



AERODYNAMICS

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NOW BOARDING

Greetings from Your Canadian Rep

By Laurie Watson

Hello to all Canadian members of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER). I write to you from Toronto, Ontario, where I am preparing for a new school year as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist with the Toronto District School Board. It is with gratitude that I also prepare to join the AER Board as your Canadian Representative. I wish to thank previous rep Carole Williams for all her dedication and guidance.

As we move forward in ever-changing times, I hope to hear from members about how AER can support you in ongoing professional learning. I will share opportunities that arise for us to collaborate in helping to support AER's mission, developed in 2017:

"The mission of AER is to serve and empower professionals to deliver standards-based practices that lead to improved educational and rehabilitative outcomes for individuals with visual impairment and blindness.

The vision of AER is to be a dynamic and thriving professional membership community with innovative practices and standards that result in responsiveness, recognized leadership and improved outcomes for individuals who are blind and visually impaired."

I look forward to hearing from you. Please reach out to me by cell phone, 647-321-6951, or via email: lauriewatson@me.com.

BUSINESS CLASS

Connecting the Dots Goes Virtual!

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. This two-day conference will provide opportunities for attendees to:

- learn more about current trends and innovations in the sight loss community at thought-provoking workshops and informative panel discussions;
- network with industry experts and connect with other like-minded professionals;
- experience the latest advancements in braille and assistive technologies;
- meet a community of braille transcribers, technology experts, academics and entrepreneurs from diverse organizations and institutions; and
- gain practical experience from industry experts.

Connecting the Dots is going virtual this year! To connect you with people worldwide, we've transformed our annual in-person conference into a digital event to bring you a more accessible and inclusive experience free of geographical barriers. The 2020 conference will not only be much larger because it's a virtual event, but it will also provide attendees with more dynamic networking opportunities while fostering collaboration. Register for the Connecting the Dots Conference and participate from wherever you are!

Locations:

Toronto, ON

Date: October 7-8, 2020, Time: 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Montréal, QC

Date: October 16-17, 2020, Time: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

For more information or to register, visit:

<http://www.cnib.ca/connectingthedots>.

Save the Date: Vision 2020+1

Vision 2020+1, the 13th International Conference of the International Society for Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation (ISLRR), originally scheduled for July 2020, has been rescheduled for Sunday, July 11 to Thursday, July 15, 2021. Hosted in Dublin by the Vision Impaired Service Provider's Alliance (<http://www.vispa.ie>), the conference will take place at the Convention Centre Dublin (CCD) in Ireland.

Leading practitioners in Low Vision Research, Rehabilitation and Vision Impairment will meet to share current thinking and introduce future thinking to achieve best practice for Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation throughout the world.

The conference theme is Imagining the Impossible. The program will reflect and celebrate achievement; present what's possible now and explore future possibilities; and consider how to make impossible dreams a reality. Keynote presentations by an international panel of experts, including Prof. Pearse Keane (Moorfields Eye Hospital, London), Prof. Jane Farrar (Trinity College Dublin), Prof. Rupert Bourne (Cambridge University Hospital) and Prof. Joseph Rizzo (Harvard Medical School), and informed panel discussions will challenge and stimulate over a three day program, culminating in

Calendar of Events

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

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

October 18-22, 2020 -- [International Council on English Braille 7th General Assembly](#)

December 14-15, 2020 [Southeastern Orientation & Mobility Association Online Conference](#)

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

optional site visits to host associations National Council for the Blind Ireland, ChildVision, Fighting Blindness and Irish Guide Dogs on July 15.

Complementing the Scientific program will be an industry exhibition showcasing the latest products and services in the Low Vision sector. Vision 2020+1 also offers attendees a social and cultural opportunity to visit Dublin, a small capital city with a huge reputation for the warmest of welcomes!

So, if you are Low Vision Team practitioners including ophthalmologists, optometrists, vision therapists, rehabilitation specialists, occupational therapists, teachers and individuals with a visual impairment, don't miss Vision 2020+1!

For more details, visit: www.vision2020dublin.com

ALL SYSTEMS GO

Zooming with Braille: A BLC Initiative!

By Natalina Martiniello, M.Sc., CVRT
BLC President

Braille Literacy Canada (BLC) believes that all those who benefit from braille should have access to it. We recognize that not all those who wish to learn braille have access to training resources and support. This year we launched the Braille Zoomers program, a virtual peer support group for adult and older adult braille learners across Canada. Participation is open to adults with visual impairments, whether they are in the process of learning braille, learned it in adulthood or are thinking about learning braille in the future. We meet on Zoom once a month to share resources, tips and experiences and, most of all, to have fun! Participants have the opportunity to network with other adult and older adult learners in an informal and supportive environment. So far, we have covered a range of topics: tricks to remember easily confused symbols, memory tactics for new contractions, tracking techniques, strategies to develop tactile skills as an older learner, how (and where) braille can be requested in public places... and the list goes on! Thanks to generous donors, we have also launched Braille Starter Kits as part of this program, which include common items to support adult and older adult learners throughout the braille learning journey: a slate and stylus, playing cards, short stories for adults and much more!

