ICEVI E-News

World Braille Day Issue

4 January 2026

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Message from the President of ICEVI

Ms Susan La Venture

On World Braille Day, ICEVI reaffirms its long-standing commitment to braille as a foundation for literacy, learning, and participation for children and adults who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision. Braille is central not only to reading and writing, but to access across the curriculum, to independent learning, and to full engagement in education from the early years through to tertiary study and lifelong learning.

As an organisation focused on education, ICEVI recognises that access to braille depends on strong systems: well-prepared teachers, timely assessment, high-quality learning materials, and sustained professional development. Through the Joint ICEVI–WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign, we are working with our members, partners, and regional networks to strengthen these conditions so that braille is available when it is needed, where it is needed, and in forms that support effective teaching and learning.

We are proud to partner with the World Blind Union and many organisations around the world in this shared effort, and we invite educators, researchers, policymakers, families, and learners to join us in advancing the right to braille literacy.

Message from the President of World Blind Union

Mr S. K. Rungta

On World Braille Day, we take this opportunity to emphasize that Braille is not merely a method of reading and writing; it is an essential means by which blind and partially sighted persons realise the right to education, access information, and participate on an equal basis in society. Where Braille instruction is unavailable or delayed, the consequences are all too predictable: reduced literacy outcomes and diminished opportunity, both at school and in the workplace. Ensuring timely access to qualified teachers, appropriate materials, and modern Braille tools is therefore not a matter of charity, but of rights and public responsibility.

We must recognize that technology is best understood as a supplement to Braille, not a substitute for it. Digital innovation can expand availability and efficiency, but it cannot justify the erosion of Braille literacy. Braille also has an important role beyond the classroom, including in the built environment through clear, consistent Braille signage that enables independent navigation. Through “More Braille: More Empowerment”, the World Blind Union, in partnership with ICEVI, will continue to advocate for concrete measures and sustained investment so that Braille access becomes the norm, not the exception. We hope you will join WBU, ICEVI, and all of our partners in this global effort.

Message from The Editor, ICEVI Publications Committee

Dr Frances Gentle

On behalf of the ICEVI Publications Committee, I am pleased to welcome you to this World Braille Day issue of ICEVI E-News, dedicated to the launch of the joint ICEVI–WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign, *More Braille: More Empowerment*.

This issue brings together voices from across our global network who each, in different ways, are working to strengthen access to braille and to affirm its central role in literacy, education, independence, and participation. You will find messages from the Presidents of ICEVI and the World Blind Union, an overview of the campaign and its focus areas, reflections on the lived experience of braille, and reports from regions and partner organisations that are actively contributing to this shared global effort.

Together, these contributions highlight both the progress that is being made and the work that still lies ahead to ensure that every person who needs braille has the opportunity to learn it, use it, and benefit from it throughout life. I hope this issue will inform, inspire, and encourage you to take part, whether by advocating, teaching, researching, developing resources, supporting learners, or sharing your own work.

My sincere thanks go to all contributors, partners, and sponsors who have made this issue — and this campaign — possible, and to you, our readers, for being part of a global community committed to the right to braille literacy.

Sponsors, ICEVI-WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign

We extend our sincere thanks to the organisations that are generously supporting the Global Braille Literacy Campaign. Their commitment and partnership make it possible to advance access to braille literacy across regions and communities worldwide. All funds contributed are used directly to support the activities of the campaign at global and regional levels.

Diamond Sponsor – HumanWare

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Platinum Sponsor – CBM

Braille Builds Futures: Launching a Global Movement

On World Braille Day, 4 January 2026, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) and the World Blind Union (WBU) proudly launch the joint Global Braille Literacy Campaign, More Braille, More Empowerment.

The campaign runs from January 2026 to January 2028 and aims to strengthen access to braille literacy for children, young people, and adults who are blind or have low vision across all regions of the world.

Braille is a foundation for literacy, education, employment, independence, and full participation in society. Yet many individuals still face barriers to accessing braille instruction, qualified teachers, braille technology and learning materials, and supportive policy environments. This campaign responds by bringing together individuals who are blind or visually impaired, and the network of government and non-government organisations, professionals and others who promote their right to braille literacy and work to improve braille access and outcomes worldwide.

