PRESIDENTIAL REPORT TO THE 7TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

11-16 MAY 2020

1. INTRODUCTION  
   This report covers the quadrennial period from the conclusion of the 6th General Assembly which took place from 22-26 May 2016 in Baltimore, United States of America until the 7th General Assembly which will take place from 11-16 May 2020 in London, United Kingdom of Great Britain.
2. COMMITTEE MEMBERS
   1. During the 6th General Assembly the following persons were elected to serve on the executive committee of ICEB:  
      Christo de Klerk – President (South Africa)  
      Maria Stevens – Vice President (New Zealand)  
      Frances Mary D’Andrea – Secretary (USA)  
      Jen Goulden – Treasurer (Canada)  
      Leona Holloway – Public Relations Officer (Australia)  
      Phyllis Landon – Code Maintenance Committee Chair (Canada)  
      Jean Obi – Member at Large (Nigeria)  
      Ntshavheni Netshituni – Member at Large (South Africa)  
      Ilka Staeglin – Member at Large (Ireland)
   2. Judy Dixon was also co-opted as a Member at Large.
3. COMMITTEES  
   During the Executive Committee meeting immediately following the 6th General Assembly it was decided to name committees according to their names in the updated constitution and those names will be used in this report. The following permanent committees were appointed:
4. PERMANENT COMMITTEES
   1. Finance: Jen Goulden (chairperson), Christo de Klerk (president) and Phyllis Landon.
   2. Bylaws: Ntshavheni Netshituni (chairperson), Ilka Staeglin, Jen Goulden and Christo de Klerk (ex officio).
   3. Nominations: Mary Schnackenberg (she was appointed later during the term as chairperson). She engaged Darleen Bogart and Mandy White to serve on the committee with her.
   4. Code Maintenance: Phyllis Landon (chairperson) and Joe Sullivan and Bill Jolley (appointed for their specific expertise) plus country representatives.
5. TECHNICAL COMMITTEES  
   The Executive Committee may create and discontinue these committees as needs require. The following persons were appointed to chair the technical committees while braille authorities nominated their representatives to serve as members:
   1. Music Braille: Jordie Howell.
   2. Braille Technology: James Bowden.
   3. Public Relations: Leona. The 6th General Assembly resolved that this committee should become a permanent committee, but as the constitutional change that requires can only be accepted by the 7th General Assembly, it is still listed as a special purpose committee here.
   4. Research: Frances Mary D’Andrea (appointed during a subsequent executive committee meeting).
6. COMMITTEE MEETINGS  
   The Executive Committee met regularly around every three months via teleconference. These meetings were hosted by the CNIB and I wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to them. The midterm meeting of the Executive Committee took place from 17-21 April 2018 in Dublin, Ireland.
7. IN MEMORIAM  
   Since the 6th General Assembly two leading figures in the field of braille in member countries passed away. Antonnette Botha and Reinette Popplestone, both from South Africa, passed away within a month of each other. Reinette had served a term as PRO of ICEB and both represented South Africa at ICEB General Assemblies. Antonnette had been chairperson of South Africa’s braille authority until 2007. Their passing is a great loss also to the braille using community. Lisette Wesseling and Jeanine Wright from New Zealand, and Bill Byrne from New South Wales, Australia, also sadly passed away. Our heart-felt condolences go to the loved ones of those who have passed away.
8. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND MEMBER COUNTRIES  
   See the separately circulated reports of ICEB’s committees and of member countries for information about the work done in those committees and braille related matters in ICEB member countries.
9. THE MIDTERM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING  
   The midterm meeting of the ICEB executive committee took place on 17-21 April 2018 in Dublin, Ireland. It was arranged by the youngest ICEB member country, Ireland, and proudly hosted by Child Vision and NCBI. During the meeting there was an in depth discussion around challenges caused by quotation marks and apostrophes as well as other code maintenance related matters such as the Guidelines for Technical Material. There were demonstrations of low cost braille displays: the multi-line Canute, the Orbit and the BrailleMe. We enjoyed several unforgettable social events and some extremely informative visits.
10. RESOLUTIONS FROM THE 6TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
    Six resolutions were adopted during the 6th General Assembly (see the circulated document containing the resolutions for the detail). The current status of these resolutions is as follows:
    1. Resolution 1 (implemented);
    2. Resolution 2 (not yet implemented);
    3. Resolution 3 (ongoing);
    4. Resolution 4 (in progress);
    5. Resolution 5 (ongoing – as LibLouis is now used by probably the majority of manufacturers/developers, it was felt that they should be notified whenever significant improvements are made to UEB);
    6. Resolution 6 (implemented – the newsletter is read in several countries that are not ICEB members).
11. ICEB WEBSITE AND OTHER ONLINE PLATFORMS  
    Judy handed over the maintenance of the ICEB website to Leona who has put much new and updated information on the site. Leona has also created a twitter account as well as a Facebook account for ICEB. Through these platforms she has distributed much interesting and relevant information.
12. ICEB NEWSLETTER  
    One of the highlights of ICEB’s work during the current term of office has been the publication of the quarterly newsletter edited by Leona. The first edition saw the light in the first quarter of 2019. The newsletter has been distributed widely and has been very well received.
13. RESEARCH  
    FM chairs the new Research Committee established in accordance with a resolution from the 6th General Assembly. She was responsible for the distribution of much interesting and thought-provoking braille research related information.
14. WORLD BRAILLE COUNCIL  
    Judy Dixon is ICEB’s representative in the World Braille Council. She reported that that body did not seem to function during the current term of office.
15. UEB IMPLEMENTED BY BANA  
    The UEB was implemented in the US for non-technical material in 2016. BANA decided to allow a choice as to the use of Nemeth or UEB for technical material. The use of UEB for technical material has been gaining ground steadily thanks to much training and awareness campaigns.
16. UEB ADAPTED FOR BRAILLE CODES OTHER THAN ENGLISH  
    The braille codes of several other languages in and outside of member countries have been unified and adapted according to the principles of the UEB. The Updated Irish Braille (UIB) code has been updated to incorporate UEB principles. The recently established braille authority in Nepal as done likewise for the Nepalese language.
17. AND THEN CAME COVID-17  
    Travel restrictions due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible for ICEB to have its 7th General Assembly in London during may as planned. The Executive Committee resolved to postpone the General Assembly to 14 October in the hope that a physical meeting would be possible by then. At a meeting of the Executive Committee on 20 July, it was resolved with regret that as it seemed highly unlikely that a physical meeting would be possible, the General Assembly would take the form of a virtual meeting in October. Due to the inevitable extension of the current term of office, Phyllis requested to step down as chair of the CMC. The Executive Committee resolved to appoint Kathy Riessen to take over that position until the elections can take place. I wish to thank Phyllis for the excellent work she has done for many years as chair of the CMC. I am pleased that she is keen to still serve as a member of the committee which will benefit significantly from her expertise. I also wish to thank Kathy for being willing and ready to step into this demanding position immediately. It is hoped that the world can return to normality soon.
18. CONCLUSION  
    It has been a great pleasure and a huge honour to serve as president of such a worthy body. As my term as president of ICEB comes to an end, I also wish to thank my committee for their support and the hard work they put in during the past four years to advance the UEB in member countries and elsewhere. I wish the incoming executive committee everything of the very best for the next term of office. As immediate past president I will pledge my support to our new president. I submit this report in the belief that it provides an accurate overview of the work done by the executive and other committees of ICEB and of braille related matters in ICEB's member countries.

Signature

CJ de Klerk

PRESIDENT – THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON ENGLISH BRAILLE