
WISCONSIN BRAILLE



Volume 22, Issue 1

Winter 2021



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Congratulating BLTS on its 50th Anniversary

by Sandra Adams, President of Wisconsin Braille

Wisconsin Braille is very pleased to congratulate BLTS on its 50th anniversary of service to the blind community this year.

Braille Library & Transcribing Services, Inc. (formerly known as the Volunteer Braillists and Tapists, Inc.) is a Madison-based non-profit organization founded in 1971 in order to produce reading materials in braille and on tape for blind individuals.

The mission of BLTS is based on the belief that all people have the right to the opportunity to read. Requests for braille transcriptions and library services are accepted, the only limitations being the availability of braillists and the braille book collection. When priorities must be determined, educational materials take precedence, followed by job-related requests, functional materials, and leisure reading.

The Madison braille organization was started in the late 1960's by four Madison women: Betty Land, Sue Clark, Harriet Boldon, and Margot Aserlind, all alumnae of Delta Gamma Sorority who were helping a vision teacher, Ruth Woodworth, at Lakewood Elementary School in Madison. They soon realized that they would be more useful if they knew how to braille. The vision teacher agreed to teach them after school hours using the braillewriters at Lakewood. But because the women had no braillewriters at home on which to practice, learning braille became frustrating. They made a request for funds from their sorority to purchase four braillewriters and were granted the money. Shortly afterwards, Marion Hong, a former braille teacher, moved to the Madison area and agreed to teach the women the official Library of Congress Transcribing course. All became certified braillists and founded the Volunteer Braillists in 1971.

BLTS has certainly evolved since these humble beginnings. Today there are 15 trained braillists producing adapted materials (now in the UEB code). During this current year alone, they produced 14,495 pages of material for the library as well as 3,043 pages for clients.

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First envisioned in 1975, the lending library maintained by BLTS includes fiction and non-fiction materials for young blind children as well as teenagers and adults. There is also a collection of cookbooks and craft books. Upon request these materials are circulated not only in the US, but in Canada, too.

A nationally recognized expert in braille transcription and a longtime member of BLTS, Connie Risjord has written and edited several versions of braille transcription manuals over time, and is currently teaching the braille transcription course with Patricia Herrling through BLTS. Recently three new braillists completed the course and are now serving the blind community.

Wisconsin Braille enjoys the distinction of being founded by Connie Risjord and Mary Ann Damm, two members of BLTS, with the intention of coordinating and informing those who are concerned with the availability, quality and distribution of brailled materials in Wisconsin. In 1999, they invited teachers and parents of the blind, as well as transcribers employed by school districts, to come together in support of this effort.

Soon after the establishment of Wisconsin Braille, the effort to also produce braille books free of charge for the state's blind children was initiated. These books were intended to become the children's own, allowing them to develop a collection of braille books at home...books they may want to enjoy over and over, and perhaps even read to their children one day. Today this annual effort is known as the Special Book Project.

Together both BLTS and Wisconsin Braille support the effort and intention "that all may read"...that all, regardless of vision loss, may benefit from the gift of literacy throughout their lives.

FROM THE UNITED NATIONS: *U.N. NEWS*

People with vision impairment are more likely to experience higher rates of poverty, neglect and violence. The pandemic and its consequent impact, such as lockdowns, has worsened their challenges, isolating them further...

...The pandemic has also underscored the importance of making information available in more accessible formats – including in Braille and on audio platforms – so that everyone can access vital information to protect themselves and help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The UN, for its part, has implemented several good practices to promote an inclusive response to the pandemic.

In Malawi, for instance, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) produced 4,050 braille products on spreading awareness and prevention of COVID-19, while in Ethiopia, the UN human rights office (OHCHR) published audio information, education and communication materials, to media professionals, and developed them in Braille formats.

Similarly, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) produced guidance notes in multiple languages and accessible formats, including Braille, on considerations for children and adults with disabilities in the response to COVID-19.

