

**WBU E-BULLETIN**

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## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE E-BULLETIN

We welcome articles from the regions and from members who wish to share their good news with the rest of the world. Our next deadline for content is **April 2nd,** **2018.** We accept submissions in English, French, and Spanish in electronic format. Please note that we retain the right to edit submissions due to space limitations. Send your news to: [Terry.Mutuku@wbu.ngo](mailto:Terry.Mutuku@wbu.ngo)

# PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Let me begin by congratulating Mr. Jose María Viera. Jose has been selected to be our next CEO following the retirement of Dr. Penny Hartin later this spring. Jose brings a wealth of experience in international advocacy and a deep personal dedication to expanding opportunities for blind and partially sighted children and adults around the world. Jose and his wife and new daughter is expected to move to Toronto in April to begin the transition. We welcome Jose and wish him all the best as he assumes the position of Chief Executive Officer.

In December, Dr. Penny Hartin spoke at the opening ceremonies for the International Day of Persons with disabilities representing civil society and the disability community at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Her presentation brought attention to the civil and human rights challenges facing people with disabilities and, in particular, the problems facing blind and partially sighted children and adults.

Last month, we were notified that the World Blind Union will be featured by the Zero Project, an initiative of the Essl Foundation, for our work on the Marrakesh Treaty and its implementation. I have been asked to speak at the Zero Project’s annual conference in February, 2018, and present the WBU’s work around the Marrakesh Treaty and provide information about resources that can assist countries in the ratification process.

The Zero Project focuses on the rights of persons with disabilities globally and provides a platform where the most innovative and effective solutions to problems people with disabilities face are shared. Held at the UN in Vienna, the Zero Project Conference typically brings together 500 delegates from more than 70 countries around the world.

The World Blind Union continues to be the voice of the blind throughout the world. We speak out against injustice and promote equal opportunity for all blind and partially sighted people. Recently, in Nepal, the government announced a ban on blind Everest climbers. While very few blind people will ever undertake such an effort, it is worth noting that the only blind Everest climber to make the attempt, Erick Weihenmayer, made it to the top safely and has gone on to summit the highest peaks on all of the world’s continents. (Read press release on the [WBU website](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/news/Pages/Blind-People-Condemn-Nepal's-Ban-on-Blind-Everest-Climbers.aspx)).

In the greater scheme of things, the ban on blind Everest climbers may seem small, but it is symptomatic of the pervasive problem of blind people suffering lack of opportunity based on nothing more than the assumptions of others. In large and small ways, the World Blind Union continues to stand up for the rights of blind people everywhere to live full and productive lives free from the artificial limitations imposed on us by others. We defend the right of blind people to climb Mount Everest; we defend the right of blind children to be educated; we defend the right of blind adults to work. In short, we stand up for justice and the dignity that comes from full and equal participation.

We have made remarkable progress, but there is still much to do, and it will take the collected hard work and dedication of all of us to achieve true equality. As the new year begins, let us all – each and every one of us - redouble our efforts to advance opportunities for blind and partially sighted people everywhere.

*Dr. Fredric K. Schroeder*

*President, WBU*

# WBU NEWS

# Q&A WITH WBU'S INCOMING CEO MR. JOSE MARIA VIERA

1. **What inspires your commitment to the WBU mission?**

I believe in the key role World Blind Union plays both nationally and internationally to ensure that our voice is heard. My personal commitment is to ensure that all blind and partially sighted people live the life we choose irrespective of our social, political, economic, cultural, backgrounds. I believe the WBU is the perfect channel that allows us to speak on our behalf. We are strong, well organized and with our own unique agenda and that is definitely an asset in our daily work. My commitment is to contribute to the WBU agenda and represent as many blind and partially sighted people as possible globally.

1. **What will be your priorities when you join WBU?**

To continue what has been done in the right direction and to try to improve what I think is needed. Overall, WBU has come a long way in advocating for improving the lives of blind and partially sighted people. I think now is the time to take the organisation one step up and work in collaboration with our members; to explore new areas and to develop new partnerships that will enable us to perform better and more efficiently. We need to pay more attention to what our regions need and spread the WBU mission widely.

1. **What would you like to achieve in the next few years?**

A more representative organization that can simultaneously deal with issues from diverse geographical areas of the world. A WBU that can represent those who do not have Jobs and to advocate for a more inclusive technology.

1. **What are some of the challenges you have confronted in serving the human rights cause?**

Often, our members see that the WBU is far a way from their needs therefore, they do not see the benefits of being part of our organization. I think we need to transform this perspective to a scenario where we all understand that WBU exists because our members exist and contribute to a bigger and more inclusive organization. We should no longer wait to see what WBU can do for us but what we can do for the WBU. This will evolve WBU into a bigger and stronger organization and our needs will be better handled, and new solutions will be achieved.

1. **What drives you to this cause?**

The deep conviction that we are responsible to improve our lives and the lives of people like us. We own our future thus we need to construct our future.

1. **What was your childhood ambition?**

Since I was a child I really wanted to devote my life to create a better world for all. I always saw enormous mistakes and discriminations. I wanted to create a better place to live. A place where we respect each other.

