



Newsletter

IFLA Libraries for the Blind Section

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Editor:

Beatrice Christensen Sköld,
Information Coordinator
The Swedish Library of Talking
Books and Braille (TPB)
SE-122 88 Enskede
Sweden
Tel: +46-8-39 93 74
Fax: +46-8-659 94 67
E-mail:
bea.christensen@tpb.se

Co-editor:

Päivi Voutilainen
Finnish library of the Visually
Impaired
Backasgatan 58-60
FIN-00510 Helsinki
Finland
Tel: +358-9-2295 22 50
Fax: +358-9-2295 22 95
E-mail:
paivi.voutilainen@celialib.fi

Distribution:

Beatrice Christensen Sköld
Address as above

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Standing Committee Members

Chairperson

Marijke van Bodengraven, Director

Address:

PO Box 24

NL 5360 AA GRAVE

The Netherlands

Phone: +31 486486486

Fax: + 31 486 476 535

e-mail: mvbodengraven@fnb.nl

Secretary

Helen Brazier, Chief Executive

National Library for the Blind

Far Cromwell Road, Bredbury

Stockport SK6 25G, United Kingdom

E-mail: Helen.brazier@nlbuk.org

Other members

Henri Chauchat, France

Beatrice Christensen Sköld, Sweden

Elke Dittmer, Germany

Marie H el ene Dougnac, France

Galina Elvimova, Russia

Lina Kouzi, Ireland

Keun Hae Youk, Korea

Ku Jo Bee, Malaysia

Barbara Mates, USA

Francisco J. Martinez Calvo, Spain

Marie-Cecile Robin, France

Johan Roos, South Africa

Eugenia Shepovalova, Russia

Carolyn Sung, USA

Eldrid N. S ornes, Norway

Dick Tucker, the Netherlands

P aivi Voutilainen, Finland

Section News:

Changes in the Standing Committee

During IFLA's World Congress in Berlin there was a change of members in the Standing Committee. Rosemary Kavanagh left after two periods as chair. She was succeeded by Marijke van Bodengraven from the Netherlands. Helen Brazier was elected secretary. Helen is not new to the job as she has been acting secretary since Dick Tucker left last year. Read more Marijke and Helen in the introduction below.

Other new members are Elke Dittmer, Norddeutsche Blindenbücherei in Hamburg, Germany, Marie Hèléne Dougnac, ENSSIB, France, Keun Hae Youk, Korea Braille Library, Lina Kouzi, National Council for the Blind, Ireland. Johan Roos, South African Library for the Blind. Carolyn Sung, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically handicapped (NLS), USA and Elsebeth Tank, Danish National Library for the Blind. Beatrice Christensen Sköld from TPB, Sweden, reentered the Standing Committee after two years as special advisor. Beatrice will continue as information coordinator and editor of this newsletter.

Members who have been re-elected are (apart from Helen Brazier): Henri Chauchat from AVH, France, Dick Tucker, Force Foundation, Netherlands and Päivi Voutilainen, Celia Library Finland, also co-editor of this Newsletter.

Sadly we say goodbye to Catherine Desbuquois, BrailleNet France, Hiroshi Kawamura, Japan, Bente

Dahl Rathje, Denmark, Brad Kormann, USA and Yoon Loong Wong, Malaysia. Our grand old man, Rainer Witte, who has been on the committee since 1978 also left after having arranged his second expert meeting in Marburg.

The new chair and secretary will introduce themselves as follows.

Marijke van Bodengraven - Chair

I am the director and chairman of the Board of FNB, the Netherlands, since September 2000. FNB is the organisation in the Netherlands responsible for all production and distribution of materials in alternative formats, including newspapers and magazines, school and university books, leisure books and music. Clients include all people with a print impairment.

FNB has around 240 employees and about 1.000 volunteers, working at three main offices Grave (headquarters), Amsterdam, Rijswijk, and two smaller ones in Rotterdam and Arnhem, and in studios all over the country.

Before joining FNB, I worked for different organisations in the profit and the non-profit sector in management positions:

1997- 2000: international business development director for Foster Parents Plan, an international charity with headquarters in the UK.

1993-1997: director for corporate and marketing communication worldwide at KEMA, an international energy company headquartered in the Netherlands.

1988-1993: director Provincial Tourist Board North-Holland (province of Amsterdam).

1985-1988: head of department for service industry at Foreign Trade Agency of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs.

1978-1985: different positions as purser, manager public relations, manager in-flight services at Pan American World Airways in Miami, USA.

I have lived in Brazil, South Africa, the United States and in several European Countries. I was born in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, where I finished high school and went to University. I have a doctoral degree in German Language and Literature and a BA in Portuguese Language and Literature. While living and working in the US, I obtained an MBA from Florida International University in Miami.