Starting With Paper

By Erica Christie

The English phrase, "out of sight, out of mind," contains the old expression, "out of mind," to convey something is forgotten. This phrase was first used in John Heywood's published works in 1546, and it is a phrase most applicable to members of the blind and visually impaired community. Think of how often you yourself tucked away unfinished tasks, coveted objects, or secret stashes of money. There they remained safe from your line of sight and, often forgotten. When a person has trouble seeing, or accessing visual input, the world around them can also be "forgotten" or difficult to understand. This includes an understanding of how physical space is organized. Most importantly, this includes, the concept of a page and how it is formatted. Tangible, physical connections to the world of a braille or print page grounds the reader in the world of written language, its rules of use, format and replication. Through the experience of braille or print the young pre-reader and, later on, the young reader learn to orient themselves to the written word and navigate through it with ease.

To understand this, we must understand why having access to paper braille is crucial for our children and their development. Learning how to orient and navigate within physical books is a must in developing literacy. It teaches young readers many things about how books "work." First, by example, children observe and eventually imitate the process of how to open a book, explore its pages, turn them and tell the stories written there. Yes, even before children can read, they imitate what they perceive the adult is doing, and tell stories as they turn pages. With the guidance of proficient readers, blind children learn these concepts. With daily exposure to braille books, eventually young children solidify their understanding of how to manipulate books and their pages. Well produced books will teach concepts of shape, color, texture and simple words which, in turn, become the building blocks for accessing the world of the written word. Navigating within the physical structure of a book "teaches" the rules of reading and writing. It also helps young blind children make the connection to the world of the written word through the power of touch.

Young readers need hard copy, paper braille, in the early years of their education just as sighted children need hard copy paper books. Braille books empower young readers. It helps them feel connected to their sighted peers. They, like their peers,

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Contributors to this newsletter are:

**Sandy Adams, Linda Bailey, Erica Christie, Cindy Collins,
Leanne Dieck, Constance Risjord, and Judy Sherry**

have books. They can read their books to their friends just as their friends read to them. Using braille text books allows the blind child to actively participate in shared classroom reading.

It is true that schools are rapidly shifting to electronic technologies for production of classroom assignments and that students are expected to complete assignments using similar technologies. Blind children must keep up with this trend too, but not at the expense of omitting paper braille from their repertoire of reading and writing materials. Paper braille will ground them in an understanding of how to format written assignments as they learn to put name, date and subject headings on assignments they turn in. It will help them understand the skill of making numbered lists, starting new lines and indenting paragraphs. Blind children must learn these standard formats before they can be expected to complete assignments requiring specific written formatting. Just as sighted children are taught these formats through the use of books, pencil and paper, blind children must learn through the use of braille books, braille writers (not electronic braille notetakers) and paper before being expected to do all of their assignments using technology. When those skills are mastered, and at the same time as their peers, it will be time to introduce electronic technologies for reading and writing.

Electronic technologies are not appropriate for teaching the skills of reading and writing because they do not have the ability to format. Mathematical equations, scientific calculations, and maps are each examples of situations where braille is best suited to a paper format. Take the example of maps. Maps are impossible to display electronically. Maps require physical layout that electronic notetakers do not offer. A single print map can include physical features, political boundaries, climate regions, and land use by employing print symbols, drawn lines, color and shading. In braille, while all of these features can be represented, a single map displaying such a quantity of information is next to impossible to make meaningful sense of. It is best to show so much information on multiple maps, thus making the braille designations easy to understand.

Braille, in the paper format, demonstrates the importance for spacing, layout, and visual aesthetics in a world where they are often forgotten. Spacing of words and lines, indentations, uniformity, artistic flare of fonts and texts, shaping and spatial awareness are all important concepts learned through the use of paper braille.

Producing paper braille, certainly has its drawbacks. For one, it is bulky and takes up space. For another, it can be difficult to correct errors neatly. Also, it can simply take more time to write with a braille writer. It is, therefore, important for blind children to learn the use of braille notetakers, just NOT at the expense of learning to read and write using hard copy braille at the outset of their reading/writing careers.

A Different Kind of Beauty by Sylvia McNicoll

By April Henry

Reviewed by Cindy Collins

A Different Kind of Beauty is a teen/young adult novel written by a Canadian author. It won the Canadian Children's Book Centre Our Choice Award in 2005, and it was nominated for two other awards. It is the second book in a trilogy, but it is not dependent on the first book *Bringing Up Beauty* for its story line. In *Bringing Up Beauty*, Elizabeth, the main character, had her heart broken over the lab puppy she raised for a guide dog program. It was very difficult to surrender that first Beauty. In this book, she's trying again (with Beauty II), and she vows she won't fall in love. She'll have fun, but she's going to try very hard not to get as close to this dog so giving her up won't be so wrenching.