We invite you to spread the word about this exciting new initiative to your adult and older adult clients, colleagues and friends! Note that the aim of this initiative is not to teach braille, but to provide peer support and opportunities to learn from and network with other adult braille learners. Even those of us who have been using braille for years leave each session having learned something new!

Braille Zoomers is just one of the many initiatives offered through BLC. We also publish a bimonthly newsletter, host regular teleconferences on braille-related themes, repair and rehome unused braille users to recipients across Canada, run a scholarship program for future braille transcribers, and host a variety of committees working on exciting projects every day. Our members consist of professionals, braille users, parents, transcribers, producers and anyone who believes in the power of literacy!

Learn more about us at
www.brailledliteracycanada.ca
or write to us at:
info@blc-lbc.ca
Happy brailleing!

PILOTS & PROJECTS

What Does It Mean to Have an Accessible Home?

From walk-in closets to stainless steel appliances, fireplaces and custom cabinets, the list of coveted features in a house are endless. But what about the elements that make a space inclusive and age-friendly?

More and more people are prioritizing accessibility when looking for a place to call home. As the population ages, furthermore, age-friendly communities are a necessity.

Statistics Canada 2019 data indicate that about 6.5 million people are 65 years of age or older and account for 17.5% of the population, with the proportion of seniors in Canada expected to double by 2025.

With this in mind, what does it mean to have an accessible home?

DeafBlind Ontario Services, an Ontario-based not-for-profit, aims to raise awareness about large- and small-scale projects to improve the accessibility of spaces in its Accessibility Guidelines for Sensory Loss. Although the recently released third edition of this free downloadable resource was developed with the accessibility needs of people with deafblindness in mind, it can also benefit anyone with sensory loss, including Canada's aging population.

According to the Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI), 22% or 70,080 of Ontario seniors in home care and long-term care reported experiencing a combination of vision and hearing loss.

"The purpose of our tool is to share guidelines and provide helpful tips that focus on establishing inclusive environments for individuals with varying sensory loss. Inclusion of accessible features and design emphasizes efficient environments, space maneuverability, the importance of illumination, and the use of colour and texture, as well as specialized materials, just to name a few," says Kelly Patterson, DeafBlind Ontario Services' Manager of Client Services and Specialized Training.

Contrary to popular belief, accessible design does not need to be expensive and may aesthetically enhance a space. With respect to kitchens, for example, a number of factors can improve accessibility, while also ensuring functionality and safety. Efficient design can mean maneuverability for mobility devices; minimal effort of use; ease of cleaning; and appropriate illumination. Colour contrast assists people with low vision to discern kitchen features and should be a consideration from the outset. Light-coloured flooring could be cream, white or light grey with defined perimeters of colour-contrasting baseboards a minimum of 100 mm wide when combined with light-coloured walls. An alternate colour scheme is dark-coloured flooring, light cabinets, dark counters, light backsplashes,

dark drawer pulls, dark walls with light outlets on the wall and light-coloured trim. One simple kitchen improvement is to change cabinet handles to a colour that contrasts to that of the cabinetry. “D” type pull handles are recommended.

The Accessibility Guidelines for Sensory Loss features comprehensive Accessible Design Guidelines, Quick Design Tips and a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Accessibility Enhancements section to provide all of the information necessary to improve the accessibility of a specific space.

“Together, we can proactively breakdown barriers to make an environment safer, accessible and inclusive to everyone,” says Patterson.

Learn more at: <https://deafblindontario.com/our-services/accessibility-guidelines/>

COAST TO COAST TO COAST

Canada’s Bilingual Master’s Program in VIR

The Master’s program in Vision Impairment & Rehabilitation (VIR) at the Université de Montréal has a number of distinguishing characteristics. First, it is one of three options within the Masters of Vision Science offered by the School of Optometry—one of only two such schools in Canada. Second, it is the only program in Canada that prepares professionals to work with the visually impaired population throughout the lifespan. Third, it is the only fully bilingual program in the world. These three characteristics ensure that the program offers depth and breadth in the teaching of Low Vision, rehabilitation for blind persons, and Orientation & Mobility for both Anglophones and Francophones. The existence of the program within the School of Optometry enables the inclusion of optometrists, trained as Low Vision specialists, as professors and mentors.

The Master’s in VIR program, with its three concentrations in Low Vision, Orientation & Mobility (O&M) and Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) was established in the fall of 2016. However, Low Vision was the only new component. The other two evolved from a French graduate diploma program that began in 2000 for O&M and 2004 for VRT students.

The 16-month program follows a traditional format with students required to take most or all of their courses at the university and at local agencies that serve blind and visually impaired persons. Exceptions are occasionally made for students in special circumstances, whereby they are allowed to complete the first semester through distance courses that they follow from home. The overall structure of the program consists of 45 credits subdivided into 15 credits of core courses that are common to all three concentration; 23 specialty-area credits, including internships; and seven credits devoted to a research project.

To date, 32 students have completed the program and 19 are in the current cohort, whose timeline has been affected by the pandemic and whose members will complete their program requirements in March/April, 2021, rather than in December 2020. All graduates who wanted to pursue careers in this field are currently employed.

The Master's program in Vision Impairment & Rehabilitation has solid roots as well as fresh, new branches, which will enable it to prepare professionals to offer quality services in Low Vision across Canada and around the world.

For detailed program information & admission procedures, please contact:

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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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