Putting it all Together

The classic music of the Eagles rocks out over the radio, while the presses thump away rhythmically in the room next door. Periodically the clack-clack-clack of paper against wood announces that stacks of pages are being shuffled into tidiness. This is the collating department at National Braille Press, where individual pages of braille become books.

Supervisor Danusa Lesqueve and collators Marlene Brewington, Elizabeth Bouvier, Helen Fahey, Tracey Reynolds, and Joan Souza collectively have 119 years of experience at the Press. Over the years, improvements in their technique have created a smooth-functioning team.

When the braille sheets come off the presses, they are brought to the collating department, with hundreds of copies of the first page-spread in one stack, hundreds of copies of the next page-spread in another. The stacks are laid out in order on long tables. Starting at one end, a collator picks up one page from each stack, walking down the table, and deposits them at the end of the row. A second collator then takes that stack, making sure all the edges align, and folds it in half. A third person operates the stitcher—basically, a four-foot-tall stapler—where two stitches along the spine bind it together.

About half of the Press's collators are blind, and half are sighted. Even the sighted employees need to know how to read braille numbers, to check their work as they go—but this is an area where the blind employees have the advantage, since they can more easily understand the context of their work. Nonetheless, some of the Press's print/braille children's books that include the original print pages can provide a good opportunity for volunteers. The Press augments its collating capacity with evening and weekend corporate volunteer projects.

The work done in this department is rarely mentioned in the thanks we receive from readers—who notices that page 37 comes after page 36? But it's essential to the quality the Press strives for in every aspect of our work. And after so many people at the Press have worked on a particular book, it is the collators who get the satisfaction of packing the finished product neatly into boxes, to send to waiting readers.

Angela Kessler

Thank You!

We are very thankful to the 250 of you who opened your hearts and your checkbooks during the month of December.

Besides being a seasonable time to share your good fortune, these year-end gifts also reduced your taxable income for last year. Now we are nearing the end of the Press's tax year, and we still need to raise $92,000.

You can help by sending a donation by March 31.

Please help us ensure that we can continue to produce braille books that are fully underwritten, so that blind children and adults pay only the retail price that their sighted peers pay. As always, your gifts are tax-deductible.
Remember when you were a little kid and believed in magic? What a thrill when your uncle reached behind your ear and grabbed a quarter! And it was a different sort of thrill when you learned a trick or two yourself: you could show off a card trick to your family, or amaze your friends by sticking a needle into a balloon without popping it.

Children are naturally curious about the world around them, and are fascinated by magic tricks. But can a blind child learn how to do magic tricks? Isn’t magic mostly dependent on optical illusions, or sleight-of-hand tricks? Not at all. Masked in fun, magic tricks involve scientific principles, logic, and, well, tricking your audience into assuming something that isn’t true.

There are also many theories on how magic can play a role in a child’s development of physical, social, and academic skills. Performing simple tricks can help a child improve his coordination and bond with other children. There is no reason why blind children should not be given these same opportunities.

To bring these thrills to blind children, the Press has recently published two books of magic tricks, *My First Bag of Tricks* and *12 Amazing Tricks*. The first comes with a set of props, including a magic wand; the second set of tricks uses props from around your house. Both have been specially adapted for blind children by Anna Dresner, a blind author who has written for us before.

The books are available on our website, www.braille.com, for $15 and $5. Why not introduce the young blind person in your life to the wonderful world of magic!

*Lissa Hirshson*

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**Can a blind child learn how to do magic tricks? Absolutely!**

**We receive a steady stream of letters and email telling us how our books and services have touched people’s lives. These thanks really belong to you, since it is only with your support that we are able to do this work. Letters may be edited for space considerations.**

I know I’d be lost without my braille.

-*John, in New York, New York*

[From Cindy Rogers, who spoke at our *Hands On!* event in September]

Last week was one of the most magical weeks of my life! . . . It is essential that the message about braille literacy is promoted every day to everyone who will listen, and even those who don’t. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your message.

-*Cindy, in Chandler, Arizona*

I find every issue [of *Syndicated Columnists Weekly*] informative, thought provoking, and sometimes challenging. That’s why I renew my subscription every two years.

-*Jeri, in Colorado Springs, Colorado*

I truly enjoy *Our Special*, and have used material from it in classes while teaching. Thank you so much for putting out such a great magazine.

-*Olga, in Grand Forks, North Dakota*

Thank you so very much for helping me find a braille teacher for my daughter Lindsey . . . We are very fortunate that we were directed to you. You have been so helpful and so nice to talk to.

-*Marlene, in Framingham, Massachusetts*
Hands On! Gala a Success

National Braille Press celebrated its second annual Hands On! Books for Blind Children gala on September 27 at The State Room in downtown Boston. Nearly 450 guests helped raise $730,000 to help put more books in the hands of blind children.

National Braille Press values our donors’ resources, and we are proud to report that nearly 80% of the money raised through Hands On! is going directly to our programs for children and youth.

Mark your calendar for September 2007!
For the past five years, the Team With a Vision event has drawn more and more runners and walkers. Excitement is building as we approach this year with a new date, a new location in Boston's Fenway neighborhood, and the more succinct event name Vision 5K.

