



AERODYNAMICS

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NOW BOARDING

Welcome to the June 2020 issue of AERODYNAMICS

Many summertime events and activities have been rescheduled or are being adapted to an online format. Other organizations are also doing their part to make life more livable. Here are just a few:

- [The American Foundation for the Blind Leadership Conference \(AFBLC\) 2020](#), rescheduled for next year, has key sessions available live online and then archived.
- [The HumanWare Live Webinar Series](#) allows you to learn about its products by attending live or accessing past recordings free of charge.
- [Freedom Scientific](#) is offering a free home licence of JAWS, ZoomText or Fusion, which will expire June 30, 2020.
- And [CNIB](#) has expanded its virtual programs to meet the needs of people across Canada.

I hope you have a safe summer. The submission deadline for the September 2020 issue of AERODYNAMICS is August 25, 2020. Email me at saralb@sympatico.ca

Message from Your Canadian Rep

By Carole Williams

In my final communication with the wonderful Canadian membership, I would like to thank you for your support over the past four years! It's been quite a ride and I have learned a great deal from all the amazing professionals in the field, as well as each and every member of the AER Board of Directors, under the leadership of Emily Coleman. I would also like to send out a big Canadian welcome to our new Interim Executive Director, Mark Richert. I'm looking forward to working with you again, Mark, and am excited about the future of AER, under your direction!

I would also like to thank Angela Smith, who recently resigned from the AER staff. I always felt that she was a huge supporter of the Canadian professionals and went to great lengths to work with me to help improve our member benefits. Angela, you will be missed!

Thank you, Sara Bennett, for your patience and your gentle reminders about contributing to this wonderful newsletter! This is an invaluable resource for the Canadian membership, and we appreciate all your hard work and dedication to this publication and the field!

I am so pleased that Laurie Watson decided to run as AER's new Canadian Representative! She is a longtime dedicated AER member who recently moved from British Columbia to Ontario. She held a leadership role with the BC/Yukon Chapter, and I am confident that Laurie will continue to make sure your voice is heard by the AER International Board when she takes office in August.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to have our usual face-to-face networking this year, as both the Canadian Vision Teachers' Conference and the AER International Conference have been postponed. But stay tuned for some exciting virtual professional development opportunities in the near future!

Finally, I wish you all good health, happiness, and calm in these unpredictable times, and I know you will continue the incredible work you are doing with our clients and students across Canada.

Please keep in touch! Call me at 416-523-8807 (cell) or email at carolewilliams2017@gmail.com.

BUSINESS CLASS

Extra! Extra! AER News

- The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) International Conference, "Gateway to Community", July 22-26, 2020, Union Station Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri, has been rescheduled for July 20-24, 2022. Please remember to cancel any hotel reservations for the 2020 conference, as they are not cancelled automatically and are subject to applicable fees. Thank you!
- AER has implemented new membership dues for Canadian members. Now, when you renew your AER membership, you will automatically be directed to the reduced rates in our online renewal system. Visit us [here to log-in and renew online](#). If you prefer to renew with the membership form, simply complete the special [Canadian Membership Form](#) and return it to us at memberservices@aerbvi.org or mail to: AER, 5680 King Centre Drive, Suite 600, Alexandria, VA 22315 USA.

- Get continuing education hours and receive a 20% discount on all Perkins Self-Paced Tutorials! Access the Perkins School for the Blind Learning Catalogue and choose from nearly 160 self-paced videos! To get started, go to: <https://aerbvi.org/professional-development/perkins-e-learning-aer-member-discount/>

Call for Papers! Connecting the Dots Conference

Held annually, Connecting the Dots is Canada's largest educational and professional development experience focused on braille, technology and employment for people who are blind or partially sighted. During this two-day conference, keynote speakers and presenters have access to captive audiences and receive credits from the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).

