



Modern-Eyes

Working together
WITH visually impaired people
FOR visually impaired people

THE MAGAZINE

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Sharing news, views, comments, information
and technology

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Modern-Eyes: **THE MAGAZINE**

is available in large print or Braille, on tape or as a DAISY CD, on a data CD, by email and on the website as a Word file, zipped Word file, webpage or pdf file.

Email: info@modern-eyes.co.uk

Website: www.modern-eyes.co.uk

A MESSAGE FROM SUE

Hello again, everyone!

Well, we are now moving into autumn so this month we have a few ideas for improving the lighting around the house. There is also some news about accessible DVDs, an appeal from RNIB for you to join their campaign to increase DLA and, as usual, much more.

I have also included the new regulations for using 'Articles for the Blind' labels now that all the postage rules have changed.

Remember, we do like to hear from you, our readers! If you have anything you would like to put in the magazine, please make sure it arrives with Sue by the tenth of the month.

Email: sue@modern--eyes.co.uk

Telephone: 01453 757 047

So, you know what to do ...! Find a comfy chair, get the kettle on and read on.

Sue

NEW FORMATS AVAILABLE

MODERN-Eyes: THE MAGAZINE NOW AVAILABLE IN MORE FORMATS!

As you already know, the magazine is available in large print, on audio tape, on DAISY CD as a digital talking book, in Braille, by email and on the website.

We are now withdrawing the floppy disk version as we have been having drive problems and few modern PCs actually have floppy drives.

So, if you prefer a text version on disk, we will now be offering a data CD version instead of the floppy version.

The data disk will contain the magazine as a text file, word file and pdf file, so you can choose which version is best for you.

As with the DAISY CDs, you do not need to return the disks. You can keep them to refer to as you wish.

To change your format, just contact Sue and you can start receiving the new format.

Sue

Telephone: 01453 757 047

Email: sue@modern-eyes.co.uk

ACCESSIBLE DVDs

Accessible dvdS becoming available

A Victory for Persistent Pestering. By Dan Jellinek.

The menus on DVD disks are hard enough to navigate for sighted people, with jumbles of animated images often overlaid with confusing text menus leading to different episode or scene selections, and other disk features.

For blind people, however, finding one's way around a disk is all but impossible, even if the disk features an audio description track which allows them to enjoy and understand the film itself. The problem is, how does the user know how to access the audio description track, or how to choose an episode, or even know which disk is which?

At last month's annual Sight Village conference in Birmingham

Website: <http://www.qac.ac.uk/sightvillage>

for which E-Access Bulletin was the main media partner, a prototype talking DVD disk was unveiled by the RNIB aimed at tackling these problems.

Currently in development in partnership with the BBC, which has implemented it on its new Doctor Who DVDs, the disk automatically starts with audio navigation, and then you use up and down arrows to access spoken commands such as Episode Selection, Play All or Special Features. Other functions reveal how many options there are, and give an overview of the disk's entire contents.

"For the first time, absolutely everything on the disk's menus can be accessed through sound," Joan Greening of the RNIB told delegates.

The Dr Who disks talk as soon as you put them into an ordinary mainstream DVD player. "It says 'Series 1, Disk 3', or whatever, so it is immediately clear which one it is out of a potential jumble of disks. How often have you dropped the lot on the floor?" Greening said, to sympathetic murmurs from the audience.

Greening says the RNIB would like this prototype development work to lead to an industry standard for audio navigation, but it would be a de facto standard rather than a formal technical standard with the RNIB as its guardian. "We just want it to be out there."

As well as audio navigation, which was needed on all disks, as many films as possible needed to be audio described, she said. The whole Doctor Who series is audio-described, following talks with the RNIB, as are around 150 films, most of which are listed on the RNIB website

Website: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/dvd>

Audio description is now part of the mainstream product for these DVDs, something for which the RNIB and other campaigners had been pressing for years, Greening said. "It will normally say on the back of the box if it is audio described".

Notable recent victories for Greening's own long-term, dogged campaigning work for RNIB have been pledges from Buena Vista and Warner Brothers to audio describe all future films, she says. Part of the problem faced has been identifying the right person to lobby in each film company, she says, as most do not have anyone tasked specifically with improving the accessibility of their output. But her persistence has paid off. "I'm like a dog with a bone, I don't give up, and I can pull in people to support us like people from the UK Film Council.