As president of LBS I plan to involve the members of the committee more, as to my understanding being a member means carrying responsibility for the results. I also want to involve the professionals of the member organisations in the working groups, while at the same time reducing the working groups, as to being able to really concentrate on the big issues, identified in the Strategic plan.

Helen Brazier - Secretary

I am the Chief Executive of the National Library for the Blind in Stockport, UK.

After a period working in public libraries, I have spent most of my career in special or workplace libraries, mainly in the UK, except

for a two-year period when I worked as a librarian for the United Nations in Hanoi. Most of my posts have involved setting up or developing library services to meet users' needs.

I was appointed Customer Services Director at the National Library for the Blind in 1997 and subsequently Chief Executive in March 2002. I have been actively involved in developing new services, such as Reveal: the National Database of Accessible Resources, and building new partnerships with voluntary sector agencies in the UK and overseas, as well as with the UK public library sector and with government. I am a member of various sectoral working groups and the Board of Share the Vision. I have spoken at events and written articles about diverse aspects of NLB's work.

I am an associate member of CILIP, formerly served as chair of Aslib Northern Branch, and a member of the Library Association International Sub-Committee. Currently Secretary of IFLA Libraries for the Blind Section.

World Library and Information Congress in Berlin

The World Library and Information Congress took place in Berlin August 1-9, 2003. Libraries for the Blind Section (LBS) had an Open Session and a workshop both concentrating on print-handicapped users of Libraries.

The theme of the Open Session was Partners in Life Long Learning: Working With Print-handicapped Users. Pamela Benson presented,

how the National Library of Trinidad and Tobago partnering with the Torres Foundation provides access to information through multiple assistive technology products and computer aids. Lina Kouzi from NCBI, Ireland, introduced a survey conducted across a selection of Public Libraries in the Dublin area focusing on what libraries know about the Library Services of the NCBI. She also presented a list of recommendations based on the survey. The recommendations focused on increasing awareness of library services for the blind.

Marijke van Bodengraven, FNB Netherlands, emphasized in her presentation that if a library wants to serve all people, it should have an accessible OPAC through a web-interface. A library OPAC that can be reached via the Internet with an accessible interface, offers everybody, anywhere, anytime access to the information needed. Currently, many library interfaces are not accessible for people with a print-handicap.

The Open session was finished with Helen Brazier's very interesting presentation on two highly innovative reader development projects in UK, A Touch Of... and A Touch More.

Thursday's workshop brought up lots of useful information and new ideas. Initially, discussion focused on what should Public Libraries know about serving print-handicapped readers. Then, topics such as various information media, copyright, accessibility issues and networking were discussed. Through integrating collections and services, print-handicapped people could have access to the same range of services

as sighted readers.

Irith Getz presented research that was conducted among the readers of talking books in the Central Library for the Blind in Israel. The study focused on the reading style between recordings for the blind and commercial cassette books for the general public. It was found out that the two types of recorded books had distinctive differences in reading styles. This raised the question: Was there any justification for having this difference? More study on this subject is required.

Marie-Hélène Dougnac from France studied the impact of new technologies on the way visually impaired people read. Today there are many options in meeting the needs of service users: Braille, enlarged, audio and digitalized formats. New technologies, without denying the importance of Braille, extensively expand the equality of access to information.

Bente Dahl Rathje and her inspiring story about organized library visits for handicapped children in Denmark finished the workshop. Cooperation between organizations that look after the needs of disabled children and Public Libraries was a fruitful experience.

Most of the papers are available on the Internet
<http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla69/prog03.htm>

Päivi Voutilainen

Access Point Library: Where do the Blind fit?

Approximately 100 persons participated in the Section's 2,5 day long conference at the SORAT hotel in Marburg, July 27-30th. Local organizers were Blista in cooperation with three other German organizations for the Blind (DBSV, Bonn, DVBS, Marburg and BKD, Bonn). In conjunction with the Conference a francophone workshop was held July 31st.

Opening

Mrs Edelgard Bulmahn, Federal Minister of Education and Research opened the conference. Theme for her opening speech was "Full participation and equal access in Germany". Rainer Witte, the doyen of our section, gave an overview of the Section's history. Twenty years ago, in 1983, the Section held it's first Preconference here in Marburg, at that time called an Expert Meeting. Rainer was present.

After the Opening the winner of the Ulverscroft Frederick Thorpe Best Practice Award 2003 was presented to us by Helen Brazier, Director of the National Library for the Blind, UK. The Department of Library, Archive and Information Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria was the happy winner of 15 000 GBP. In addition the Nigerian Library received 10 000 Euros from the Rotterdam Foundation.