October 7-8, 2020, Toronto, Ontario, MaRS Discovery District

October 16-17, 2020, Montreal, Quebec, Sandman Hotel, Longueuil

The Call for Papers ends June 26, 2020! For more information, or for the application in English or in French, visit: <http://www.cnib.ca/connectingthedots>

ObjectiveEd & CNIB Team Up

By Marty Schultz, Co-Founder, ObjectiveEd

ObjectiveEd, an organization that provides digital educational games for students with disabilities, has teamed up with CNIB to provide free distance learning for teachers of the visually impaired and their students in Canada until the end of July 2020. Designed to help both those who are blind and partially sighted, the curriculum is comprised of a web-dashboard for teachers and a set of goal-oriented games that students use with an iPad or iPhone. Other devices, such as Android and Chromebooks, will be available in the fall.

ObjectiveEd's digital curriculum for students with visual impairments consists of apps that build orientation and mobility (O&M), assistive technology and braille literacy skills. Using the ObjectiveEd web-dashboard, the teacher configures each goal-oriented game to the needs of each student. For example, in one of the O&M games, the teacher uses the web-dashboard to tell the game to focus on laterality, or on simple clock or complex directions. The teacher can adjust the game to be appropriate for students who are not developmentally at grade level or for students with limited mobility. Likewise, with the web-dashboard, the teacher can remotely monitor how well a student is acquiring each skill and can use the student's progress to plan the next lesson.

For more information, please visit: www.objectiveEd.com/distance

ACVREP's Helpful Activities

The Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) has recently adapted its 2020 certification/recertification policies, as well as issuing guidance on remote instruction. Click on whichever of the following topics is of interest:

- [Message from the ACVREP Board of Directors about the Impact of COVID-19 on Applicants for Certification](#)
- [The Board of Directors of ACVREP Votes to Waive 2020 Recertification Late Fees](#)
- [Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Subject Matter Expert Committee Issues Guidance Letter on Remote Instruction](#)
- [Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist Subject Matter Expert Committee Issues Guidance Letter on Remote Instruction](#)

ECONOMY CLASS

Scholarships Still Available!

- The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) has extended the deadline for submitting applications for the NEADS National Student Awards Program, the NEADS Holly Bartlett Memorial Award, the NEADS Christine Nieder Memorial Award and the Accessible Media Inc. (AMI) Robert Pearson Memorial Scholarship (two AMI Robert Pearson Memorial Scholarships will be awarded—one to a student from the English community and one from the French). The new application deadline for all awards is June 30, 2020, at 5 p.m. Eastern.

[**Click here**](#) for the English Robert Pearson Memorial Scholarship and [**click here**](#) for the French version.

For further details on all scholarships: <https://www.neads.ca/en/about/awards/>

- CNIB is offering five scholarships to students who are blind or visually impaired and pursuing a post-secondary diploma, degree, skilled trades certificate or apprenticeship program in the upcoming academic year. The CNIB is also offering two Master's scholarships to students who are legally blind. The application deadline for both post-secondary and Master's scholarship programs is July 5, 2020.

[**Click here**](#) for the post-secondary scholarship program and [**click here**](#) for the Master's scholarship program.

Calendar of Events

October 7-8, 2020 -- [CNIB Connecting the Dots Conference](#), Toronto, Ontario, Canada

October 16-17, 2020 -- [CNIB Connecting the Dots Conference](#), Montreal, Quebec, Canada

October 19-23, 2020 -- [International Council on English Braille \(ICEB\) 7th General Assembly](#), London, England

December 12-15, 2020 -- [Southeastern Orientation & Mobility Association \(SOMA\) Conference](#), Tampa, Florida, USA

February 3-5, 2021 -- [International Orientation & Mobility Online Symposium](#)

April 14-16, 2021 – American Foundation for the Blind Leadership Conference (AFBLC), Arlington, Virginia, USA

July 11-15, 2021 -- [13th International Conference of the International Society for Low Vision Research & Rehabilitation \(ISLRR\)](#), Dublin, Ireland

July 20-24, 2022 – “Gateway to Community” AER Biennial International Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, USA

COAST TO COAST TO COAST

Survey Exposes Disturbing Impact of COVID-19 on Visually Impaired Canadians By Keith D. Gordon, Ph.D., CCB Senior Research Officer, and Michael Baillargeon, CCB Senior Advisor, Government Relations and Special Projects

“What is affecting my mental health is this prolonged and extreme isolation. As a blind person, I already live a fairly limited life when referring to freedom of movement and independence, and now even that small wedge of my active life has been completely eradicated.”