The other main character is Kyle. He is 16, and he was a very active teenager who especially enjoyed surfing the waves. He becomes blind from diabetes and he is struggling with that loss when the reader first meets him. He and Elizabeth go to the same high school, but at the beginning of the novel, they have not met.

The novel deals with adolescent concerns: unrequited love, family and friendships. It also deals with Kyle's issues with orientation and mobility and his desire to be a good cane traveler so he can be more independent. He has a huge fear of dogs from an "attack" when he was young, so he feels he'd never want a guide dog. As he goes through two major traumas, he decides a dog might be a good idea, so the readers get to hear his inner thoughts and insecurities when he finally attends dog guide school.

Both character development and action move this novel forward. The protagonists' stories parallel one another, and each has a distinct voice that conveys both angst and perseverance.

One reviewer wrote "a heartwarming coming-of-age story for young teens ... McNicoll creates a cast of characters with depth and emotion that teens are sure to love."

Sadly, this book is not available in braille, but it is on Kindle, so it could be read with an electronic reader.

THE BRAILLE CORNER

Dear Ms. Perkins,

Please explain when and how to use centered, cell-5, and cell-7 headings. I'm confused.

Dear Confused,

Braille Formats tells us that headings are one of the most important ways a reader obtains information about the print format of material being presented on the braille page. Headings denote hierarchy. Finding a heading level quickly is the key for the braille reader. The more it stands out, the more important that heading level is.

Print may place headings centered on a line or all the way to the right or left margin. With the exception of paragraph headings, braille has only three possible locations for a heading: centered, starting in cell 5, or starting in cell 7. For instance, there is no such thing as a braille heading starting in cell 1 even if print starts the heading at the left margin. All of these headings are preceded by a blank line. Think of blank lines before headings like a stop sign.

Centered headings are used to introduce major sections of a text, i.e., chapters or parts. Cell-5 headings are only used for subheadings within a section introduced by a centered heading. Cell-7 headings are used for sub-subheadings following a cell-5 heading.

Follow print capitalization for all headings. Do not use italics unless they are needed for emphasized words within the heading.

Centered headings may occupy more than one braille line. Each line of the heading must be centered and have at least three blank cells at each margin. Blank lines must precede and follow each complete heading.

As their names imply, cell-5 headings start in cell 5, cell-7 headings in 7 with runover lines blocked. They must be preceded, but not followed, by a blank line.

It is possible to place a heading near the bottom of a braille page if there is room for the complete heading, preceded by a blank line, and at least one line of text. If this is not the case, take the entire heading to the next page. If a running head is used, leave a blank line between it and the heading. If a running head is not used, place the heading on the first line.

Leave a blank line between a heading and a page change indicator.

Do not leave a blank line between a heading and a top box line.

More explanations and many helpful examples can be found in *Braille Formats* Section 4.

Sincerely,
Ms Perkins

Pre-Braille and Braille Activities

By Leanette Dieck

Are you looking for fun family games that are inclusive to family members regardless of their vision? Are you wondering if your pre-reader might need to learn braille? Do you have a braille learner who could use some extra practice? Here is an invitation to check out Wisconsin Braille's [website](#) where you can find a TVI curated list of prebraille and braille activities that your braille learner can work on at home. Some of these activities will be easy to create with materials you may already have at home and or low-cost items/games that you can purchase for family fun. These activities are divided into three groups: (1) Sensory and fine motor activities to get children touching different types of materials and to strengthen and segregate their fingers, (2) Tactile discrimination activities to get kids labeling and matching textures and patterns by touch and (3) braille activities to encourage children to discriminate and label different braille symbols in fun, meaningful ways. There are plenty of tools and resources here for parents of children with visual impairments, who may not know much about braille themselves, to become familiar with the process of learning for their child.

