



AERODYNAMICS

The AER Canada Newsletter

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of the Blind and Visually Impaired

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NOW BOARDING

The Power of Braille

By Sara Bennett, Editor

Although we're well into 2023 and it's almost spring, at least according to the calendar, I want to wish you all a Happy New Year. Here in southern Ontario, the snow seems to never end, and it still feels like deep winter. I hope this year brings health and happiness to everyone.

You will notice three braille-related articles in this newsletter, something I didn't notice until I read it through. Strange because I was only just thinking about how much braille has meant to me recently since the passing of my father in early January. I plan to share some thoughts I have had since my father's death, probably in the next issue of the newsletter. For now, suffice it to say that I wouldn't know where I'd be without braille. It has been integral in planning Dad's funeral, liaising with his Executor, completing Sudoku puzzles when I've needed a break ... I think you get the picture. My computer has also been integral, but there's no computer articles in this newsletter. Braille is literacy and, at least for me since my father's passing, it has also been sanity.

The submission deadline for the June 2023 issue of AERODYNAMICS is May 25, 2023.

Email me at: saralb@sympatico.ca

FIRST CLASS

Nominate a Leader to the Hall of Fame

The 2023 Hall of Fame nomination process is now open with a submission deadline of April 30!

What are the Criteria?

Persons who have made transformative contributions to improve the lives of those who are blind or low vision in such areas as:

- Contributing to the body of knowledge
- Contributing through communication
- Contributing through leadership
- Contributing through advocacy
- Contributing through mentorship and role modelling
- Contributing through professional practice
- Distinguished champion of the field of blindness and low vision and
- Sustainability.

Who is Eligible?

- Persons are eligible five years after departure from positions where their significant lifetime body of work was made.
- Persons from North America are eligible for nomination (North America is defined as Canada, the United States, Mexico and the Caribbean).

For more information on criteria, eligibility and the nomination process, please visit <https://sites.aph.org/hall/nominate/> or email Mike Hudson, Curator, at mhudson@aph.org or Bob Brasher at bbrasher@aph.org.

BUSINESS CLASS

Extra! Extra! AER News & Reminders

- AER is pleased to announce that we are now accepting applications for the 2023 AER Scholarship! We are proudly offering this opportunity to graduate-level students studying for a career in the field of Teacher of the Visually Impaired or Orientation & Mobility. Three scholarships will be offered in the amount of \$2,000 each. The deadline for submitting the application is May 15, 2023, and the three recipients will be announced on our website in the summer of 2023. Please refer to the application for the specific eligibility criteria and for further details. Visit our [website for more information](#) or click here to view the [scholarship application](#).
- The Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Division of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) is now accepting applications for the Donald Blasch Scholarship until March 10, 2023. This scholarship is offered to all students training to be O&M instructors in an AER-accredited O&M program. [Click](#)

[here](#) for the application form or for questions, email Margaret Winn, Chair of the Blasch Scholarship Committee, at BlaschScholarship@gmail.com.

- Did you know that AER LIFT (Leadership Initiatives Facilitate Teamwork) has relaunched? If you are a professional leader, aspiring leader, or leader within AER, you are encouraged to join AER's Administration & Leadership Division. The first two Zoom meetings to help you build leadership skills to use within AER were "What You Always Wanted to Know About AER, But Didn't Know Who to Ask." And "AER Accreditation: What is it and Why Do I Need to Know About It?" "AER Historical Perspectives" is scheduled for March, and "AER Strategic Planning" is planned for April. Stay tuned!
- Multiply your member benefits by adding divisions! Did you know that AER boasts over a dozen special-interest divisions and members may join up to three of them free of charge? From Orientation & Mobility to Low Vision and Psychosocial Services, from Aging and Multiple Disabilities to Neurological Vision Impairment, there is something for everyone. Divisions offer great networking and professional development opportunities through listservs, webinars, conferences etc. Here is just a smattering of recent and upcoming webinars and watercoolers: Administration & Leadership—"Catch and Release: Acquisition and Allocation of Resources" and "Leadership Cocktail Hour and Book Club"; Aging—"Remote Training After the Pandemic", "Vision Impairment and Strokes", "Developing Self-Advocacy Skills in Seniors" and "Cane Travel and Seniors: Issues with Acceptance, Use and Practice"; Psychosocial Services—"Trauma and Togetherness: Building a Professional Support Community"; Rehabilitation Counselling & Employment—"Applied Ethics"; Vision Rehabilitation Therapy—"Diabetes Management for Blind and Low Vision Patients". To learn more about AER's divisions, please visit: <https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/>
- The Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (JVIB), a member benefit of AER, is seeking research and practice articles for a special issue topic: 2024 Special Issue on Evidence-Based Interventions for CVI—Guest Editors Amanda Lueck, Ph.D. and Corinna Bauer, Ph.D., submission deadline February 29, 2024. For further details, visit: <https://www.afb.org/publications/jvib/jvib-authors/calls-papers>
- AER members receive a 20% discount on the total cost of Perkins self-paced tutorials. Each course provides an opportunity to enhance your knowledge, skills and job performance! Only AER members may use the voucher code 20aer20 to take advantage of this member benefit and earn continuing education (CE) hours. [Click here to get started.](#)
- AER offers discounted membership dues for Canadian members. 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.

