

International Council on English Braille

ICEB Newsletter

Issue 1, 2018

Welcome from the ICEB President

It gives me great pleasure to extend a hearty word of welcome to our new newsletter edited by Leona Holloway from Australia who is our Public Relations Officer. She will be providing a lot of very interesting, informative and important information about a range of matters related to braille. We trust that through this newsletter you will also become informed about the work of ICEB.

The International Council on English Braille (ICEB) was established in 1991. Its main purpose at the time was to research the possibility of creating a unified braille code, a code which unified the different codes used in English speaking countries including diverse codes used for literary, mathematical and computer texts; a code that would be unambiguous and that would have the least possible impact on literary braille in use at the time. Such a code, now known as UEB (Unified English Braille), was carefully developed over the years and adopted as a standard in 2004. It has since been implemented in all ICEB member countries and some other countries where there is substantial use of English braille.

ICEB consists of 8 member countries: the US, Canada, Ireland, the UK, South Africa, Nigeria, Australia and New Zealand. Countries can become members through their braille authorities and each member country has a representative serving in the ICEB Executive Committee. In addition to the country representatives, there are also the following positions on the Executive Committee: The President, the Immediate Past President (when there is one), Vice-President,



Christo de Klerk
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Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer and the chair of the Code Maintenance Committee.

Although the UEB remains the main focus of ICEB, we also regard as important matters such as the promotion of the use of braille, braille technology, braille music and braille signage and we have committees and persons dealing with these aspects. You can find much more information about us on our website at www.iceb.org.

I trust that you will enjoy our newsletter and find it informative. We invite you to interact with us. Your feedback will be valued.

—Christo de Klerk, ICEB President

Welcome from the editor

Welcome to the first issue of ICEB’s newsletter, sharing news and stories of ICEB activities and braille usage throughout the English-speaking world.

The newsletter will be issued quarterly in March, June, September and December. We hope that it will provide a space in which to share our passion for braille literacy, celebrate achievements made possible through braille, and connect the braille dots around the English-speaking world. Please don’t hesitate to contact us with your stories, your questions, and news of braille-related events.

—Leona Holloway
ICEB Public Relations Officer



Leona Holloway
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ICEB membership

Full Membership in ICEB is open to all nations in which English is a major language and/or in which there is a substantial use of English-language braille, and which have a national standard-setting body for braille. Full members have the right to send a delegation to the ICEB General Assembly, which takes place every four years. They are also entitled to representation on the Executive Committee and can appoint a voting member to each of the ICEB working committees.

Associate Membership is open to all nations which do not meet the criteria for Full Membership, as well as to organizations and individuals. Associate Members do not have voting rights in ICEB but are welcome to participate in discussions.

More information about ICEB membership, including how to apply, is available on the ICEB website at iceb.org/PR.html.

Setting up a braille authority

Having a braille authority is a necessary requirement for countries wishing to become Full Members of ICEB. A braille authority acts as a national focus for braille, bringing together touch readers, braille teachers and braille producers with the common goal of promoting literacy through braille for all blind people. [Setting up a braille authority](#) is a document produced by ICEB to assist countries to establish their own braille authorities. It provides some questions to consider and some braille authority structures to review. The document is available for download in Word format from iceb.org/PR.html.

Unified English Braille adoption

After more than a decade of development by ICEB members with braille code expertise as braille users, teachers and producers, Unified English Braille (UEB) was declared sufficiently complete for adoption in 2004.

UEB usage survey

Unified English Braille is now successfully used in all member countries of ICEB: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the USA. Nemeth braille also continues to be used in some states of the USA for mathematical materials alongside UEB for literary materials.

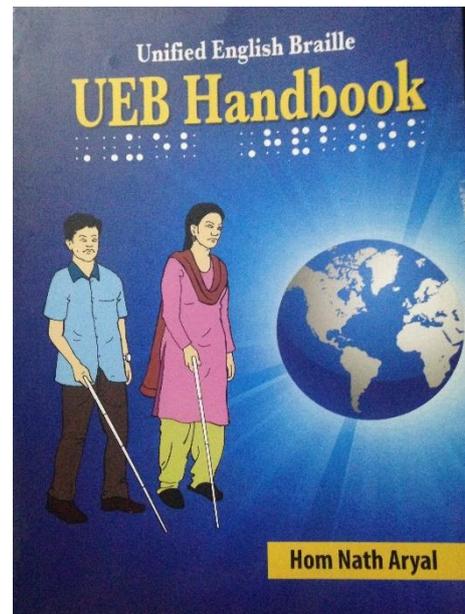
UEB is also used in many other countries using English braille, including Botswana, Ghana, Kiribati, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. We are eager to know more about the use of UEB in non-member countries. If you can provide information, please complete our survey at surveymonkey.com/r/VKPXR7H or contact us at info@iceb.org.