Then followed five sessions with the themes:

- What do Users Want
- The Integrated Digital Library
- Reading by Touch

- Braille Music:
A Model for Cooperation
- Managing and Marketing:
Change in Libraries for the Blind
- Are we doing enough for People with Low vision.

The presentations from the conference will be published later this year. We will just mention some of the highlights.

What Do Users Want

Two users, Dr Gillian Burrington, UK, and Mrs Eva Björk, SRF, Sweden gave us a hint of what it is like to be blind and how you access your information.

Future Content

Under the theme "Future Content: The Integrated library" Elke Dittmer, head of the North German Library of Talking Books in Hamburg gave an overview of the libraries for the blind in Germany. Each state in the German Federation has a library of its own under the auspices of the regional government. However the libraries cooperate when it comes to copyright clearance and technical development such as DAISY and a common OPAC.

Under the same theme Victoria Owen from the CNIB Library in Canada told us of her experience when dealing with publishers in order to obtain digital files. Agreements vary from publisher to publisher. Some charge others don't. Files come in various lay-out formats and are "cleaned" by staff at the CNIB who then tag the files in XML.

Maarten Verboom from the Federation of Dutch Libraries for the Blind,

gave a presentation about the new organization of the Dutch libraries. The aim is to meet the demands and needs of the print impaired citizens by integrating information channels such as newspapers and magazines, talking book services study material, music scores and introducing a common OPAC.

Reading Tactile Material

Professor Birgitte Röder, from the Department of Psychology at the Phillips University in Marburg presented the result of a project about Braille reading. She showed us that blind people when reading Braille are using the same part of the brain as sighted persons use when they are reading ink-print. When listening to a textbook in audio the blind persons uses the parts of the brain used for listening as well as the part you use for reading.

Under the same theme Mr Wilfried Laufenberg from the host organisation Blista told us about the importance of using threedimensional figures in the education of the blind. Philippe Claudet, of the European project Tactus, gave a demonstration of colourful tactile picture books that can be used by both blind and sighted children. Mr Claudet can make books in all European languages. He also makes books on demand i.e. if you send him a book in ink-print he will translate the pictures into tactile ones and transcribe the text into Braille.

Braille Music: A Model for Cooperation

David Crombie gave a presentation of accessible music. By using DAISY

and commercial software such as MPEG and MPEG 7 in combination you can solve many problems visually impaired musicians have today. XML also makes it possible to print out Braille scores from this system. Mr Crombie also promoted a conference on accessible music which is to be held in Amsterdam 2-3 October this year. At the conference the new software will be released. More information can be obtained at:

www.interactivemusicnetwork.org,
or e-mail:am2003@fnb.nl

Roger Firman, RNIB, talked about cooperation among producers of Braille scores. The Dacapo project is another way of sharing music. This EU project should have been presented by Dr Thomas Kalisch who unfortunately was unable to participate due to an accident.

Managing and Marketing

Elsebeth Tank, Executive Director of the Danish National Library for the Blind (DBB) showed us how an organisation can be changed or even be better by having to reduce your budget 20 per cent.

Mrs Ingar Beckman Hirschfeldt, Head of the Swedish Library of Talking Books and Braille (TPB), gave an account of the Swedish DAISY Campaign. Sweden has integrated talking book lending into the public library system. The central library, TPB, has the role of producer and marketer. In order to promote the transition from analogue to digital audio, in 2001 TPB decided to market the DAISY System including talking books, software and playback-machines. A professional marketing manager was hired. In a year the

new media was introduced at approximately 265 library units. The focus was set on the user and the aim that each talking book user in Sweden by the end of 2001 should have tried the DAISY system.

Are we Doing Enough for People with Low Vision

Mrs Frances Cutler, CNIB Canada, predicted that in ten years time 50 per cent of the people born in the 1940s in the developed countries will suffer from macular degeneration. Mrs Cutler herself has suffered from this disease since she was born. She pointed out how necessary it is for libraries to build up large print collections. However, most large print books haven't got the right typography. The CNIB is developing a special large print font suited for person with macular degeneration. While waiting for specially made fonts Mrs Cutler recommended libraries to use Verdana font for their information material.

Dr John Gill, RNIB, presented the Tiresias project that has developed a type font for people suffering from macular degeneration. The font exists in every European language and can be find at www.tiresias.org.

Mr Heinz Zysset from the Swiss Library for the Blind In Zurich told us about the XML project the library has run and is continuing under the auspices of the DAISY Consortium.

The Conference ended with a Francophone workshop.