Dave McGillivray, Race Director of the Boston Marathon, saw the potential in this event, and is working to build Vision 5K into one of Boston's premier race events. “I am thrilled to be involved with the 2007 race, and look forward to bringing it to new heights within the running industry,” he says.

Vision 5K is a partnership between National Braille Press, the Carroll Center for the Blind, the Greater Boston Guild for the Blind, MAB Community Services, and Perkins School for the Blind. Working together, we can raise more awareness and funds for blind and visually impaired people.

Runners and walkers of all levels of ability are encouraged to participate. It takes most people between 20 minutes and an hour to complete the course. Adding to the festivities will be a Kids’ Fun Run, a Feast on the Fenway provided by area restaurants, and performances by notable local musical groups.

We invite you to run or walk to support the Press’s work for braille literacy. We invite you to take up the challenge of raising sponsorships for your efforts. But most of all, we invite you to join us on what promises to be a great day of community and individual achievement!

Angela Kessler

Count Me In!

☐ Please send me information on participating in the race on June 2, 2007, as a runner, walker, or race-day volunteer. The first 1,500 people to register at www.vision5k.org will receive a free T-shirt!

☐ Yes! I want to sponsor Bill Raeder's team.

Please accept my donation of $_________.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

E-MAIL

Return to: National Braille Press
Attn: Vision 5K
88 Saint Stephen St.
Boston, MA 02115

For more information:
Jennifer Stewart
617-266-6160 ext. 36
www.vision5k.org

Running Blind

Courtney Henry got a surprise last year. The Lexington Tab writer volunteered to guide Francis Thuo for one leg of the 5K race because the Kenyan runner’s regular guide was ill. But when the previous—exhausted—guide passed on the wrist tether, Courtney “was jerked forward much like a dog might jerk their master when they see a squirrel.” After a quarter-mile of sprinting to keep up with Francis’s distance pace, Courtney too began to lag.

Blindness certainly doesn’t affect Francis’s legs. In fact, Courtney’s account of the episode barely mentions his blindness, focusing instead on the fact that “he looked like one of those guys that you see in Nike commercials.” This is what Vision 5K offers blind athletes: a place where they can be athletes first, and blind only incidentally.

Kenyan Francis Thuo races for the finish.
The MathWorks Helps NASA, Then Takes on Dr. Seuss

Do you listen to National Public Radio? If so, you may have heard of the MathWorks, creators of MATLAB and Simulink software, recently used in planning NASA’s Mars rover landing. At National Braille Press, they’ve taken on a different role: helping build children’s books.

Liz Callanan, corporate relations manager at the company, attended our Volunteer Leadership Open House in June 2006 and was impressed with what she saw. “I was inspired by the example of Bingham McCutchen’s involvement. I believed this was something the MathWorks people would want to be a part of” she says.

Later that summer MathWorks volunteers came to the Press to help with our ReadBooks! Because Braille Matters outreach project. They put thousands of adhesive braille labels on the classic Dr. Seuss board book Mr. Brown Can Moo, Can You? Thanks to their help, young blind children all over the country will get early exposure to braille as their parents share this funny story with them. The MathWorks then returned in December, helping put together a print/braille storybook about Rosa Parks.

Volunteer groups are key to allowing the Press to make print/braille books. And it’s a great way to introduce new people to our work. “It’s really a win-win situation,” says Callanan. “We’re able to support literacy for blind children, and at the same time our MathWorks staff volunteers have a chance to learn about an organization’s operations and services. As a company, we’re pleased to support our greater community; assisting the Press is a good example of this.”

Justin Byron
Change is in the Air
Trustees Announce that Bill Raeder, President of the Press for 31 Years, Plans to Retire

Think back to your first contact with National Braille Press. Chances are good that William M. Raeder was leading the organization at that time. Brought on board in 1975, he has shaped the Press into what it is today. Now the Board of Trustees has announced that after three decades of leadership, Bill has asked to retire.

How do you replace the institution that is Bill Raeder? The solution begins with a strong succession committee of successful leaders who have the utmost respect and caring for Bill, his staff, and the Press’s mission—and we have one.

Bill’s leadership has made a deep mark on the work and reputation of National Braille Press. In addition to turning the budget around from red to black, he brought the Press into the computer age and then the age of the Internet. He helped complete our transformation into an internationally known publishing house of original braille material. Our braille schoolbook initiative, launched under his direction, makes us the first company that many testing publishers and state departments of education think of when they need braille. And his leadership is also evident in our increasing focus on braille outreach and advocacy, through our Hands On! Books for Blind Children programs.

But now other adventures call. Besides leading the Press to new heights, in recent years Bill has hiked up mountains and skied down them. He hints that he would like to explore the world while he’s still young enough to enjoy it.

The Press is in a strong position to navigate this transition. Our recent strategic planning efforts have clarified where the organization should be going, and what needs to be done in order to get there.

Francis Ierardi led the Press for our first 38 years. Bill Raeder has led the past 31. Our newly formed succession committee will respect the past while delivering a great leader for the future. And your support and trust will carry us through the transition.

Angela Kessler

How do you replace the institution that is Bill Raeder?
Fortunately, the Press is in a strong position to navigate this transition.