"Without RNIB there would be no audio description in this country, it would not be in the cinemas, it would not be on DVDs. If you ever go to broadcasting meetings, there is never anyone there representing blind people unless we are there. But we're there now at Ofcom and other meetings. Now we're leading the world in audio description.

(E-Access Bulletin August 2006)

DLA CAMPAIGN

DLA – TAKEN FOR A RIDE CAMPAIGN

This is an email I received from the RNIB Campaign Team.

Dear Campaign Supporter

As you may know, RNIB is campaigning to ensure that:

- **Registered blind and partially sighted people are 'pass ported' onto Disability Living Allowance (DLA).**
- **People with serious sight loss are able to claim the higher rate mobility component of DLA, rather than just the lower rate.**
- **Mobility costs are available for newly disabled people over the age of 65**

The Campaign

The campaign was launched on 10 August 2006 with the publication of our report highlighting the injustice of only allowing people with serious sight problems to claim the lower rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Parliamentary activity will start during October, with presentations of the report to both the All Party Eye Health and Visual Impairment Group and the All Party Disability Group. An Early Day Motion (EDM) will be tabled in November.

We are holding a lobby of Parliament on 4 December (working with other organisations). We hope that as many people as possible will attend. We will be encouraging people to write to their MP and will be asking people who are willing to devote more time to this campaign to act as 'Constituency Champions'.

We need to secure your help to make this campaign a success.

Help us to increase your income!

Please could you...:

- **Write to your MP in October about the campaign**
- **Tell them your experiences and what a move from the lower rate to the higher rate mobility component would allow you to do that you can't currently do.**
- **Ask your MP to sign an Early Day Motion supporting the campaign (this will be tabled in Parliament following the Queen's Speech in November).**

Please come along to the Lobby of Parliament on 4 December, the more people that attend the stronger our message to Government will be. RNIB will seek to cover travel costs. Ask your MP to meet you either at the Lobby of Parliament on 4 December or at their constituency surgery.

In September we will send a campaign pack to everyone who has contacted us so far about this campaign. This will contain details of the Lobby of Parliament, of the Early Day Motion, a draft letter to MPs that you may wish to use and a factsheet about the campaign.

If you are willing to write to your MP and haven't already contacted us on this issue, let us know and we will send you the pack in September.

Email: campaign@rnib.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7391 2123

**Kind regards
Helen Dearman
Campaigns Officer**

(RNIB Campaign News August 2006)

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

TACTILE CHRISTMAS CARDS

Sending Christmas cards this year couldn't be easier with RNIB's new collection of brightly coloured tactile cards. Bold, vivid colours make the tactile cards easy to see for those with low vision, whilst the tactile element around the edge of each design allows them to also be distinguished by touch. Sold in packs of eight, there are four designs;

- **Snowflakes**
- **Three wise men**
- **Reindeer**
- **Christmas tree**

The message inside the card is in both large print and Brail le.

Product code: XC 127

Cost: £3.75

WORK

ACCESS TO WORK FUNDING CLOSED TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Disability groups have reacted with dismay to news that Access to Work funding is to be cut for all central government departments. The funding, which has been available since 1994, pays cash sums to employers for modifications or specialist equipment needed by disabled people in the workplace.

"We're very concerned about this, it doesn't augur well for the future," a spokesperson for the Disability Rights Commission (DRC)

Website: <http://www.drc-gb.org/>

told E-Access Bulletin. According to the DRC, payments under the Access to Work scheme have already stopped at the Department for Work and Pensions, the central government body responsible for administering the scheme, and other departments will follow suit.

According to DRC, the cuts will make it more difficult for central government departments meet their own commitments for employing people with disabilities. "They are already miserably off-target," said the spokesperson. In addition, the cuts come at a time of government reforms to the incapacity benefits system aiming to encourage recipients back into work. "Our position is that if this is achieved by punishment, penalties and sanctions, without the support disabled people need it would be brutalism of the worst sort," said the DRC.