Save the Date! 3rd Annual BLC Virtual Symposium

Wherever you are located in the world, the international braille community is strong. As we look forward into the bright future of braille literacy, there is much to celebrate and share.

Braille Literacy Canada (BLC) will be holding its Third Annual Virtual Braille Symposium on Friday, June 2, 2023, from 1-5 p.m. EDT. This event will be of interest to braille readers, educators, transcribers, parents and anyone else who is passionate about braille literacy!

A host of exciting and world-renowned speakers will give half-hour presentations (beginning at the start of each hour), followed by time for Q&A and discussion, with exciting door prizes sprinkled throughout the day!

Last year, this international event brought together braille enthusiasts from around the world and a line-up of exceptional speakers. Check out the recordings here:

<https://www.brailledliteracycanada.ca/en/programs/workshops/2022-braille-literacy-canada-symposium>

The symposium will be free of charge to members and \$20 for non-members. Interested in becoming a BLC member? Annual membership is \$20. Write to us to learn more--info@blc-lbc.ca. More details on theme, registration and schedule coming soon. Mark the date in your calendars and check the [Braille Literacy Canada website](#) for updates. This will be an event you won't want to miss.

AFBLC Registration Now Open Hyatt Regency, Arlington, Virginia

Hot off the press! Program details are now available for our [2023 American Foundation for the Blind Leadership Conference](#), including what you can expect from two full days of extraordinary content.

You'll hear from big-name experts from Amazon, Teach Access, XR Navigation, University of North Texas, American Printing House for the Blind and more. [Check out the conference agenda](#) for information on speakers, panels, Q&As, social sessions and an Ideathon.

[Grab your ticket](#) and mark your calendar for these important dates:

- Helen Keller Achievement Award Celebration—April 19, 2023
- AFB Leadership Conference—April 20-21, 2023

See you there!

Register Now for Early Connections Conference!

The Early Connections Conference brings together families with children from birth to age seven who are blind, deaf-blind or low vision, including those who have multiple complex disabilities, to engage with each other and leading professionals in the field. On Saturday, April 29, 2023, join us on the Perkins campus for this annual event—our 40th year of bringing together parents, medical professionals and educators in a supportive environment of learning, relationship-building and growth.

Our theme this year is engagement. Our sessions will focus on getting blind or visually impaired children on an early path to technology and literacy—with an emphasis on the importance of play, social interaction, and community.

Registration is open! Let's connect. Let's engage. To sample recordings of sessions from past conferences, or for schedule updates or to register for this year's event, please [click here](#).

ECONOMY CLASS

Canadian Scholarships Available

- The 2023 competition for the Edie Mourre Scholarship is now open and will be accepting applications until March 31, 2023. This fund is intended to assist those who are pursuing employment as a braille transcriber or proofreader, or as an educator. Eligible codes include: Unified English Braille, Code braille français uniformisé, music braille or other braille systems.

More information on the program and an application form (in English and in French) can be found online at:

<https://www.brailleliteracycanada.ca/en/programs/ediemourre>

- The Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC) is now accepting applications for the 2023-2024 academic year. This year it will be awarding one Allyant Scholarship, two AEBC Scholarships, a scholarship in memory of John Rae and a British Columbia Scholarship. The application deadline is March 31st, 2023.

Calendar of Events

April 20-21, 2023 -- [American Foundation for the Blind Leadership Conference \(AFBLC\)](#), Arlington, Virginia, USA

May 25, 2023 – Submission Deadline for June Issue of AERODYNAMICS

June 2, 2023 -- [Third Annual Braille Literacy Canada \(BLC\) Virtual Symposium](#)

July 24-27, 2023 -- "[Low Vision Across the Lifespan](#)" International Society for Low-Vision Research and Rehabilitation (ISLRR) Conference, Denver, Colorado, USA

November 29-December 2, 2023 -- [Getting In Touch With Literacy \(GITWL\) Conference](#), St. Pete Beach, Florida, USA

For further details, or to download the application package in English or in French, please visit: <http://www.blindcanadians.ca/programs/scholarship>

- Blind Beginnings is pleased to announce that applications for the Lori Sheppard Memorial Fund Bursary are now being accepted, with a submission deadline of April 7, 2023. Applicants must be 16 years of age or older, reside in British Columbia, and be legally blind or have a medical condition that could result in progressive vision loss, such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis etc. The funds may be utilized for the payment of tuition fees, professional fees, purchase of adaptive equipment, or to support costs linked with the creation of a home business.

