because publishers, by law, are required to make their electronic files available to those who can transcribe print to braille, the process, from that point on would be quick and easy. Not so. It takes a highly trained braille transcriber hours to "clean up" and re-format publisher files so that they can be read by a braille reader. Electronic notation about print format must be removed and replaced with correct braille format, pagination must be completed, tactile maps, graphs and illustrations created. That's just the tip of the iceberg, but I think you understand.

Secondly, there are the classroom worksheets. In some situations this process can be more complex than the transcription of a textbook. Worksheets must pass along a pipeline that is not always free-flowing before transcription can even begin. First, the worksheet must be generated. If that happens the night or morning before the worksheet is needed, and the vision teacher is in the building with time to spare, often a rarity, the student might have the worksheet on time. Sometimes the worksheet has been prepared weeks in advance but the unforeseen happens. The teacher must switch lesson plans around according to a larger master plan over which they have no control. Material that is ready for use is suddenly bumped behind material that is still in the pipeline, to be brailled according to the original deadline. Suddenly, what had been needed at a future date is now not even available. Whether or not the teacher plans ahead, and sometimes must change plans at the last minute, or the teacher's style is to plan-on-the-go, getting print worksheets into the hands of the brailist and back to the student in time for class use takes time.

Once the materials, textbooks and worksheets, are collected by the vision teacher, he or she begins the process of getting the materials into the hands of those who can do the braille transcription. Textbooks, in the State of Wisconsin, are ordered through the Department of Public Instruction. That process can take some time, depending upon whether the book has already been transcribed or not. It is not necessary for you, the reader, to know its details.

With worksheets the process is different. The vision teacher needs to put them directly into the hands of the designated transcriber. Some school districts hire their own certified transcribers, some vision teachers transcribe as best they can and some vision teachers work directly or remotely with transcribers. I have done them all. Before the days of computers, when worksheets were few, I transcribed. As computers became the tool that teachers used to generate worksheets, I relied on transcribers. I found that I simply did not have the time to produce the amount of braille needed and also teach vision skills. I have worked both directly and remotely with certified transcribers during my career. The direct process is simplest. The vision teacher and transcriber work out a system of getting worksheets from the classroom teacher to the transcriber and then the transcription proceeds. The remote process is a bit more complex. Worksheets must be collected in a timely manner, scanned (I use my iPhone to scan), and emailed as attachments to the transcriber. The transcriber transcribes according to the vision teacher's directions that were part of the email containing the

attached worksheet. When the material has been transcribed and formatted it is sent back to the school via US mail's Free Matter for the Blind mail service.

All these processes, from teacher generated worksheet to braille formatted and transcribed worksheet and from print textbook to braille formatted and transcribed textbook, take time. They are the processes we must complete to remain in compliance with the law which stipulates equal access to a free and public education. I am proud to say that I am part of it.

... And from a Remote Transcriber's Perspective

By Judith Sherry

I've been a remote braille transcriber for 6 years, after previously having worked for over 20 years as a transcriber and special education instructional aide in several small school districts in the southeast corner of Wisconsin.

My focus as a remote transcriber is on those worksheets and supplemental materials that the classroom teachers give to the vision teacher for transcription. Working remotely from a home office, I miss the advantages of being on-site as a team member in a resource room. Certainly, communication with vision teachers and classroom teachers is more direct – face-to-face conversations beat email any day. And delivering transcribed materials straight from an embosser into the hands of the vision teacher is faster than anything the US Postal Service can do for us. But by working remotely, I'm able to provide services to vision teachers and their braille students from many locations, especially small school districts that have just one or two braille students and no on-site transcribers.

It can be a challenge for a remote transcriber to get brailled materials into the hands of a vision teacher's student when a classroom teacher's request comes at the last minute. I share Alison's commitment to her braille readers that they have their materials at the same time that print readers have theirs. But I've spent enough time in classrooms to know that even the best-prepared teacher occasionally deviates from lesson plans when a lesson needs to be retaught, and also when a lesson takes an unexpected detour and calls for some spontaneous lesson-planning. So I depend on vision teachers like Alison who communicate consistently with classroom teachers. And I definitely depend on the US Postal Service, which gives my "Free Matter for the Blind" packets first-class treatment and often provides next-day or 2-day delivery.

