International Council

on English Braille (ICEB)

7th General Assembly

October 2020

**From**: ICEB 2020 Nominations Committee: Mary Schnackenberg (Convenor), Darleen Bogart and Mandy White

**To**: Executive Committee and members of the International Council on English Braille

**Date**: 31 August 2020

**Subject**: 2020 Nominations Committee Report and Slate

The Nominations Committee is pleased to propose this slate of candidates for the 2020-2024 term of the ICEB Executive Committee. Each of the individuals listed below has agreed to stand for election and is supported by the braille authority of his or her member nation. We sincerely thank each member for their willingness to serve ICEB during the 2020-2024 term.

These candidates are to be elected at the 7th General Assembly in a virtual gathering on Zoom in October 2020. Further nominations may be made to the Convenor of the Nominations Committee by the end of the first day's session on Sunday 18 October 2020. The nomination must be accompanied by the consent of the nominee and a brief biography indicating the candidate's expertise and experience in the braille field. Elected candidates take office at the close of the General Assembly on Friday 23 October 2020.

## The 2020-2024 Slate

### Officers

President: Judy Dixon, United States.

Please note that the President is deterritorialized upon election.

Immediate Past President: Christo de Klerk, South Africa.

Code Maintenance Officer: Kathy Riessen, Australia.

Please note that the Code Maintenance Officer is deterritorialized upon election.

Vice President: Ilka Stäglin, Ireland.

Secretary: Frances Mary D'Andrea, United States.

Treasurer: Jen Goulden, Canada.

Public Relations Officer: Maria Stevens, New Zealand.

### Members-at-Large

James Bowden, United Kingdom.

Jordie Howell, Australia.

Ntshavheni Netshituni, South Africa.

Vacant, Nigeria.

We very much regret that, at the time of writing, we have not been able to establish direct communication with Jean Obi's member organisation in Nigeria to confirm their country's nomination to the Executive Committee.

## Proposed changes to the Executive Committee

We warmly welcome Judy Dixon as our proposed President and the two first time members of the Executive Committee, Kathy Riessen and Jordie Howell.

We say farewell and very warm thanks to two members who are stepping down, Phyllis Landon and Leona Holloway.

Phyllis Landon from Canada was appointed Chair of the Code Maintenance Committee at the Mid-Term Executive Committee meeting in 2010. In 2012, following a change in the Constitution, Phyllis became the Code Maintenance Officer, a deterritorialized position. She continued in this role for a second term from 2016 to 2020. Phyllis advised the Nominations Committee that she wished to step down from the Executive Committee. In her role as Chair of the CMC, Phyllis has oversight of the UEB Rulebook. Work continues on revision of the Guidelines for Technical Materials. The Code Maintenance Officer presides over debate and discussion and leads the crafting of amendments to rules and guidelines until consensus is achieved and changes are authorised, a challenging task which Phyllis has carried out with considerable skill and patience.

Leona Holloway from Australia served as Public Relations Officer from 2016 to 2020. She advised the Nominations Committee that she was not seeking another term on the Executive Committee. Leona strengthened the ICEB website, established a strong social media presence on Facebook and initiated a quarterly Newsletter publishing seven of them. The work of ICEB is now much better known in the international braille scene.

I wish to thank the members of the Nominations Committee for their contributions in developing a representative slate to present.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Schnackenberg

Convenor, 2020 ICEB Nominations Committee

## Biographies of the 2020-2024 Executive Committee members

We are pleased to share a biographical note written by each of the Executive Committee members.

### James Bowden, Member-at-Large, United Kingdom

James writes:

I started to learn braille around age 6 in a mainstream school. From age 7 on, I did most of my education in braille at special schools. This included learning the British codes for maths and science, various foreign languages and the music code. As a side-line I also became interested in grade 3.

Whilst at school, I became interested in computing and I wrote my first braille translation program. It just used a word processor and took 15 minutes to translate about 20 pages of ordinary print!

After a degree in maths and computer science, I was then a programmer for 18 years, using screen readers and braille displays together. Several of my projects involved braille, including developing translation software and tables (rather more advanced than my teenage efforts).