UEB in Nepal

Nepal held national two-day seminars on UEB in 11-12 December 2016 and 12-13 in December 2017, where 75 resource teachers, transcribers, braille producers and blind teachers took part.



A UEB Handbook was produced, with 80 pages explaining the development of the braille code, facilities for the people who are blind or visually impaired, UEB changes, examples of text written in UEB, UEB indicators, UEB punctuation, and UEB shape indicators. 1,000 copies of the UEB Handbook were printed and provided to the seminar participants for distribution and use. The UEB Handbook written by Hom Nath Aryal was jointly released by Mr Krishna Prasad Kapre, Director of Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education and Mr Ganesh Poudel, Chief of Inclusive Education Department of Government of Nepal. A further 500 copies of the braille version of UEB Handbook were prepared by the Nepal Association for the Welfare of the Blind (NAWB) and distributed to blind teachers all over Nepal.



The seminar participants of 2016 December and 2017 December expressed solidarity to implement UEB throughout Nepal from 2018 January. The Braille Printing Organizations have already started using UEB. The Nemeth code will continue to be used for mathematics for a few years.

In regards to forming a Braille authority of Nepal, a constitution draft committee has been formed with the convenorship of the undersigned. Within two months the Braille Authority of Nepal will be registered with the Government Agency as an NGO for the development of the Braille.

—Hom Nath Aryal,
Emeritus National Coordinator CBR National Network Nepal &
Former Senior Program Office, Nepal Association for the
Welfare of the Blind

Unified English Braille code developments

Unified English Braille Math Tutorial online



One of the central principles underlying Unified English Braille is the use of a single code across literary and technical contexts. The [UEB Math Tutorial](#) is a new online resource for learning about the use of UEB for technical materials, with a focus on mathematics. The content is organised into chapters of increasing complexity. Lessons are accompanied by practical exercises to provide practice and feedback in writing, reading and proofreading UEB math. The tutorial is free and self-paced and can be accessed at uebmath.aphtech.org/. Congratulations are extended to the American Printing House for the creation of this valuable resource, with support from a grant from the William M. Wood Foundation, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee.

Further free resources for learning UEB are listed on the ICEB website at <http://iceb.org/ueb-training.html>.

Apostrophes and quotation marks

As apostrophes and single quotation marks look the same in print, should they also look the same in braille? Do quotation marks need to be directional in braille? Can braille translation be totally automated when the wrong symbols are often used for quotation marks in print? These are some of the questions being considered by the UEB Code Maintenance Committee, responsible for the maintenance, improvement and documentation of the Unified English Braille code.

You may remember that an international survey on the representation of apostrophes and quotation marks was conducted last year. We received 616 responses from 14 different countries and countless well-considered comments. Equal support was shown for two of the four options: using a dot 3 (⠠⠨) for all apostrophes and single quotes; and no change to the current system. However, many of the votes for no change were because none of the options were felt to be ideal.

The issue continues to be debated and explored. Watch this space for updates.

UEB Q&A

Harry Potter and UEB

What does Harry Potter have to do with UEB, you ask ... well, aside from the obvious answer that braille makes it possible for blind people of all ages to read these fabulous books? It's probably more precise to ask what UEB has to do with Professor Dumbledore.



Our UEB list recently received a question regarding the use of the “ed” contraction in the word Dumbledore. UEB allows for contraction use that would not have been permitted before, but Duxbury – which is quite reliable about these things – does not contract Dumbledore. So, does the famous fictional professor have a contraction in his last name? Why or why not?

No. According to The Rules of Unified English Braille, group signs such as “ed”, “st” and “wh” should not be used when the contraction would bridge two words in a non-hyphenated compound. As a result, the word “boredom” can be contracted but “kettledrum” cannot. If you're like me and thought that Dumbledore is just a name that J.K.

