ANZAGG Meeting Minutes
May 2018

# 1. Roll Call

## 1.1 Present

Deb Lewis (SVRC), Debra Murphy (Vision Australia), Leona Holloway (Monash University), Annette Sutherland (NSW Department of Education), Josie Howse (NSW Department of Education), Sally Balwin ( QBWA), Scott Erichsen, Joanne Chau, Alan Blackburn (NSW Department of Education), Ramona Mandy, Rosemary Wills (RIDBC), Ross de Vent, Kathy Riessen (SASVI), Jordie Howell (Vision Australia), Lyn Eagers (Vision Australia), Shirley Henderson (WA Education ), Weny Voom (Royal Dutch Visio), Terry Boyle (QTMC), Rhonda Boyle, Nicole Holmes (Guide Dogs NSW/ACT), Geoff Denton (CEO Armidale), Rashmi Balakrishman (RIDBC), Karen Clark (QLD Education), Marcia Marcinkewycz (Griffith University), Irina Bruchmen (Guide Dogs), Tina Shembri, Nicole Johnson, Andrew Addison

## 1.2 Apologies

Leone Carroll, Tristan Clare (RIDBC), Tom MacMahon (QTMC), Sue Greenall, Pasha Alden, Louise Curtin (Vision Australia), Galiema Gool (NSW Department of Education), Trish Bishop (BLENNZ)

## 2. Group status & Operation

### 2.1 Committee status

Informal Group at this stage.

### 2.2 Facebook group

The ANZAGG facebook group is a closed group with 149 members. It is a closed group and members, and invited friends of members, must answer a screening question before being admitted to the group. All members are encouraged to post items of interest to the group: photographs and news stories of new technologies

* Not all members are from Australia or New Zealand, however the majority are
* Deb and Ross: like the summaries at the end of each month
* Wendy: Is there another social media platform that could be used?

Leona: Facebook is where people are already and it is more about connecting people, rather than getting messages out.

* Ross: Is there any similar group overseas

Leona: Yes, similar but not the same. The BlindMath mailing list discusses access to tactile and auditory graphs; see <http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/blindmath_nfbnet.org>. The accessibleimage group mainly focuses on accessible art and art made by blind people; see <https://www.freelists.org/list/accessibleimage>. TAGS is the email list of the NFB Tactile Art and Tactile Graphics Specialist Group; see <http://nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/tags_nfbnet.org>.

### 2.3 Listserv

Traffic on the listserv has been slow, confined mainly to notices about events relating to accessible graphics and monthly facebook digests listing the activity on the ANZAGG facebook group.

* 90 members
* Open for anyone to submit questions to.

# 3. Working groups

## 3.1 Standards for tactile graphics

**Group members:** Sue Greenall, Annette Sutherland, Tom MacMahon, Leone Carroll, Pasha Alden

**Task:** To evaluate and recommend suitable existing guidelines on tactile graphics production.

**Progress:** We have a shared (but hidden) web page listing the existing guidelines we know of and giving a brief description. Thanks to Annette for the work she has done in evaluating some of these guidelines. The web page also includes some research relating to standards for tactile graphics.

Deb Murphy and Shirley Henderson expressed an interest in joining the group.

## 3.2 Teaching tactile graphicacy

**Group members:** Debra Lewis, Louis Curtin, Trish Bishop, Galiema Gool

**Task:** Investigating pedagogy for tactile graphics literacy.

* Louise, Deb and Leona to get together soon to write the document.
* Looking for new members to join this group. Shirley Henderson suggested Julie Miles as a new member for the group.

**Report:**

* The Royal Dutch Visio C-MOOC on Concept Development has been of interest.
* BLENNZ have continued work on their Pedagogy of Tactile Graphics, as described in their report (next item). Almost completed but not ready to share at this stage.