I was invited to join the mid-term meeting of ICEB in 2010 as an observer and from there was asked to lead the Braille Coding Group of the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF).

I now work for the Royal National Institute of Blind People as its Braille Technical Officer and have served as the UK rep for ICEB since 2016 and also lead the ICEB Technology committee.

**Service on the ICEB Executive Committee**: Appointed by the UK Association for Accessible Formats, James was elected Member-at-Large in 2016. He is on the slate for the 2020-2024 term as a Member-at-Large.

### Frances Mary D'Andrea, Secretary, United States

FM writes:

I went to college in 1978 to become a teacher of students with visual impairments because I thought braille was cool. I was right! I started teaching preschool blind children in 1982 and have been involved in teaching in some capacity ever since. I have taught children in residential settings, in a resource room, and as an itinerant teacher. Now I teach college students to become teachers of children who are blind or have low vision for the University of Pittsburgh. From 1995-2005, I worked for the American Foundation for the Blind providing professional development for teachers and have co-authored several books promoting braille literacy. I continue to serve as AFB's representative on the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) serving in various capacities including Chair during the time when the US voted to adopt UEB. Currently, I chair the BANA general committee on UEB. I have served as secretary for ICEB for the past term.

And after 41 years, I still think braille is wonderful and still love to teach it. I look forward to continuing to work with ICEB to promote braille literacy around the world.

**Service on the ICEB Executive Committee**: Appointed by the Braille Authority of North America, FM was elected Secretary for the 2016-2020 term. She is on the slate for the 2020-2024 term as Secretary.

### Christo de Klerk, Immediate Past President, South Africa

Christo writes:

I have been a braille user since the age of 6. From 1985 until the end of 1989 I worked at my old school, now the Pioneer School where I initiated their computerised braille production and I taught braille.

In 1986 I was trained by Joe Sullivan to create and maintain Duxbury tables and I created one for Afrikaans. Later, after adoption of the UEB, I created unified tables for our 10 local languages.

In 1986 I was a founder member of our first braille authority, Braille SA, and in 2012 I became the first president of our current Braille authority, SABA where I now serve as deputy president. I became involved in ICEB in 1992 as a member of the UEB project's Committee II and became an exco member in 2008 and became president in 2014. I am an accredited braille instructor and have been used to teach braille to many educators of blind learners. I have now created a translation table for Afrikaans for LibLouis and am working on one for the Nguni languages of South Africa.

**Service on the ICEB Executive Committee**: Appointed by Braille SA (now the South African Braille Authority), Christo was elected as a Member-at-Large in 2008. He was elected Vice President in 2012, stepping up to the office of President when Peter Osborne resigned in May 2014. Christo was elected President in 2016. He advised the Nominations Committee that he wished to step down from the role of President. He automatically becomes the Immediate Past President for the 2020-2024 term.

### Judy Dixon President deterritorialized

Judy writes:

1952: Born blind

1955: Received my first Perkins Brailler

1958: Entered school for the blind in Florida; began learning braille

1958: Received my first slate and stylus

1960: Entered public school in Massachusetts; continued learning braille

1974: Entered university; used my first audio textbook

1981: Began working at Library of Congress; many braille-related projects

1982: Received certification in braille proofreading

1984: Presented paper on tactile graphics at international conference in Berlin, Germany

1985: Co-authored Computer Braille Code Made Easy

1990: Compiled the second edition of World Braille Usage

1991: Donated collection of 34 historic braille writers to museum at APH

1999: Received Special Achievement Award for creating Web-Braille, an online service allowing access to thousands of electronic braille books and magazines

2000: Edited book "Braille into the Next Millennium" published by Library of Congress

2004: Joined the Board of the Braille Authority of North America (2004-2016)

2007: Became Chair of BANA (2007-2012)

2008: Became Secretary of ICEB (2008-2016)

2009: Began serving on World Braille Council

2011: Keynote speaker at Braille21, an international conference in Leipzig, Germany

2013: Coordinated the compilation of the third edition of World Braille Usage

2016: Continued to serve on ICEB Executive

**Service on the ICEB Executive Committee**: Appointed by the Braille Authority of North America, Judy was elected Secretary in 2008 and again in 2012. In 2016 the Executive Committee appointed Judy as an additional member to attend its meetings.