Rowling made up you might be surprised to learn that it can also refer to an insect, some sort of dung beetle. It also happens to be considered a compound word, so the “ed” contraction cannot be used.

– Jen Goulden, Braille Literacy Canada

Test your UEB knowledge!

Question: Can the lower wordsign for “in” be used in the following example?

He told me to come in, out of the cold.

Check near the end of the newsletter for the answer.

World Read Aloud Day celebrations in South Africa

Nal’ibali (isiXhosa for “here’s the story”) is a national reading-for-enjoyment campaign to spark children’s potential through storytelling and reading. It strives to promote a culture of reading. They have again written a short story in all 11 South African official languages to be read aloud on World Read Aloud day on 1 February.

Blind SA, a prominent consumer organisation of Blind persons, and the South African Braille Authority (SABA) have joined Nal’ibali again



Students participating in World Read Aloud Day in 2018

to celebrate World Read Aloud day, but because 1 February is a little inconveniently early in the year for schools, it will all happen on 21 February when at least 10 schools for the blind will participate.

The story will be provided in grade 1 braille and large print to all participating schools in any of the 11 languages they

require. Blind SA and SABA will send representatives to participating schools to assist with the event.

An interesting fun day is anticipated. Learners in grades 4 to 7 will participate. First, learners will read the story in turn. Then there will be a quiz based on the story: 15 questions to test comprehension and 15 words to spell and there will be prizes for the winner in each grade. This will be followed by a treasure hunt in which learners have to search hidden cards with instructions in braille and large print on them. Whoever finds a card, has to perform the instruction on it and will earn a prize. There will be one lucky winner of a big prize. The school with the highest percentage of participants across all categories will win a Tatrapoint braille writer.

This will be the second year that we will have this event with schools and all schools that participated last year, enjoyed it and are keen to participate again. We are looking forward to this fun day while we are also aware of the importance of creating a culture of reading and of promoting the use of braille.

– Christo de Klerk

Braille technology

Orbit Reader 20 rollout in the United Kingdom

The Orbit Reader 20 braille display – a device that aims to bring refreshable braille technology into the hands of more people – launched in the UK on 8 October.

UK distributors RNIB include a Quick Start Guide (in contracted braille and print) and an SD card containing the full instruction manual with each Orbit Reader 20. The SD card also contains a variety of books, some braille music and the Oxford English Dictionary.

Customers can also download the Quick Start Guide or the full instruction manual – in large print, contracted or uncontracted

braille, or audio – from RNIB’s online shop. They can also order any of these items in a hard copy format, at no charge, from RNIB’s Helpline or the online shop.

In the first two months of sales, RNIB has sold 170 units. According to Claire Maxwell, Senior Product Developer – Braille, most people are purchasing the Orbit Reader 20 to access content on other devices. She said, “This is due in the main to the limited number of digital braille books available. RNIB has provided details of free and paid-for translation packages to enable customers to create their own electronic braille files, but many customers still prefer to access books in mainstream apps, and read them in braille on the Orbit Reader 20.” She added, “At present RNIB are working on a project to offer our current library books as downloads. This will happen in 2019.”



1The Orbit Reader 20

Feedback from customers has been overwhelmingly positive. One customer said: “I just wanted to tell you how much the Orbit Reader 20 has changed my life. It is the single best thing I’ve ever bought myself. I have never spent much money on myself and I can honestly say I am so, so happy with it ... I cannot express in words how it has

changed my life, it has made reading any book so much more accessible to me.”

The Orbit Reader 20 is available from RNIB, costing £449 ex VAT. RNIB Connect members can buy the Orbit Reader 20 at the discounted price of £399 ex VAT.

For more information, call RNIB on 0303 123 9999, or visit the website: rnib.org.uk/orbit-reader-20

– Joanna Franks, RNIB

Congratulations

Christine Simpson was editor of the first edition of the Rules of Unified English Braille. This was a huge task, requiring expertise in braille and accessible format production, an exacting eye for detail, and endurance for the lengthy task. Christine served as a member of the Australian Braille Authority executive for 16 years, including 6 years as its Chair. Christine was honoured for her work by the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Inc., who awarded her with the 2018 Tammy Axelsen Lifetime Achievement Award.



*UEB Rulebook editor
Christine Simpson (left)
with Round Table President
Neil Jarvis*

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Braille Literacy Month

January is Braille Literacy Month.