# 4. Member reports

## 4.1 BLENNZ

Over the past year, BLENNZ have worked on their Pedagogy of Tactile Graphics, which contain 5 principles. This document will provide a framework of strategies upon which teaching of tactile graphics will occur. We have also developed a document titled ‘Development of Tactile Graphic Skills, Level 1’ that details a scaffolded plan to teach pre-skills and concept development that will support the development of skills that will enable learners to interpret tactile graphics. It thereafter builds on, and incorporates the New Zealand Curriculum goals for Literacy and Numeracy at Level 1, which is approximately the first 2-3 years of school, specifically those where the incorporation and inclusion of tactile graphics are most common. The purpose of the plan is to expose learners to tactile graphics at the same time their sighted peers are presented with print diagrams and illustrations to support their learning, and enable to them to be ready to interpret tactile diagrams presented to them in assessment and within their curriculum, as they progress through school.

This year the plan and resources are being trialled by BLENNZ Resource Teachers with a variety of learners. They will each critique it, adding to its value. We are hoping to develop ‘worksheets’ or ‘resources’ that accompany the Numeracy strands that are adapted to suit the needs of our learners who are blind. An assessment tool to identify skills and needs is also in the process of being developed.

- Trish Bishop

trish.bishop@blennz.school.nz

February 2018

* Shirley Henderson is keen to see the BLENNZ framework as WA are currently writing a similar document

## 4.2 Monash University

Monash University's Faculty of Information Technology has a team of researchers working in the field of accessible graphics for people who are blind or vision impaired. They are led by Prof Kim Marriott (Immersive Analytics) and Dr Matthew Butler (SensiLab).

## recent projects

An interactive laser cut tactile and audio map for the Vision Australia Kooyong refurbishment is complete and can be found in the reception area.

We conducted a project with Bendigo Art Gallery, producing accessible versions of several of the most popular artworks from their permanent collection. Leona will speak further about this project at the Round Table Conference on Tuesday and the slides will be made available.

Anuradha Madugalla is nearing completion of her PhD, automating translation from online floorplans to tactile graphics, GraVVITAS diagrams and audio descriptions. She is conducting user testing this month and would welcome further participants to evaluate her output.

We have had two Honours students working in the realm of accessible graphics. One has produced a vibratory system to provide tactile feedback to blind students studying programming. The other will create an app with audio cues for navigation.

Our work comparing 3D printed maps with tactile maps was presented at the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems in Montreal. It can be accessed at <https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=3173772>. The main finding was that objects are more readily recognised and understood on 3D maps.

## upcoming projects

We are pleased to report that the Australian Research Council has provided funding for a 3 year project exploring 3D printing for accessibility. We will focus particularly on 3D printing for education and O&M. We thank our partners for making the project possible and look forward to working with many of ANZAGG's members. The partners are the Round Table, the Department of Education Victoria, RIDBC, RSB and Guide Dogs Victoria.

We will also be working with Melbourne's Science Gallery.

- Leona Holloway, Research Assistant, Monash University

* Ramona: keen to see the tactile and audio map at Kooyong

## 4.3 Vision Australia

It has been a very busy year with hundreds of diagrams produced at Vision Australia over the past year.

The majority of our diagrams were for Tertiary Education. Half of these diagrams would be for Statistics and the other half for STEM based subjects.

The majority were for first and second year students, as most students used less braille as they progressed into final years of their degree.

A handful of local maps were produced but many reproductions were made of older maps.

VA cleared out many of the older hand drawn tactile maps due to less storage space in the new location.

A thermoform machine, with a life time supply of paper and tools were donated to Monash University.

The Majority of our tactuals were produced on swell paper. We have recently started production again on the Tiger embosser, after resolving technical issues.

- Peter Le, Vision Australia alternative formats production team leader

* Peter: VA moved from Enfield NSW to Parramatta. Couldn’t find homes for old diagrams so many were destroyed
* Ross: Are there opportunities to access 3D tactile graphics from VA

Peter: Not in NSW but possibly in Victoria

* Leona: Who can be referred to VA for copies of graphics?

Peter: Anyone can contact VA, through Customer Service Transcription. Free for clients.

## 4.4 Queensland Tactual Mapping Committee

The Committee has met four times in the past year at Braille House and continues to serve as a communication point for members interested in tactile graphics from various organisations. A primary focus for meetings has been QTMC's Operational Guidelines and how the Committee will operate in terms of the new QBWA/Braille House Strategic Plan.