### Jen Goulden, Treasurer, Canada

Jen writes:

My journey with braille began almost as far back as my earliest memories. Whether taking notes in class, reading for pleasure or playing Monopoly with my family and friends, braille has always been the key to equal access. Although I identify primarily as a reader I am also a certified transcriber and proofreader.

My involvement in the wider braille world began in 2008 when I joined the board of the Canadian Braille Authority (now Braille Literacy Canada). I served as its president from 2011 to 2018 and am currently Canada's voting member on the Code Maintenance Committee. Since 2014 I have represented my employer, Crawford Technologies, as an associate member of the Braille Authority of North America. I attended my first ICEB General Assembly in South Africa (2012) and became the treasurer in 2016.

It is an honour to represent my country on the ICEB Executive and to collaborate with people around the English-speaking world who understand that braille is to the blind what print is to the sighted.

**Service on the ICEB Executive Committee**: Appointed by Braille Literacy Canada, Jen was elected Treasurer in 2016. She is on the slate for the 2020-2024 term as Treasurer.

### Jordie Howell, Member-at-Large, Australia

Jordie writes:

Growing up as a totally blind person, my use of braille has been lifelong. My early schooling was in a reverse integration program which normalized braille for me: I learnt braille while my sighted and partially sighted friends learnt print. I was mainstreamed at the age of eight and learnt piano and sang in choirs with the assistance of braille music. In secondary school, braille facilitated language studies in Italian, French and Indonesian. Emerging braille technologies later enabled me to complete a Bachelor of Music. I have taught braille to adults and children and enjoy sharing my passion for braille while demonstrating the independence and efficiency braille provides. I transcribe music into braille with Vision Australia, working with sighted volunteers who dictate music to produce scores for our clients. I am a classical soprano and sing professionally both as a soloist and in choirs. The large amount of music and speed of learning mean that braille is a necessity in my singing career. Braille assists me with many conference presentations, teaching roles at Braille Music Camps and in other areas of braille promotion. I have served on the Australian Braille Authority Executive since 2011 and appreciate the opportunity to see braille develop both nationally and internationally.

**Service on the ICEB Executive Committee**: In her role as Chair of the ICEB Music Committee, Jordie has been an observer on ICEB teleconferences during the 2016-2020 term. Appointed by the Australian Braille Authority, she is on the slate for the 2020-2024 term as a Member-at-Large.

### Ntshavheni Netshituni, Member-at-Large, South Africa

Ntshavheni writes that he is a middle-aged man who became blind at the age of five due to measles.

I started schooling in 1981 and learnt braille as my medium of reading and writing.

I loved braille and, to enhance my knowledge and ability to read braille, I wrote various braille examinations back in late 80's, early 90's and mid 2000's.

I worked as a braille proofreader from 2004 to date. I also participated at the changing of Xitsonga and Tshivenda braille contractions in 2007 and 2009.

I have been involved with the South African Braille Authority from 2008. In 2012 I was elected the Authority's Vice President and in 2014 I was elected President, the position I am still occupying to this day.

I attended the sixth ICEB General Assembly in 2016, in Baltimore, Maryland, in the United States and I was elected the chairperson of the bylaws committee for the term ending in 2020.

Besides this brief history, I am an avid reader of braille and enjoy seeing it developing. To this end, I also presented 2 papers, one in 2012 about the dynamics of Tshivenda braille and one in 2019, about the preservation of braille, particularly its affordability for African users.

**Service on the ICEB Executive Committee**: Appointed by the South African Braille Authority, Ntshavheni was elected as a Member-at-Large for the 2016-2020 term. He is on the slate for the 2020-2024 term as a Member-at-Large.