The campaign is structured around three interconnected focus areas:

- *Advocacy and Awareness* – promoting braille as a human right and an essential element of inclusive education, and supporting public awareness, policy dialogue, and national and regional advocacy.
- *Information Resources* – strengthening the availability of quality braille resources, professional learning for teachers, and access to braille materials in multiple languages and formats.
- *Research* – building a stronger global evidence base through research, data collection, and sharing effective practices.

The campaign is guided by a joint ICEVI–WBU Steering Committee and implemented through working groups for each of the three focus areas.

Through *More Braille: More Empowerment*, ICEVI and WBU invite the global community to join in ensuring that every person who needs braille has the opportunity to learn it, use it, and benefit from it — at school, at work, and throughout life.

A Personal Reflection

Braille is Magic

Dr Judit Gombás

I am a blind teacher. I am a blind mum. I am the blind boss in my kitchen. I am a blind friend. I am a blind volunteer.

Braille is strongly related to all my roles:

- I make braille notes on paper which guide me through my lectures and courses,
- When my son was younger, I used to read to him tales from ’normal’ picture books, and the words in braille were glued on the pages on transparent plastic sheets,
- I use a large variety of spices, grains and different kinds of flower, which I keep in containers labelled with braille,
- I love to play cards, and no one should see my cards during the game, of course,
- I often arrange inclusive day trips for groups of hikers with and without a visual impairment. Better not trust my memory, so my backpack contains a braille list of participants.

You may say I am old fashioned and should improve my digital skills. You are right!

But I love to touch a nicely formatted text on paper.

I love to smell freshly printed braille books.

I love that my hardcopy notes are available any time – no electricity needed.

I love that I could read this short piece of text out to you in the dark woods, too.

Braille is always there for me. Isn't that fantastic?

Braille is knowledge.

Braille is empowerment.

Braille is fun.

Braille is autonomy.

Braille is magic!

News from the ICEVI Regions

Latin America Region

Ms Gladys Correa, President, ICEVI Latin America

ICEVI Latin America, as a regional body of ICEVI, actively joins the Global Braille Literacy Campaign "More Braille – More Empowerment" through a range of actions that will be carried out in the 17 countries where we have established delegations in the region. This participation is grounded in the firm conviction that children who are blind, or who have residual vision that is not functional for reading and writing, have the inalienable right to be educated through the code that offers them the greatest benefits: the Braille System.

There is no other form of direct access to reading and writing, nor to the intellectual development promoted by these skills, than through the Braille System. Therefore, replacing its instruction, postponing it, or avoiding it altogether entails a significant loss of future opportunities for personal, educational, and social development.

Considering that in our region the teaching of the Braille System is, in many cases, carried out by professionals who do not have specific training in its didactics, a 120-hour diploma program on Braille didactics will be launched in 2026, in coordination with Mondragón University of Mexico. This training initiative seeks to strengthen the competencies of those who are currently engaged in this task, since teaching the system without adequate knowledge often results in many children, adolescents, and young people failing to achieve functional use of Braille in everyday life, replacing it prematurely with technology and thereby losing a key tool for empowerment in the adult life of persons with visual impairment.

In addition, a diploma program focused on criteria for the preparation of tactile materials and transcription into the Braille System will be developed, with the aim of unifying braille standards across the different countries of the region. This will allow braille materials produced in one country to be printed and used in others, avoiding

duplication of efforts and generating regional synergy that will significantly expand the availability of accessible titles.

Furthermore, within the framework of the intense work the region has been carrying out with a group of young people, a series of videos will be produced in which they will share their experiences and the advantages of having been educated in Braille. These materials will be made available to the global campaign as living testimonies of the system's transformative impact.

ICEVI Latin America continuously carries out awareness-raising activities about the importance of Braille literacy and its sustained use throughout life. In this regard, during the years 2026 and 2027, we will continue to promote and contribute new initiatives within the framework of this campaign, reaffirming our commitment to the right to literacy, autonomy, and empowerment of persons with visual impairment throughout the region.

North America and Caribbean Region

Dr Michael Bina, President, ICEVI North America and Caribbean

The ICEVI North America and Caribbean (NA/C) region is proud to report that we are actively planning and enthusiastically implementing ICEVI-WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign activities and initiatives.

In Canada our colleagues are organizing a World Braille Day virtual celebration. They are working on "Braille Boost" which is an archive of free braille and tactile graphics files. These include activities such as puzzles and word games. They are in the process of posting them to their World Braille Days 2026 website.