For more information or for an application form, call 604-434-7243 or toll free 1-866-736-8620, visit <http://www.blindbeginnings.ca> or email shawn@blindbeginnings.ca.

- The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) offers a number of scholarships for those residing in Atlantic Canada. The S.R. Hussey Memorial Fund is designed to assist legally blind post-secondary students in purchasing equipment or legally blind persons in obtaining equipment/services to be used in the course of their employment. The deadline is May 1 of each year. Applicants for the Scholarship For Post-Secondary Training In Any Field Relating To Serving Children and Youth Who are Blind or Visually Impaired may apply anytime. The Summer Camp Grant must be applied for a minimum of four weeks beforehand, as must those for APSEA Recreational/Social/Cultural Opportunity Grants and the Summer Support Grant. The APSEA Research Grant is designed to support research in Atlantic Canada and must benefit children and youth who are blind or visually impaired, while the purpose of the Professional Learning & Training Grant is to ensure that APSEA continues to meet its need for specialized staff. For further details, please visit: <https://apsea.ca/families-students/scholarships-and-financial-aid>
- The National Educational Association of Disabled Students' (NEADS) National Student Awards Program is accepting applications until May 31, 2023. Designed to encourage full access to post-secondary education for persons with disabilities who often have higher costs and greater barriers to participation in higher education, the program offers the Canada Post Award, AMI Robert Pearson Memorial Scholarship (one English and one French), Connor Clark & Lunn Financial Group Scholarship, NEADS National Student Awards, NEADS Holly Bartlett Memorial Award, NEADS Christine Nieder Memorial Award and the Katelyn Mitchell Memorial Scholarship for the Visually Impaired.

For further details on eligibility and criteria, or to start the application process, please visit: <https://www.neads.ca/en/about/awards/>. Or email etes@neads.ca

ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

World Braille Days 2023 on You Tube!

By Karen McKay, Communications Manager, CELA

A collaboration of organizations serving the blind community in Canada teamed up in January to create new resources to support braille users and celebrate the birth month of Louis Braille. The result? Three new videos and their transcripts on Braille Literacy Canada's YouTube channel:

- In The ABCs of Braille for Beginners, new and later-life braille learners, and those who support them, are treated to new learning strategies, a review of resources and helpful tips offered by more seasoned braille readers.
- Living with Braille, the French-language program, addresses the ways braille can make a difference in careers, education and daily life.
- And Productive Allyship for Braille in Post-Secondary captures a robust conversation about how professors, library and accessibility staff, as well as institution administrators, can support the unique needs of braille users in colleges and universities, in the classroom and beyond.

This particular conversation has sparked interesting discussions about how the organizing team, including colleagues from Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA), National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS), Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB), Braille Literacy Canada (BLC), Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI), Alternative Education Resources for Ontario (AERO) and CNIB can capture these ideas and use them to increase awareness about ways institutions can improve accessibility for blind students.

Please visit: <https://www.youtube.com/@brailleliteracycanada>

INTERNATIONAL

What Do You Know About LEGO Braille Bricks?

By John Ravenscroft, Professor of Childhood Visual Impairment, University of Edinburgh

Literacy is a key gateway, a bridge to social and economic development. Literacy is empowerment--it enables information to flow between people and people, as well as between

people and systems. Obtaining proficiency in literacy is therefore one of the fundamental principles of education.

For children with visual impairment, learning braille can be a major key to advanced literacy. This cannot be understated in the education of children and young people with significant sight loss and for those who have additional print disabilities. In order to optimise braille literacy, the child should be seen as an active agent, bringing themselves to the act of learning braille by being immersed in the activities that have been skilfully constructed by the child's educator. This immersion and engagement should be joyful/playful, allowing the child to explore, to be curious and experience success to success.

One approach to joyful learning has been developed by the LEGO Foundation through its development of the LEGO Braille Bricks. However, very little research on the impact of literacy, inclusion and, indeed, joyful learning with the LEGO Braille Bricks has been conducted. To rectify this, I have put together a survey for education practitioners from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, the European Union and other parts of the world who speak English, French and German. The survey will explore education practitioners' and other practitioners' perceptions and knowledge of LEGO Braille Bricks. The results of this survey will help us to understand what you, as practitioners, know about LEGO Braille Bricks. It will also help us to further understand the impact that they create and to identify the need for future training and resources. This survey will inform discussion questions for focus groups with education practitioners and children with visual impairment in further stages of the project.

May I please urge you to complete which ever language version you prefer. Thank you.

Links to Survey:

English: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LBB2023>

French: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LBB2023FR>

German: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LBB2023DE>

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