Sensory and fine motor activities should be offered to encourage children to use their sense of touch. Some children may be resistant to this at first but when offered gradually, when in a good mood, and in the context of play, children are more likely to be willing to join in the play. Any chances that children have to play with play dough, in a mud puddle, a sandbox, with shaving cream or in the water are opportunities for children to explore different textures and decrease possible sensory defensiveness. It is easy to start playing with a material the child is willing to touch and invite them to join you. As they have positive experiences with materials they are more familiar with, they may become more willing to touch less preferred materials. In addition, fine motor activities can help build hand strength, control and confidence in using the information about the environment.

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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..

In addition, fine motor activities can help build hand strength, control and confidence in using the fingers to gain information about the environment.

Activities for tactile discrimination and concepts that involve labeling textures and materials might include things which are bumpy, squishy, soft, hard, smooth, rough etc. When introducing these textures to children it is also a good time to practice using concepts like top/bottom, left/right, up/down, front/back, first/last. These concepts can be practiced on the body, with objects and in books. For instance, try saying something like, "Put the soft ball on/under the chair." You get the idea. Improvise. Sometimes children with visual impairments have gaps in the understanding of concepts that are often learned incidentally by children with typical vision. For great tactile discrimination skills, children need to learn to use a very light touch, so they can practice delicately touching a feather or sand to see if they can brush their fingers across them without moving the object around. Also encourage children to explore pages in a left to right, from top to bottom pattern. This is called tracking, and braille reading children need to become very familiar with this pattern of page exploration. Children can use all of these activities to match things that are the same and notice when things are different.

Braille activities can be as simple as the child determining which symbol is different in a set of the same braille symbols. Children should have plenty of experiences touching their name in braille and at first may recognize it as a whole rather than identifying the individual letters, as sighted children often do. As often as possible label toys and items in the home. Print readers are exposed to print examples everywhere they go but braille is much less prevalent in our society and everyone has to work harder to give pre-braille and emergent braille learners meaningful exposure to braille. TVIs are usually happy to help you create labels for your use at home. If you aren't familiar with the code, they can help you find the resources to learn along with your child. You can also visit [Hadley School for the Blind](#) to sign up for free courses to help you read braille by sight. Have conversations with your child's TVI regarding the introduction of braille contractions and recommendations for supporting your child's learning at home. Some TVIs prefer teaching with uncontracted braille initially but research supports early introduction of contracted braille so students are able to see many braille words as they typically will see them in books.

**Wisconsin Braille Board of Directors
Nomination Slate
2021-2023**

President:

Sandy Adams (2020-2022)

Secretary:

Cindy Collins (2021-2023)

Officers

Vice-President:

Leanne Dieck (2021-2023)

Treasurer:

Linda Bailey (2020-2022)

Directors

David Grulke (2021-2023)

Faith Kelly (2021-2023)

Kurt Pamperin (2021-2023)

Connie Risjord (2021-2023)

Alison McKee (2020-2022)

Kevin Jones (2020-2022)

Judith Sherry (2020-2022)

William Dieck (2020-2022)

The election of these nominees will occur during the afternoon general Membership meeting, starting at 12:00. Nominations are still open for an additional two directors. See below for meeting details.

Wisconsin Braille Board Meetings Are Always Open to the Public



Please join us for our next virtual meeting,
March 20, 2021, from 10:00-11:45 a.m.
To receive an email invitation to the meeting
Please Contact: william.dieck@gmail.com

Please join us, immediately following our board meeting for the
Wisconsin Braille Annual Membership Meeting
At 12:00 p.m.

Guest speaker will be Patricia Herrling, President of the BLTS Board.
Again, if you would like to attend, please contact our webmaster,
William Dieck by email--william.dieck@gmail.com.
He will send you the link to the meeting the day before the meeting.

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.

Regular membership, annual dues \$10 _____
Sustaining membership annual dues \$30 _____
Lifetime membership \$200 _____
Additional donation _____
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Donations to *Wisconsin Braille* are tax exempt.

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2021: () New member () Renewal

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What is your affiliation with the braille reading community? (Check all that apply.)

Teacher _____ Producer _____ Ed. Assist. _____

Transcriber _____ Proofreader _____ Parent _____

Administrator _____ User _____

Other (specify) _____

Return application to:

Membership Chair

557 Milky Way

Madison, WI 53718



WISCONSIN BRAILLE



WISCONSIN BRAILLE INC.

5745 Bittersweet Place

Madison, WI 53705

Address Correction

Requested