In addition for the month of January on Louis Braille's birthday, Canadians will celebrate the gift he gave the world through efforts of The Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC), Alternate Education Resources Ontario (AERO), Braille Literacy Canada (BLC), the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB), the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA), the CNIB Beyond Print, CNIB Foundation, the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS), and the Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI). These organizations are pleased to collaborate on and celebrate World Braille Day.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association (TTBWA) has been highlighting the ICEVI-WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign on the TTBWA Facebook page. In addition, they are planning other public awareness activities. They are sharing information to ensure Braille remains relevant and accessible for persons who are blind and deaf blind.

In the United States, our NA/C board members have forwarded the ICEVI-WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign information to all of our partnering organizations as

is being done in Canada. We are encouraging that each of the organizations, associations, schools, and agencies share the Campaign's information and organize and implement awareness and involvement activities. The organizations that were sent information are the Council of Schools for the Blind, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, VisionServe (private agencies and schools), the American Foundation for the Blind, the American Printing House for the Blind, the American Council of the Blind, the National Federation of the Blind, and the Blind Veterans Association.

The NA/C region appreciates the vision and leadership of ICEVI and the WBU in organizing this world-wide effort to promote braille, a critically essential code that can ensure accessibility, inclusion, and academic and career success allowing individuals to reach their highest potential.

Africa Region

Mr Komivi Ayassou, President, ICEVI Africa

Partnership between ICEVI Africa and CBM

In 2023, ICEVI Africa and CBM entered into a three-year partnership to improve access to quality education for people with visual impairment, including those with blindness, low vision, deafblindness, and those with additional disabilities, in Africa. This reflects a shared vision of both organisations. Under this partnership, CBM has supported and strengthened the work of ICEVI Africa by improving training materials and resources for teachers and other people who serve learners with visual impairment. The partnership has focused on meeting the capacity development needs of educators, CBM partners, and other organisations working in the area of education.

CBM has extended this partnership with ICEVI Africa to include sponsorship of the ICEVI–WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign in Africa.

2nd ICEVI Africa Conference

The International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment – Africa (ICEVI Africa) is pleased to announce the 2nd ICEVI Africa Conference on the Education of People with Visual Impairment in Africa, to be held in South Africa from 28 September to 1 October 2026.

The conference will bring together practitioners in education and related sectors, including policymakers, technology developers and suppliers, educational service providers, researchers, teachers, learners, and consumer representatives, to engage on the improvement of education for people with visual impairment in Africa.

Additional information on the conference, including the call for papers, participant registration, program, conference venue and rates, will be published soon.

Improving Performance in Mathematics among Learners with Visual Impairment

At the 2025 *STEMtastic Adventures! Africa* Symposium, co-hosted by the Education Alliance, the Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTEA), and the African Union Development Agency–NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD), ICEVI Africa presented an innovative pilot initiative at Thika High School for the Blind in partnership with the Smiley Foundation.

The initiative aims to address one of the greatest barriers to educational equity in Africa: low uptake and performance in Mathematics among learners with visual impairment. Despite progress in inclusive education, STEM uptake among learners with visual impairment remains low, limiting access to higher education and career diversity. The presentation highlighted the initial results of the pilot, challenges, and recommendations, and included a call to action to break barriers and support inclusive education. With the right tools, visually impaired learners can excel in STEM subjects.

Pacific Region

Mr Ben Clare, Co-President, South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment

The ICEVI-WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign offers the opportunity to reflect on initiatives that are having a positive impact on access to Braille as well as examining ongoing barriers that continue to prevent access to education and overall societal inclusion for people who are blind.

I have worked for more than 20 years in several Pacific countries on initiatives to increase braille literacy by supporting teachers, students, and family members. Through this work — and in my own life as a braille user — I have experienced the true power of braille and the many opportunities it creates, opening doors to education, employment, independence, and participation.

In the Pacific region, access to Braille literacy faces formidable barriers that are commonplace worldwide. Cost, lack of access to Braille production equipment, skilled trainers and competition from audio and digital devices such as smartphones all contribute to existing barriers, enforced by geography and large numbers of blind people not formally connected to support services. Despite these challenges, the demand for increased Braille literacy is growing.