According to DWP, the Access to Work funding previously made available to central government will now be paid to private sector employers. However, according to the DRC, the government's efforts to raise awareness of the funding have been poor. "It's been one of the best kept secrets of central government," said the spokesperson. According to a report presented to Parliament in October 2005, three- quarters of British employers have never heard of the scheme

Website: <http://fastlink.headstar.com/mem1>

**(E-Access Bulletin
August 2006)**

YOUR HEALTH**TALKING GLUCOSE METERS**

Some 300 talking glucose meters are to be made available to vision impaired Diabetics on low incomes following a Diabetes UK campaign about the high cost of the device. The price of the Sensocard Plus Meter, which measures blood glucose levels, has been lowered from 150 to 50 pounds and is available from Diabetes UK, among others:

Website: <http://fastlink.headstar.com/diab1>

**(E-Access Bulletin
August 2006)**

LIGHTING IDEAS FROM RNIB**SOME LIGHTING IDEAS**

Lighting couldn't be anymore important than in the dark winter nights that we all know are on their way! RNIB's range of task lights is ideal for improving the amount of light in your home in a variety of circumstances, such as for reading or even cooking in the kitchen.

To order

Telephone: 08457 023 153

FLOOR STANDING LIGHT

This white floor standing light is adjustable with a flexible arm that allows easy positioning of the light over the activity that you are doing. It also has a magnifier on a flexible arm too. Its weighted floor stand with wheels makes it easy to move around, enabling you to position it next to a chair or table or as you choose.

Product code: DH 161

Cost: £57.95

WHITE PORTABLE LAMP

This daylight lamp is lightweight and compact and folds up neatly making it conveniently portable. It's designed for table top use and is ideal for tasks where a good light source is essential.

Product code: DH 217

Cost: £26.95

DESK LAMP WITH FLEXIBLE ARM

A stylish metallic-finish desk lamp with a flexible arm that can be adjusted to the position of your choice. It's ideal for use around the home and can provide better lighting when working at a desk. The oval base has a contrasting black on/off switch for ease of identifying.

Product code: DH 205

Cost: £19.95

FOLDING CRAFT LAMP

Foam energy efficient, portable folding craft lamp which offers natural daylight indoors and shows colours true to life with a natural balance. It's compact and stylish in design and it has an adjustable

arm enabling light to be directed where required. It comes supplied with an energy efficient light tube which has an energy rating of B and which should last up to 10,000 hours.

Product code: DH 226

Cost: £29.95

MINI FLUORESCENT LANTERN

This battery operated mini-fluorescent lantern is ideal for brightening dark corners or cupboards or for short-term use around the home. The lantern can provide additional lighting when reading labels or checking information and comes supplied with a 4-watt fluorescent bulb.

Product code: Not available!

Cost: £5.95

MORE INFORMATION?

For more information about the full range of lights that RNIB can offer, please see their Everyday living catalogue, which can be ordered through Customer Services

Telephone: 08457 023 153.

UPDATE ON 'Articles for the blind' posting rules

NEW 'ARTICLES' REGULATIONS

As you will know by now, there are new regulations for posting letters and packets via Royal Mail. Here are the new regulations for using Articles for the Blind labels.

Royal Mail's free postal service for the blind and partially sighted – what's in it for their customers?

- **They can save money by posting items free of charge**
- **Arrange a collection if it is difficult to get to a Post Office branch**

Who is eligible to use this service?

Anyone who is registered as blind or visually impaired and has a close up vision of, with spectacles, of N12 or less, as certified by a doctor or optician.

Can organisations for the blind apply?

Yes! Contact the Sales Centre for advice or to set up the service.

What can I send?

Only items that have been specially produced for blind and partially sighted people may be sent using the service. This includes:

- **Books, papers and letters, wither embossed or in large print – minimum font size 16 point**
- **Relief maps**
- **Devices used to produce tactile information**

With prior agreement, organisations can also send the following:

- **Talking books and talking newspapers, which are recordings of readings from printed sources, such as books, journals, newspapers, periodicals or similar publications**
- **Equipment used to play or record audio, video and electronic media, ie, talking books and talking newspapers**
- **Computer disks and CDs that have been prepared for blind people**

- **Spoken audio video with added commentary and electronic media**
- **Electronic and optical magnifiers**
- **Games, mathematical devices, watches, clocks, timers and measuring equipment designed for blind people**
- **Stationery for tactile information or for mail**
- **Mobility aids, including sticks and guide dog equipment**
- **Embossed or blank plates for producing tactile information**

What can't I send?

- **Personal communications, except for letters impressed or prepared for blind people**
- **Printed material in a font smaller than 16 point, unless it is a faithful of information that has been transcribed into Braille, tape, CD disk or large print and where it accompanies the transcribed version or the material relates specifically to and accompanies an 'Article for the Blind' item, such as an instruction booklet, guarantee, technical documentation and other similar information.**
- **Music or entertainment more than two minutes or more that ten percent of the duration**

How do I prepare my mail?