Beatrice Christensen Sköld

News from the World:

New Braille Production Centres open in North Africa

On the 7th May 2003 the new Braille production centre in the Mohammed VI Institute for Blind Children in Temara near Rabat was officially inaugurated. This is the result of a project jointly funded by the Union Francophone des Aveugles (UFA) and the FORCE Foundation. The Federation for the Professional Integration of Deaf and Blind people in France (FISAF) had provided two trainers, from Angers and Besançon. For two weeks prior to the inauguration a team of three transcribers from the Institute in Temara had been joined by a the production team from the Braille printing house in Tunis run under the Tunisian National Union of the Blind. Each team consisted of two sighted and one blind operator, who were trained to produce Braille using computers, scanners, enlarging software, synthetic speech and a Braille bar. The equipment had been purchased, tested, the software installed and the network linked up in Angers prior to being shipped. A technician ensured the installation of the first set of equipment in Temara and then a second set which had been prepared for the centre in Tunis. Both centres have internet and e-mail connections so that they can join the developing network of Francophone libraries for the blind.

Local support and organisation for the training and the opening ceremony was provided by the Royal Association for the Protection of the Blind of Morocco (OAPAM), who run the school in the centres has been

established and the other 12 schools for the blind in the country. The President of OAPAM, Her Highness Princess Lalla Lamia graciously received the representatives of the participating organisations and the trainees at a reception in her palace.

On the 30th May the second centre in this joint project will be opened in the Braille Printing Press in Tunis. Both centres have the advantage of having run mechanical Braille printing presses for many years. The transition from zinc plates to computers is radical, but the transcribers have a solid knowledge of Braille. Both centres are producing texts in Braille and Arabic. The need to link up with other centres producing in these languages is paramount.

New Braille Production Centre in Cameroon

The third part of the joint UFA/FORCE project is being created in Promhandicam in Yaoundé, Cameroon. This centre which undertakes rehabilitation of many different sorts of handicap also houses one of the two recognised schools for the blind in Cameroon. It was in this school that Promhandicam with the support of the Cristoffel Blindenmission (CBM) had developed a small Braille production unit with two workstations. With additional support from the Lilliane Fonds the school building has been extended to house a four station transcription unit with a separate Braille printing room. The school gains two new classrooms and Promhandicam a new set of offices for their Community Based Rehabilitation programme.

In September a training course will be held for the staff of this unit together with transcribers from two other institutions in Cameroon and one from the Kigali Institute for Education. It is hoped that this will make it easier for people to work together in a network. Being bilingual English/French Cameroon has the opportunity to link up with many other countries and networks. The official opening of the Braille centre/library will be in October 2003.

No one party in this co-operation could have attempted any of these developments alone. Together they have been able to make a significant change to the Braille production capabilities of French-speaking Africa.

TESTLAB spin-off wins a Prize

In its time as a European Commission project TESTLAB (Testing Electronic Systems and Technology for Library Access for the Blind) contributed to changes in library legislation in some countries, the establishment of electronic libraries and perhaps most importantly changes in attitude and practice towards print impaired people in public and academic libraries. The libraries involved in the various projects which made up TESTLAB may have become a little complacent about their achievements. It was therefore a surprise and pleasure to receive a message from Adelmo Taddei of the Library Authority of the city of Genoa in Italy. Their part of the project had been to install adapted workstations in the new Berio Public Library and then launch a major social programme to change

the attitudes of both the visually impaired readers and the general public.

Adelmo's message read;

"after all this time, I think it will be interesting to you to know that our project, with the new workstations and all the new utilities for our customers, won the national award as the best project for access to public services. I received the plate directly from the hands of our Minister Luigi Stanca, Minister to the Innovation, in Rome, the 8th of May."

It is particularly encouraging when a project for the visually and print impaired is not only seen as a valid exercise in providing access to information but that it is against all the other projects, judged to be the best.

Congratulations to Adelmo and his team.

Dick Tucker

Fun and Games at Crimea

In June 2003 the 10th Crimean conference for librarians was held in Sudak. This was the sixth year that a workshop for libraries for the blind has been part of this growing event. Amongst the 1800 delegates there were 42 from libraries for the blind in Russia, who together conducted a two day workshop. In the past this has been a series of readings including those from foreign specialists. In the last two years this pattern has been changed. Rather than listen to stories of other libraries, the delegates have begun to work intensively on strategies to

improve their own libraries and co-operation with others. Nineteen papers were submitted and published but only nine speakers were called on to give very short explanations of the core issues. The rest of the first day was spent in working groups on developing new strategies. The second day was devoted to a business simulation game, led by a professional trainer from Novosibirsk. Given that the first day sessions had concentrated on the future services and social responsibilities of the libraries, this intensive exercise provided a framework of strategies to enable the library directors to review their own institutions. This was a new and difficult experience for the participants and one from which they learned a lot.

Only time will tell whether this experience can be translated into improvements in the Russian special libraries, but two ten hour working days demonstrated the devotion of the delegates and gave them license to spend the next day on the beach.

Dick Tucker