Will the primary function of the Committee remain the provision of tactual maps? What does the Committee envisage doing in the future? It is having to redefine the purpose and function of the group, restructuring in terms of its relationship to Braille House and the reduced involvement by the "Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy (DNRME) - though DNRME’s ongoing support is acknowledged here and greatly appreciated.

It was noted that there are not many requests for tactual maps. Is this because people are not aware of their existence? Or do they have no experience of reading them? There is also a trend among younger people towards technology, which is certainly facilitating readily available maps for navigation of cities etc. via audio. Older people often are not using technology: they may have lost sight in later life or do not have the manual dexterity to access maps.

We will have to consider other areas of technology that could enhance what we now have, eg. use of 3D printing and barcodes which link to an app or audio device. However, the group has felt strongly that we must continue to emphasise the importance of braille and tactual literacy, while also recognising the place of audio and the need to offer arrange of mediums and multi-modal learning to cater for diverse personal requirements and preferences.

We need to keep involved in the educational field, teaching children about maps and diagrams and how to use them and encourage requests for maps from schools and campuses.

There was discussion on the benefits of changing the name of the Committee. It was felt that changing Tactual Maps to Accessible Maps would be beneficial. Since Braille House is phasing out “Queensland” from its marketing because they are operating nationally, it was suggested that the Mapping Committee would benefit from doing the same. A clear and unambiguous name is necessary: it should reflect the direction we are going in and be easily found on Google.

Members have recently been considering and providing email feedback regarding the draft Operational Guidelines and possible names, e.g. “Accessible Maps: for tactile and large print users” or “Accessible Mapping Committee: for people with no or low vision”.

While we did not produce any maps this year, we were successful in moving the large 3D model of the University of Queensland from storage space at Braille House to Vision Australia and have continued to share much valuable information.

We hope the coming year will see clarification of our future focus and directions and ways to encourage more active membership from teachers and users.

- Tom McMahon (presented by Terry Boyle)

* Terry acknowledged the work done by Tom

They have been a Sub Committee of QBWA for over 30 years, producing many great tactile graphic, some are works of art.

* Ramona: Are the maps available for only QLD or Australia wide?

Terry: Mainly custom maps for QLD, however future direction may be to areas outside QLD if requested.

* Ross: Are Braille House and QLD mapping now National?

Terry: Yes. Happy to have representation from members outside QLD

* Sally: Clarified that Braille House has gone through a lot of change and the Board are working on a five-year plan. They have been doing resources Australia wide, however it was generally thought to be QLD based only.

## 4.5 Feelix

100 new kits have been produced in the last 12 months.

We have run 3 Tactile book workshops in the community to support people working with blind and low vision children.

We are reviewing our very early books and including tactile books in all of these kits, families have requested this.

Feelix has a new staff member Toni Chilton who is replacing Robyn Sainsbury-Vale. Toni comes from previous roles as an O&M and a braille transcriber.

Feelix staff attended a workshop to learn how to make sensory mats using small electrical circuits that are sewn into materials. This was run by Leona Holloway and the staff at Monash Uni Caulfield Campus.

Face-to face Story-mornings for children and their families were held in Sydney, Brisbane and the Gold Coast, At these events Feelix Library provides tactile experiences so that children get involved with the imaginative world of the story.

Some of our new titles with terrific rollicking language are: OI Frog; Piranhas don’t eat Bananas; Growl like a Tiger; Run like a Rabbit; This little piggy went dancing and The Very Itchy Bear.

Our membership continues at the 450 member mark.

More than 50% of these children are less than 3 years old.

## 4.6 ABA QLD Forum:

At least once a year we have a Tactile Graphics focus for Kids Club.

“Aussie Dots” is well used but people have asked for more grade 1 (uncontracted) material. They are now developing supporting resources and a book with no contractions (illustrated) for purchase.

* Kathy: Uses “Aussie Dots” extensively. Children are now requesting pictures in all story books.

# 5. Other business

Joanne Chua

* Lots of potential for Tactile Map development in Australia
* Has been to Germany and Leipzig where there are extensive map resources
* Lot of potential for 3D models in train stations
* Volunteered to assist with leading ANZAGG

# 6. Meeting close

Thank you to all for your interest and participation.