- **Write 'Articles for the Blind' and the sender's name and address clearly on the outside.**
- **Leave your mail open or make sure it is easy to open for inspection**

- **If the contents are fragile, you can get permission to seal the package**

How heavy can my package be?

No more than seven kilograms

How large can my package be?

- **If it is rectangular, no larger than 610 mm by 460 mm by 460 mm**
- **If it is cylindrical, the dimensions must be no larger than 900 mm**

How do I arrange a collection?

Telephone: 08457 740 740

Calls are charge at local rates.

Can I post items second class or use special delivery free of charge?

No. Articles for the Blind is available using First Class post only.

Can I claim compensation for damaged or lost items?

No.

Can I send items abroad free of charge?

Yes. You ca send items by either surface mail or air mail. See 'Articles for the Blind' International for more details.

Extra help for you

For clarification on any of the information relating to this product service, please contact the Business and Consumer Markets Helpline

Telephone: 08456 088 588

Note:

The exclusion for compensation has been challenged and Royal Mail has agreed to reconsider the situation.

**(National Talking Express
August 2006)**

SPECIAL OFFER FROM RNIB

VIBRA LIGHT TIMER

Keep track of time with this handy timer which allows you to choose either a beep, flash or vibrating alert when the time has expired. It features a digital display with numbers shown 16 mm (0.63 inches) in height.

It's so handy, that it can be clipped onto a belt or is actually small enough to fit into your pocket. The back of the timer is also magnetic, so you can stick it on your fridge or elsewhere around your home.

The Vibra light timer is available at a specially reduced price of œ7.95 from 1st September to 31st October. It has previously been priced at œ10.95, therefore offering you a great saving of œ3!

Product code: DK 118

Cost: £7.95

Telephone: 08457 023 153

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY!**SIGHT VILLAGE 2007**

The growing success of this annual event, held at the Clarendon Suites in Birmingham is a must for all. Every year there has been an increase in visitor numbers and it's now one of the main events RNIB supports. Organised by Q A C they have announced the dates for next year,

Dates:

17, 18 and 19 July 2007

So make a note in your diaries now!

Website: www.qacsightvillage.org.uk

GADGETS AND GIZMOS**VIBRATING LIQUID LEVEL INDICATOR**

The new vibrating liquid level is now available! It's the same size and design as the audible version but it will vibrate to warn you when liquid reaches the top of your cup. This indicator has a red case.

Product code: DK 98VB

Cost: £5.99

Telephone: 08457 023 153

COMPUTING

VOICE ACTIVATION SOFTWARE OFFERS 99% ACCURACY

A new product from voice technology developer Nuance, Dragon Naturally Speaking 9, offers unprecedented levels of voice control over PCs and handheld devices.

The product

Website: <http://fastlink.headstar.com/dragon1>

which removes the need for keystrokes and mouse movements, is claimed by Nuance to be 20 per cent more accurate than the product it replaces, taking accuracy levels to around 99 per cent.

Naturally Speaking 9 can also process voice input at speeds up to 160 words per minute, which means that it is faster and more precise than typing. Nuance also claims that enhancements to the software eliminate the need for lengthy training to respond properly to the user's voice. The new release integrates with Microsoft Office, Outlook and Internet Explorer, as well as Corel and WordPerfect products. Naturally Speaking is also compatible with popular open source-based products such as Mozilla Firefox and Thunderbird. The product also supports wireless technology, being compatible with Nuance-approved Bluetooth headsets. "It's a tremendous product, there's nothing else like it," Brian Hartgen of TandT Consultancy told E-Access Bulletin.

**(E-Access Bulletin
August 2006)**

FREE SCREEN READER RELEASED

A free screen reader has been launched at Sight Village, the annual vision impairment conference dedicated to blindness issues in Birmingham, UK

The software, called Thunder, which provides all on-screen content as 'spoken' audio output, can be downloaded from Screenreader.net

Website: <http://www.screenreader.net>

a new, non-profit, community interest company (CIC) from Choice Technology. Thunder was developed in partnership with international assistive technology UK company Sensory Software

Website: <http://www.sensorysoftware.com/>

The screen reader is free to individual users, although organisations must pay a yearly subscription according to their size. Users will need a computer running Windows 2000, XP or Vista as well as speakers or headphones. "It will meet most of the needs of many blind users whether beginners or seasoned operators," Roger Wilson-Hinds, co- director of Screenreader.net, told E-Access Bulletin. "Apart from being free to blind home users, there is far less chance of conflict with other software running on a computer. This has very positive support implications and is great for family users" Other screen readers on the market include the widely-used 'JAWS for Windows' from US company Freedom Scientific, which costs 800 pounds and Window Eyes from GW Micro, also in the US, which costs 380 pounds. Another free screen reader 'Orca' is currently under development as the default screen reader of Ubuntu, an operating system based on the Linux open source platform.