Braille Literacy Canada will be hosting a special teleconference on braille around the world in January in honour of Braille Literacy Month.

World Braille Day – January

World Braille Day is celebrated on 4 January each year, in commemoration of the birth of Louis Braille in 1809. ICEB encourages individuals and organisations to celebrate World Braille Day with braille-related activities and spread the word about the continued importance of braille for literacy and equity.



2019 is the first year in which World Braille Day will be recognised by the United Nations: All Member States, United Nations entities and others are invited to observe the day by raising public awareness of braille as a means of communication.

Braille Literacy Canada will be releasing a special newsletter on World Braille Day.

[Index Braille](#) will be announcing the recipient of an Index Everest embosser and acoustic hood as part of their [Index Donation Program](#) for braille producers with limited financial resources.

Braille Music Retreat – Auckland, New Zealand, January 2019

In a joint initiative between Australia and New Zealand, a Braille Music Retreat is being hosted at the BLENNZ Homai Campus in New Zealand from 17 to 20 January. Adults proficient in braille music are invited to participate in four-part choral works and jam sessions over the weekend, with an informal concert on the Saturday night.

World Read Aloud Day - February

[World Read Aloud Day](#) is celebrated on 1 February each year. People around the globe read aloud together and share stories to advocate for literacy as a human right. As the tactile equivalent of print, braille is the only primary method for people who are blind or have severe low vision to gain true literacy through direct access to the written

word. Activities planned for World Read Aloud Day in South Africa are described on print pages 9-10 of this newsletter.

CSUN Assistive Technology Conference – March 2019

The [CSUN Assistive Technology Conference](#) is the premier assistive technology conference worldwide. The 2019 Conference will be held from Monday March 11 to Friday 15 March at Anaheim Marriott in California, USA. Speaker Registration is now open.

DAISY Music Braille meeting – Geneva, Switzerland, May 2019

The DAISY Consortium are exploring options for improvements in MusicXML to allow better automated translation to music braille. The DAISY Music Braille project is a cross-sector collaboration to deliver improvements so that music scores are more readily available to blind musicians worldwide. The next meeting will be held in Geneva from 27 to 29 May 2019. Email musicbraille@daisy.org or visit www.daisy.org/project/daisy-music-braille for more information.

Round Table Conference – Brisbane, Australia, May 2019

The Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Inc. is an umbrella organisation encompassing more than 30 organisations in the fields of education, government, accessible format production, community and disability across Australia and New Zealand. Round Table holds an annual 3 day Conference preceded by a full day meeting of the Australian Braille Authority.

The conference will be held from Saturday 4 to Tuesday 7 May 2019 in Brisbane, Australia. The theme for 2019 is “The Changing Landscape for Accessible Information”. Registrations are now open online at printdisability.org/conference/2019-round-table-conference/.

Africa Forum – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 2019

Africa Forum is Africa's premiere conference for blindness activists, leaders and community. The conference is open to any individual or organisation with an interest in blindness in Africa. It offers opportunities to learn, network and contribute to the future of disability advocacy in Africa.

The 7th Africa Forum is scheduled for 7-11 October 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Getting in Touch with Literacy – USA, November 2019

Getting in Touch with Literacy is a national conference on all forms of literacy, including print, braille, auditory, tactile graphics comprehension and the use of assistive technology. The proceedings include presentations, workshops and poster sessions.

ICEB General Assembly – London, England, May 2020

ICEB holds a General Assembly once every four years. The next General Assembly will be held in London, beginning May 10 2020.

More details on the General Assembly, along with a call for papers, will be distributed via the ICEB communication channels as listed at the end of this newsletter. Meanwhile, you may be interested to read the key papers from the 2016 General Assembly, which were published as part of a special edition of the Journal of Blindness Innovation and Research (Vol 6, No 3) at

nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/jbir/jbir16/jbir0603tc.html

WBU-ICEVI Joint Assembly – Madrid, Spain, June 2020

The World Blind Union (WBU) and International Council for Education of People with Vision Impairment (ICEVI) will hold their third joint General Assembly at the Hotel Marriott in Madrid, Spain, from 19 to 24 June 2020. The proceedings will include two days of paper presentations from 21 to 22 June. The call for abstracts will be released in early March 2019 through the [WBU](http://www.wbu.org) and [ICEVI](http://www.icevi.org) websites.

