UK Country Report for
ICEB Mid-Term Assembly
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## Introduction

The braille groups of UKAAF have continued working hard and have achieved a number of successes in various different areas.

With the implementation of Unified English Braille (UEB) all but complete, the structure of the main braille groups within UKAAF has been revised to two: one concentrating on coding, the other concentrating on more general matters.

The 17th and final issue of our termly newsletter, UEB update, was despatched in September 2017. UKAAF continues to host the email list called UEB-Ed. It is a community where you can ask questions about the UEB code and has become a really active international resource.

The focus of work has shifted from resources for implementing the switchover to UEB, to more general braille advice documents, of which several have been published on the UKAAF website in the last two years, and more are in development.

## Documents Produced

The following new documents have been published:

* Braille dot dimension standards: We were often asked about the dimensions of braille by a diverse range of people, from students to graphic designers to artists, and found we did not have an agreed answer to give them. So we undertook research looking at international standards and what embosser manufacturers used and now have an agreed standard we can give people.
* Embossing, binding and labelling: This is general guidance for good practice when embossing and binding braille publications. Topics include the weight, size and type of paper and the most suitable labels for different kinds of publications. The section on binding describes the different methods of binding and when it is most appropriate to use them.
* Reading Electronic Braille: this document gives details about reading files containing electronic braille using a screen reader and braille display or a braille note taker. It gives the typical settings and (very usefully) what happens if you have the wrong settings. It also describes how to view braille on a computer screen for sighted readers when it is presented as a BRF file.
* Formatting guidelines: The guidelines for the basic layout of braille documents in the UK was enhanced with an appendix giving further examples, and more detail in areas such as headings, tables of contents, poetry, forms and footnotes.
* Maths AutoCorrect: Generating mathematical symbols using Math AutoCorrect or Unicode contains advice on correctly creating mathematical symbols using either the MS Word Math AutoCorrect function or Unicode. It contains a comprehensive table of approximately 100 different mathematical symbols and how to generate them.
* Maths practice exercises: these are the practice exercises which we used as part of our UEB technical training courses in 2016, they give a series of examples of mathematical expressions in print and in UEB.

All these are available to download from [www.ukaaf.org/braille](http://www.ukaaf.org/braille)

## Work in Progress

We also continue to work on:

* Expanded word list: based on the additional words in our former publication, British Braille (2004), we hope to publish an expanded word list giving over 700 extra words and how to contract them in UEB. Several words have proved difficult to decide and we are very grateful for the help and advice particularly from Phyllis Landon and FM D'Andrea. When we asked FM to check our work thus far, we were encouraged to find that there were only 9 words where the UK and USA differed. We continue to run through the remaining problem words and hope to publish a first version later this year.
* UK Duxbury template: in collaboration with Duxbury Systems, the aim is to produce a revised template for the Duxbury Braille Translator, which will give improved layout of braille according to accepted UK conventions. This includes headings, bulleted lists, tables of contents, end markers and much more. The template has been included with DBT 12.2 SR1 as a work in progress. All comments are welcome.
* List of mathematical signs: this document is a summary of all the mathematical symbols available in UEB. It will give the print symbol, the braille symbol, a word description of the symbol and a Unicode reference. We are very grateful again to Phyllis Landon for checking our work so far and for very helpful suggestions, particularly with arrows.

## Music

The Music groups of UKAAF have also been active and have produced the following publications:

* Braille music and UEB: in consultation with Jordie Howell, the Braille Music group of UKAAF have created guidelines about how UEB interacts with the braille music code, for example when to use UEB signs and when to use signs from the braille music code. For example, this applies to brackets, which may appear in ordinary text, lyrics, or music lines.
* Revised guidelines for Modified Stave Notation: though not specifically braille, these revised guidelines produced by the UKAAF Music group give up-to-date information about MSN (the large print equivalent for music).

The Braille Music group are in process of producing a series of short podcasts introducing braille music, along similar lines to the podcasts about changes to the braille code. Each episode concentrates on an aspect of using braille music, for example, for solo instruments, vocal music, keyboard music and so on.

Music documents can be downloaded from [www.ukaaf.org/music](http://www.ukaaf.org/music)

The Music group and RNIB have also undertaken some work looking at BrailleMuse, an automated server to produce braille music, the OpenScore project and the MuseScore score writing program. MuseScore are making good progress towards better accessibility. We would like international input in due course regarding decisions of format for the OpenScore project and other options, however, OpenScore has so far not accomplished as much as was originally hoped.

## ICEB

We are particularly grateful to our ICEB colleagues around the world for all their input whenever we have submitted questions on all kinds of topics: from contraction of particular words, to clarifications or requests to amend certain rules, to requesting additional mathematical signs. We appreciate the efforts of the Code Maintenance Committee in particular for progress on several of the Charges and the outcomes of these deliberations have been welcomed in the UK.

In particular the UK would like to express thanks for all the work undertaken in connection with the complex issue of the apostrophe versus single quote. It was clear from the responses we received from the survey that people (especially braille readers) very much valued the opportunity to contribute to the discussions and be consulted.

## Other News

The Welsh group of UKAAF has worked with Duxbury Systems to add more shortforms to the updated Welsh braille code, known as Unified Welsh Braille (UWB).

Members from the UKAAF Braille groups have continued to judge the UK entries for the annual Onkyo Braille Essay Contest and we are pleased to report more winning entries.

UKAAF continues to hold conference-style annual meetings which have been well attended. The last focused on education and the need for timely, quality accessible documentation in a variety of formats. This year will focus on employment.

Despite all this, we still receive occasional reports from some who do not like the changes to the braille code, though this is reducing. I wrote an unpublished paper giving the reasons behind some of the most notable changes between the former British code and UEB; if anyone would like a copy, please ask.

Outside of the activity of UKAAF, we would also like to mention the BrailleCast podcast series specifically about braille matters from Dave Williams, with an expanding range of episodes.

The Bank of England has introduced tactile £10 notes, £20 later this year. The plastic £10 notes have two braille G's on them.

We also continue to follow the development of various new braille technology products, such as the Canute, Orbit Reader 20 and BrailleMe with interest.

The past two years have been busy ones and I would like to thank my colleagues in RNIB, UKAAF and ICEB for all their help, support, advice and expertise.

JB 14/2/18