Remote transcribing isn't a perfect solution for getting braille into the hands of the braille student in a timely manner, but it's working well for us. Technology enables me to receive, braille, and emboss the materials the classroom teacher needs, and the US Postal Service reliably delivers it back to the vision teacher, all

of which enables the vision teacher to concentrate on what she does best: teaching the visually impaired.

She Is Not Invisible by Marcus Sedgwick

Submitted by Cindy Collins

This young adult novel, by the Printz Award winning author, Marcus Sedgwick, is wonderfully diverse. It is partly a thriller, partly an exploration of coincidence, but mostly the story of Laureth, a 16 year old British teenager who happens to be blind. Her father, a famous author, seems to have disappeared, and since he is almost always in touch with her on a daily basis, she is very worried. She has received an email that his writing notebook has been found in New York. He is never without his writing notebook, so she decides to try to find him, and she takes her seven year old brother as a guide. They go on a transatlantic flight with no parent accompanying them!

Sedgwick is very skilled at showing us the alterations blind people must use to navigate common occurrences the sighted world: waiting in line, shaking hands, putting luggage in an overhead bin. Laureth, as the narrator, admits to being scared, but she does her best not to show it so she can remain visible in this world.

What is especially unusual, and exceptionally effective, is the narrative -- it doesn't include any visual details because it is told by a blind character. Voices, smells and temperatures become the descriptors, along with feelings and thoughts.

Laureth encounters many fascinating people with as many varying attitudes about blindness. One of her statements is "I don't mind being blind. What I mind is people treating me as if I'm stupid."

The author spent time researching at a school for the blind in the UK. Everything Laureth says, feels or does is something one student or another said to him during the year he spent at the school.

This book is written from the point of view of a 16 year old, but people of all ages will find it difficult to put down. It is available through Bookshare and as a talking book.

A Short List of Free Hard Copy Braille Book Resources

Spring and fall seem to be times of the year when parents and educators are thinking about braille literacy for their children and students. In the state of Wisconsin free braille books are made available, via the Wisconsin Braille Special Book Project. Books are ordered in the fall and delivered in the spring. For

parents and educators wishing to increase the selection of braille books available to children, Wisconsin Braille is just one of many resources available. Below is a short list and description of other resources parents and educators might consider when thinking of developing braille literacy skills of Wisconsin's braille reading children.

1. American Action Fund: Free Braille Books Program, 1800 Johnson Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21230; Phone: (410) 659-9315, extension 2287; Email: actionfund@actionfund.org; Website: <http://www.actionfund.org>

This program provides a free Braille book every month from a popular children's reading series. The books are for the children to keep and collect. To enroll in this program and to find out more, please go to <https://actionfund.org/free-braille-books>.

2. American Printing House for the Blind (APH): Braille Tales Print/Braille Program 1839 Frankfort Avenue, P.O. Box 6085, Louisville, Kentucky 40206; Phone: (502) 895-2405, (800) 223-1839; Email: info@aph.org; Website: <http://www.aph.org>

Participating families receive six free print/braille books per year up to the child's 6th birthday. **To be eligible for the program:**

- You or your child must meet the definition of blindness
 - Your child must be age 5 or under
 - Both you and your child must reside in the U.S. or its outlying areas (American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands)
3. Braille Institute of America, Inc.: 741 North Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90029; (800) 272-4553, Phone (323) 663-1111; Email: ums@brailleinstitute.org; Website: <http://www.brailleinstitute.org>

The Braille Special Collection program is designed to foster a love of reading by providing blind and visually impaired children with FREE braille books and storybook kits throughout the year.

Any visually impaired child living in the United States or Canada is eligible. VI teachers or educators may also subscribe to our Special Collection through our program: [Partners in Literacy](#)

4. Braille Library and Transcribing Services, Inc.: 517 N. Segoe Road, #200, Madison, Wisconsin 53705; Phone (608) 233-0222; Email: office.blts@tds.net; Website: <http://www.bltsinc.org>

There is no charge for borrowing our books; just tell us your name and contact information and we'll get you started. Books are available for loan or sale.