This comment was made by one of the respondents in a survey conducted by the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB), a survey whose purpose was to ascertain the impact that COVID-19 is having on people who are blind, deaf-blind and partially sighted across the country.

Very early in the COVID-19 pandemic--late February to early March 2020--the CCB became aware that many Canadians who are visually impaired were being heavily impacted by the virus, but that the many pandemic-related government programs being announced were not, for the most part, taking our fundamental needs into account. We saw the need for all levels of government to provide support and solutions to help those living with disabilities, including visual impairment, to get through this crisis. Our response was to conduct an April 2020 survey of the visually impaired community in order to provide appropriate feedback to all concerned.

The CCB sought adult respondents for its electronic survey through its email list, the weekly e-newsletter of BALANCE for Blind Adults, and the email lists of the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians and Fighting Blindness Canada. A robust sample of 572 responses was received, with all provinces being represented. Forty-two percent of respondents were over the age of 65, with 37% of all respondents self-identifying as blind, 60% as partially sighted and 3% as deaf-blind. Twenty-eight percent of respondents said they had an additional disability, the main one being hearing loss.

The survey results are a call to action and paint a disturbing picture of what Canada's visually impaired community faces on a daily basis. The survey revealed that respondents were under a significant amount of stress. Of particular concern is social distancing. Respondents said that because they couldn't see how far they were from others and that others often didn't know that they had a visual impairment, others might tend to come too close. Public transit, on which visually impaired people depend, is a major concern. Almost half of respondents said they feel unsafe when going out. Getting assistance from store staff is uncomfortable because of the need to observe physical distancing and the use of plexiglass shields makes it difficult to negotiate payment. Many said they were shopping online, some for the first time, but that they were running into inaccessible websites.

Many respondents were concerned that their vision might deteriorate due to cancelled eye doctor appointments and that they might not be able to access their prescription medications. If they had to see a doctor for any reason during the pandemic, respondents didn't know how they would get to the office or hospital or if they would be able to have someone accompany them. Almost half of the respondents had a personal care worker entering their home during the pandemic and expressed concern that many PCWs were not using the proper personal protective equipment. Some respondents were concerned that their guide dogs might become rusty due to lack of use or worried about what would become of their guide dog should they, the handler, fall ill from COVID-19. What's more, most respondents didn't know where their nearest COVID-19 testing site was or whether or not it was accessible.

Another stressor? Fear of not being able to meet financial obligations and maintain an accustomed standard of living. Respondents who were working were worried that their job may disappear at any time. Over three quarters of respondents who were working from home said their employer was not compensating them for some or all of the assistive technology they needed to do their job. Respondents in general were further stressed due to their already-fragile economic status.

This is a difficult time for everyone. The CCB survey showed that it is even more difficult for people who are visually impaired, as many respondents said they are feeling, or are on the brink of feeling, overwhelmed. Governments, with the support of stakeholder organizations, must respond with urgency to the circumstances endured by those living with blindness on a daily basis. All necessary steps must be taken to recognize the needs of this vulnerable community and to mitigate the harshest effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on them.

To read the full Survey Report, including its recommendations, [click here](#).

AERODYNAMICS, the AER Canada Newsletter, is published four times per year—in March, June, September and December. Please send all items for publication to the Editor at saralb@sympatico.ca by February 25 for the March issue, May 25 for the June issue, August 25 for the September issue, and November 25 for the December issue.

Views herein represent those of the authors and not necessarily those of AER, its Board of Directors, staff, members, or Editor. Likewise, any products or services mentioned do not necessarily represent endorsement.

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