### Kathy Riessen, Code Maintenance Officer, deterritorialized

Kathy writes:

Just over 30 years ago, I began as a transcriber at Townsend School, now South Australian School for Vision Impaired (SASVI), and was thrown in at the deep end transcribing anything from mathematics, to music, to languages including Japanese. SASVI as a service is not only a stand alone school but provides teaching support and resources for all vision impaired students across the state at all year levels from pre-school to Year 12.

This has been an exciting time to be involved in braille.

When I began, transcription was mainly on the Perkins brailler, making multiple copies on a Thermoform machine. Computer aided transcription was in its infancy. The world wide web and email were still a few years away.

Fast forward, transcription is now computerised, with translation software, fast embossers and access to electronic sources of text. The internet and email enables a global community for support and resources. A huge learning curve from the Perkins!!

As a bonus, Unified English Braille (UEB) has now been almost universally adopted across the English speaking world.

I became involved in the Australian Braille Authority (ABA), initially at the state level then on a national level and currently am a member of the executive.

One of my passions, along with working on efficiencies of transcriptions, is ensuring availability of good, freely available documentation. I have co-authored/edited a number of documents for use in Australia, drawing on the skills and knowledge I have developed as a transcriber. Over the years I have also facilitated workshops on various aspects of transcription: formatting, mathematics, foreign language and the use of the Duxbury Braille Translator to name a few.

**Service on the ICEB Executive Committee**: Appointed by the Australian Braille Authority, Kathy is on the slate for the 2020-2024 term as the Code Maintenance Officer.

### Ilka Stäglin, Vice President, Ireland

Ilka writes:

Braille as a medium to produce, promote, teach and explore has played a major role in my career since I first encountered it 25 years ago. As an educator, I consider braille literacy as integral to all learning and as a braille reader's method to explore the world. Personally, I enjoyed working with braille as a tutor, braille producer and representative of Ireland on the ICEB Executive. As chairperson of the Irish Braille Authority, INBAF, I successfully facilitated the development of an updated Irish Braille Code (UIB) in line with UEB, which was presented at the last GA, and is now fully implemented in Ireland.

In my current role as Director of Education at ChildVision, I am particularly interested in pre-braille education, providing braille tuition to sighted learners who work with braille readers and in continued advocacy for UEB.

As a sighted braille reader, I use my Perkins for brailling birthday cards and notes for colleagues and friends and can also catch myself using braille contractions when texting.

Being nominated as vice-president is a real honour and I look forward to working with the new ICEB Executive over the next four years.

**Service on the ICEB Executive Committee**: The Irish National Braille and Alternative Formats Association (INBAF) joined ICEB in late 2012. In 2013 INBAF appointed Ilka as their delegate to the Executive Committee and she was elected Member-at-Large by the Executive Committee. In 2016 Ilka was elected Member-at-Large. She is on the slate for the 2020-2024 term as Vice President.

### Maria Stevens, Public Relations Officer, New Zealand

Maria writes:

I am a lifelong braille user and was the only one out of my six vision impaired siblings that learned braille at the start of my educational journey. In September 1986 I was lucky enough to be employed at the Foundation of the Blind as a braille proof-reader and since then until now I have worked in various roles in Accessible Formats always to do with braille.

I chair The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT) and serve on numerous ICEB committees as the New Zealand representative. BANZAT works with its sister Australian Braille Authority (ABA) to set and mark the Trans-Tasman Certificate of Proficiency in UEB. I am proud to note that NZ has 158 people who have passed this certificate.

Since July 2015 I was accepted as a Celebrant and braille has given me the confidence to perform celebrant duties independently.

I feel that no matter how braille is read and used either on devices, hard copy or just the odd braille label it has its place in our world that gives braille readers access to information and allows people to study and live and make life choices of their own that they can live with.

**Service on the ICEB Executive Committee**: Appointed by The Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust, Maria was elected as a Member-at-Large in 2012. In 2014 Maria was elected Vice President at the Mid-Term Executive Committee meeting when Christo stepped up to fill the office of President. In 2016 Maria was elected Vice President. She is on the slate for the 2020-2024 term as the Public Relations Officer.