In countries such as Tonga, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, and Papua New Guinea, disability-led advocacy groups and small service providers routinely offer basic braille literacy training to learners and members when the necessary equipment and expertise are available. In many cases, these groups recognise the strong benefits of

braille and advocate locally and globally for increased opportunities for learners and trainers.

It is also widely recognised that learning braille at school strengthens later use of digital technology, so braille and technology work together rather than being in competition. In my own experience, students who are braille-literate are more confident spellers and have a stronger understanding of sound-based learning, which greatly improves their learning experiences and outcomes.

In recent years, advantages of the Marrakesh Treaty are becoming increasingly familiar with formal training being completed in Fiji and Samoa and planned for Solomon Islands in 2026. While I conducted the initial training, local advocacy organisations regularly conduct Marrakesh Treaty workshops for the benefit of members and the wider public and these groups work closely with relevant government authorities on ratification and implementation.

Currently, implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty into local copyright laws is the biggest challenge, including for the small number of regional nations who have ratified the Treaty. In Samoa and Fiji, the Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) is working with national advocacy groups and service providers to establish digital and Braille libraries which will be made available to all blind people in these countries. To maximise positive impact and sustainability, I continue to work with these partners to ensure Braille literacy is taught to learners, including upskilling trainers and support teachers. This is accomplished through a combination of face to face and remote learning using the UEB Online courses.

In my role as Co-President of the South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI), I see how the association — through its dynamic membership across Australia, New Zealand, the South Pacific, and beyond — actively supports the right to braille literacy. This includes actions such as publishing our SPEVI Braille Literacy Position Statement and recognising braille as an essential tool for blind learners and for teachers of students with vision impairment, as reflected in the SPEVI Professional Standards Elaborations for Specialist Teachers (VI) developed with expertise from our members and sector partners.

News from Members of the Braille Campaign Steering Committee

The ICEVI–WBU Global Braille Literacy Campaign is guided by a Steering Committee that brings together leaders from ICEVI and the World Blind Union, along with representatives from key partner organisations and regions. The Steering Committee provides strategic direction, supports coordination across the three focus areas of the campaign, and ensures that the work remains inclusive, collaborative,

and responsive to global, regional and national priorities. Through shared leadership and regular consultation, the Committee helps to strengthen global cooperation in advancing the right to braille literacy worldwide.

Presented below are contributions from two of the organisations represented on the Steering Committee.

The International Council on English Braille

The International Council on English Braille (ICEB) was founded in 1991 and provides a forum for international cooperation among those countries that use English-language braille. It is the body responsible for Unified English Braille (UEB) and its members currently include braille authorities from Australia, Canada, Ireland, Nepal, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. *The Rules of Unified English Braille Third Edition 2024* is the definitive source of rules for the Unified English Braille code (UEB), which is maintained by ICEB and adopted by braille authorities throughout the English-speaking world. ICEB assists countries to establish standard-setting bodies in relation to braille codes and practices. In addition, through its various committees (such as UEB Code Maintenance, music and technology) it works towards the development and adoption of international minimum standards for the production and teaching of braille.

A General Assembly is held once every four years, with a midterm face-to-face meeting of the ICEB Executive Committee taking place two years into each term. The next face-to-face meeting is the upcoming Midterm Executive Committee Meeting, which is being hosted by the United States and will be held at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts from August 10-13, 2026.

If you'd like to learn more about braille on the international stage, visit www.iceb.org or write to info@iceb.org.

ICEB produces a newsletter under the direction of Jen Goulden and the Public Relations Committee, which is chaired by Stuart Lawler of Ireland. The newsletter is jam-packed with all sorts of braille-related events and information from around the world. We welcome suggestions, so if you would like to contribute to the newsletter or if you have ideas for items that could be included in future issues, please write to info@iceb.org.

To receive the newsletter, UEB updates and other announcements directly into your inbox, we invite you to subscribe to our one-way announce list by writing to iceb-announce+subscribe@groups.io.

You can also follow us on Facebook, or on Twitter and Mastodon at @ICEBbraille.

Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Samual Foulkes, Director of Braille Production and Accessible Innovation

Organizations all around the world are coming together for ICEVI's Global Braille Literacy Campaign. By combining resources and working together toward a shared goal, Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired is confident we will reach what the campaign promises—More Braille: More Empowerment. This year-long campaign begins as we celebrate World Braille Day and will continue strengthening efforts in highlighting braille's continuing relevance in the digital era, encouraging collaboration across countries and regions, and amplifying the voices of braille users worldwide, encouraging educators to learn and teach braille.