"We support anything that will give visually impaired people more access to technology at a lower cost," RNIB's Head of Products and Publications John Godber, in response to the launch.

(E-Access Bulletin
August 2006)

USEFUL WEBSITES**GOOGLE ACCESSIBLE SEARCH SERVICE****GOOGLE RESEARCH LABS LAUNCHES ACCESSIBLE SEARCH SERVICE**

Search engine giant Google has launched a service that prioritises its search results according to the accessibility of web pages it finds. In addition to standard search criteria, Google Accessible Search

Website: <http://labs.google.com/accessible/>

is designed to rank pages according to how much graphic content they contain and how easy they are to navigate using keystrokes only.

According to project leader TV Raman, of Google's research labs, Accessible Search is the first step in the company's strategy to make online content more easily available to people with disabilities. "The launch of Google Accessible search is a positive step towards our overall goal of making the world's information accessible and we're very excited about it," he told E-Access Bulletin.

According to Raman, work on Google Accessible Search is far from finished. "This is an early stage Labs product, and we are planning to enrich our features and functionality based on user feedback," he said. Future developments will include versions tailored to different countries, available in new languages. "Our goal is to provide a more useful and accessible web search for the future and as part of this commitment we'll continue to refine and improve upon Accessible Search in many ways including eventually making it available in other languages and countries," he said.

"In the past, visually challenged and blind Google users have often waded through a lot of inaccessible websites and pages to find the information they want or need. While we still have a lot of work to

do, Accessible Search is an important step and I hope it improves web search accessibility for other people like me who are blind or visually impaired," he said.

Interestingly, entering the search terms "search engine" produces results that rank Google below one of its main competitors MSN, suggesting that the company may need to improve the accessibility of its own web pages.

(E-Access Bulletin
August 2006)

SHOPPING TRIP!

The Tesco website is the only supermarket site to exceed minimum accessibility requirements according to the 'State of the e-nation' report from AbilityNet. The research used manual and automated checks to review accessibility and usability. Morrison's was found to be the second most accessible although visitors cannot buy directly from the site:

Website: <http://fastlink.headstar.com/an1>

(e-Access Bulletin
August 2006)

FREE ONLINE LANGUAGE COURSES

Sprechen ze English?: Free online English and German language courses aimed at vision impaired learners have gone live. Intermediate and advanced courses are offered to native speakers of Czech, English, German, Norwegian, Slovak and Spanish. The courses aim to enhance employment opportunities. The courses have been designed to work on both open source and proprietary browsers:

Website: <http://eurochance.brailcom.org/>

DOLPHIN LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

Dolphin Computer Access Ltd is proud to launch a new website and a new web address:

Website: www.yourdolphin.com

The new site retains its wealth of information about Dolphin and their products, but with the exciting new addition of UK customers being able to purchase software online in a new easier to navigate site. The site also includes access to downloadable brochures, manuals, the latest news headlines from Dolphin, details of events and copies of all past newsletters.

Pocket Hal version 7 due for release on Monday 18th September 2006, also has its own Pocket Hal Tour Mini Site at

Website: <http://phtour.yourdolphin.com/>

Follow the adventures of Dave Williams and his talking PDA (Pocket PC) across more than 10 US States with his regular updates via our Podcast, RSS news feed or online web log.

(Dolphin News, September 2006)

TECHNO TIP

HOW TO FOLLOW A LINK IN MICROSOFT WORD

If you are reading the magazine as a Word document, you might like to know how you can go straight to a web link without having to leave Word and type in the link in Internet Explorer or other browser. So, here's how to do it!

- 1) Find the link you want to follow

- 2) **Highlight the link**
- 3) **Press the Application key. This is the second key from the right, bottom row of the main keyboard section**
- 4) **A menu will open**
- 5) **Arrow down to the option OPEN LINK and press ENTER**
- 6) **After a few seconds the webpage will open in your web browser ready for you to read**

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