5. National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) 1291 Taylor Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20542-0002; Phone: (202) 707-5100, Toll Free (888) 657-7323; Email: nls@loc.gov; Website: <http://www.loc.gov/nls>

National Library Service (NLS) is a free braille and talking book library service. Through a national network of cooperating libraries, NLS circulates books and magazines in braille which are delivered by postage-free mail or instantly downloadable.

6. The Temple Beth El Sisterhood Braille Bindery Volunteers: 7400 Telegraph Road Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301; Phone: (248) 851-1100, extension 3129; asmandel1@sbcglobal.net

TBE's Braille Bindery offers free books in braille for blind or low-vision children. The books are for the children to keep and collect for as long as they want them.

Computer Material in UEB

Dear Ms. Perkins,

I want to write a link to a website for my braille-reading friend. How do I do that in UEB?

Sincerely,
Linus Tubyte

Dear Linus,

In the UEB rule book, computer material is defined as email addresses, websites, URLs, or filenames embedded in regular text. Contractions can be used in these instances. Uncontracted braille should be used for computer programming displayed on separate lines. In all cases, regular symbols are used. There is no switching into another code, so there are no opening or closing indicators. The same slash is used for "and/or" and "<https://>". The same colon used with words is used in computer material. The same symbol used for a period and decimal point is used for the dot in computer addresses. Upper-cell numbers with numeric indicators are used.

The good news about this is that a separate code does not need to be known when reading and writing computer material. The bad news is that the rules of UEB need to be known really, really well when reading and writing computer material, especially those rules pertaining to contraction usage, standing alone, and grade 1 mode.

The UEB rule book has a number of examples in Section 10.12.3. There are also examples scattered throughout the rules to demonstrate some other point.

There is also a short explanation in section 11.10 and in the *Guidelines for Technical Material*, Part 17, which lists some useful symbols, shown below.

Membership Renewal
by
Faith Kelley

Hello and greetings to all of Wisconsin Braille,

I am Faith Kelley and I am your Membership Chair. As such, I would like to thank you all so very much for your support and generosity. Each spring I send you reminders to renew your membership with our organization and each spring you generously respond to my membership requests. You have been the ones who have enabled Wisconsin Braille to put free braille books into the hands of our braille students for the past 20 years. In order to carry that legacy forward for another 20 years, I am asking that you please send your dues to me, as you faithfully have been doing, without my having to send out renewal reminders. My individualized reminder notifications cost us about \$78 a year. I would so much rather that those precious dollars be spent on braille. Please mail in your membership form, found on the last page of this newsletter, to me as soon as you are able.

Sincerely,
Faith Kelley

Please Join Us
For our next Board Meeting
at the
Alicia Ashman Public Library
733 N. High Point Rd.
Madison, WI

Saturday, June 2, 2018

Off Hwy 14 at the corner of Old Sauk Road and High Point Rd.

From 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

If you are interested in joining Wisconsin Braille, or have not paid your membership this year, please be sure to complete the membership form at the back of this newsletter and mail it to the address listed.

The WISCONSIN BRAILLE newsletter is published three times a year.

Deadlines are: Spring/Summer – April 15, Fall – August 15, Winter – December 15

The purpose of WISCONSIN BRAILLE INC. is to advance communication and coordinate the efforts of all persons concerned with the availability, quality, and distribution of brailled materials in the state of Wisconsin thereby encouraging braille literacy.

The purpose of this newsletter is to disperse information. WISCONSIN BRAILLE INC. does not endorse or vouch for the reliability of any of the persons, organizations, or products appearing in this publication.

This version of the Wisconsin Braille newsletter was prepared by the members of the OSCI Braille Program. It has not been proofread. Readers are encouraged to report noted errors to: Wisconsin Braille Newsletter, Editor, 5745 Bittersweet Place, Madison, WI 53705.