Clovernook Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired is a proud partner of this campaign. Recognized as the highest volume producer of braille in the world, this Cincinnati-based printing house has an international outreach and regularly produces an average of 30 million braille pages per year. As a global leader in braille production and a dedication to its growing international program, Clovernook is excited to participate in this worldwide dedication to advancing braille literacy.

Introducing our Campaign Sponsors

HumanWare - Diamond Sponsor

For nearly 35 years, HumanWare's inspirational vision has resulted in the development of more than 50 highly intuitive and intelligent solutions that change the lives of people living with visual impairment and vision loss. To use at home, in the

classroom or in the workplace, our technology has helped more than 1 million people worldwide to see things differently and live independently.

Founded in 1988, HumanWare is a Canadian-based company part of the EssilorLuxottica group since 2013. Recognized as an industry leader, our mission is to develop solutions enabling people living with visual impairment and vision loss to develop their potential and maintain their autonomy. Through the dedication of our employees and partners in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia and a worldwide distribution network, we improve the quality of life for our customers by promoting literacy, inclusion, and accessibility.

Dot Inc - Platinum Sponsor

At Dot Inc, we are proud to be a Platinum Sponsor of the Global Braille Literacy Campaign, launching on World Braille Day, 4 January 2026, led by the World Blind Union (WBU) and International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI). Supporting this campaign, and its message of “More Braille More Empowerment”, strongly aligns with our values and with our own 2026 focus, “Dots Change Lives.” At Dot, we believe that all blind and low vision people should have access to braille and tactile resources. Braille is fundamental to building literacy, opening pathways to education and employment, and supporting full participation in society. We also believe that reading by touch and technology are strongest when they work together, and that everyone deserves access to reading in a form they can truly use.

Through the Global Braille Literacy Campaign, we are proud to stand alongside braille readers, families, educators, advocates and technologists around the world. By working together as a global community, we believe we can raise awareness of the importance of braille and help achieve a more literate, inclusive future for blind and low vision people everywhere.

About Dot Inc

Dot Inc is a global accessible technology company committed to advancing braille literacy through innovation. Our flagship product, the Dot Pad, is a multiline tactile display that enables blind users to read, learn and engage with digital content through dynamic braille and tactile graphics. The Dot Pad supports access to text, diagrams and images, helping to remove barriers to learning, employment and independent access to information.

To find out more about the Dot Pad, visit:
https://www.dotincorp.com/en/product/dotpadx

CBM – Platinum Sponsor

CBM is an international development and humanitarian organisation dedicated to improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities in the world's poorest countries. With an estimated 1.3 billion people with significant disabilities worldwide, the need for inclusive development is more critical than ever. Nearly 80% of these persons live in low- and middle-income countries, where access to basic services and opportunities is often limited.

Our efforts are vital because persons with disabilities face many barriers, including inaccessible health facilities, which are up to six times more difficult to navigate. In addition, children with disabilities, who number nearly 240 million worldwide, are often denied basic rights and opportunities such as education and healthcare. Join us in creating an inclusive world where all persons with disabilities can enjoy their human rights and reach their full potential.

With over 115 years of experience working alongside persons with disabilities globally, we strive to remove the barriers that marginalise them in low and middle-income countries of the world.

Braille in Action — Share Your Work

ICEVI and WBU warmly invite readers to share their own activities, projects, and initiatives that promote the right to braille literacy in their schools, communities, organisations, and countries. Whether you are working in early childhood, schools, adult education, libraries, technology, advocacy, or research, your experiences and ideas are valuable and can inspire others around the world. By sharing what you are doing, you help strengthen our collective knowledge, build connections across regions, and support the global movement for more equitable access to braille.

Contact Us

To learn more about ICEVI and what we do, please visit our website, https://icevi.org, or contact the ICEVI Secretariat, email info@icevi.org.

To learn more about the joint ICEVI-WBU global braille literacy campaign, or to subscribe to the E-News or braille campaign email lists, please visit our dedicated webpage, https://icevi.org/icevi-wbu-global-braille-literacy-campaign/