1. **Who was or still is your mentor?**

Fortunately, I have a long list of mentors from whom I have learnt different things. My mother taught me the most important lesson I have ever learnt: When you want something, you need to do everything needed to achieve it. Also one of my elementary school teacher gave me the tools I need to interact well with my colleagues and that is still something that I remember and I use to-date. In general, people with whom I have shared different Jobs with have given me the tools that I still use; to learn to listen to people, to be flexible and available when needed, etc. Rather than having one or two mentors, I like to learn from everyone I come across in my life because I believe we all have something to learn and to teach.

1. **What is your greatest achievement(s)?**

It is hard to identify specific achievements. I think they are collective achievements which are more important than those which are individual. For example, to have a more inclusive election process in my home town is something that I think was one of my most relevant recent achievement. Many people may be asking why? But where I live the elections were never accessible before our intervention. We strongly advocated for an inclusive system and after long and sometime frustrating discussions, we finally got it. At last we can fully participate in our political life.

1. **What message(s) would you like to convey to the WBU members**

We have such a powerful organisation. We now need to take the World Blind Union to the next step and that is making it greater and more representative. To achieve this, we all need to work collaboratively and be convinced that we are responsible for our future. We have the ability to change our future. We just need to do it.

**Background**

Mr. Viera, from Córdoba, Argentina, has been appointed by the World Blind Union Officers as the incoming CEO following the retirement of our current CEO Dr. Penny Hartin. He will take up his position sometime in April.

Mr. Viera has solid experience in human rights, inclusive development and management of disability organizations. Before he was appointed CEO, he has been serving as the Human Rights Policy Advisor for the WBU since February 2016. Previously, he was the Regional Coordinator for Latin America Disability Rights Promotion International, York University, Canada. He has also worked as a Consultant for the UNCRPD Committee, a Program coordinator of the Disability Office, Social Development Agency in Cordoba, Argentina, an associate Professor of the International Relations Department at the Siglo 21 University, Argentina and as a program officer at the Siglo 21 University.

In addition, Mr. Viera served as an affiliate or volunteer in the following positions: President of the National Federation of the Blind in Argentina; Secretary for Vocational Training and Employment for Latin-America Blind Union, and Secretary General of the National Federation of the Blind, Argentina.

Mr. Viera has a Masters degree in Management of Development from Torino University, Italy and a Bachelor of International Relations from Siglo 21 University, Argentina. He was also an international Student at Roehampton University, London and has International Baccalaureate from Lester B. Pearson College, Canada.

# WBU CEO SPEAKS AT UN CEREMONIES ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The World Blind Union CEO, Dr. Penny Hartin, addressed the UN at the opening ceremony of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities held in New York, December 1. In her speech, she focused on achievements and challenges facing people with disabilities, particularly women.

Dr. Hartin emphasized the importance of including women with disabilities in the planning and delivery of programs and services that build a fully inclusive society. "It is critical to address the unique needs of women and girls with disabilities and undertake measures to ensure their full and equal participation," she said. For that to happen, "women with disabilities must be encouraged and facilitated to assume leadership roles."

Dr. Hartin also highlighted the significance of inclusive technology and observed that most technology is too expensive and out of reach for most people with disabilities. "Technology can offer a promise of increased inclusion, but only if we find ways to make it accessible and affordable," said Dr. Hartin.

At the same time, she acknowledged the progress achieved over the past few years towards inclusion of people with disabilities particularly UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and global development agendas such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction. However, she stressed that these international instruments can only make a difference if they are fully embraced at international, regional, national and community levels through strong implementation and monitoring processes.

Read the full speech on the [WBU website](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/news/Pages/WBU-CEO's-Remarks-for-International-Day-of-Persons-with-Disabilities-opening-ceremonies,-UN-Headquarters,-NewYork-%E2%80%93-Decembe.aspx).

# THE WBU RIGHT TO READ CAMPAIGN WELCOMES NEW LEADERSHIP

By Dr. Penny Hartin, CEO, World Blind Union

Following nearly ten years of leading the World Blind Union Right to Read Campaign, Maryanne Diamond, Chair of the Campaign, decided to step down at the end of 2017. Maryanne provided huge leadership to the WBU and the Right to Read team as we worked with partners to advocate for and then achieve the Marrakesh Treaty in 2013.

Attending WIPO meetings in Geneva over many years to advocate for and debate the proposed Treaty and then leading the WBU delegation at the WIPO Diplomatic conference held in Marrakesh Morocco in 2013, Maryanne’s commitment to ensuring that the Treaty would actually be able to make a difference in the lives of blind and partially sighted people around the world was a key driver in ensuring that our objectives could be met. The result of that hard work is that the WBU achieved the Marrakesh Treaty despite resistance and the belief by many that it could not be done; the Treaty came into force as a binding Convention in September 2016 and we have now achieved 33 ratifications worldwide with more expected this year.

No successful team works alone, and one of the pioneers of our work to advocate for the Marrakesh Treaty has been Christopher Friend of Sightsavers International. Chris has been a passionate advocate for Marrakesh from the time the Right to Read campaign was launched at UNESCO’s World Book Capital launch in 2008 in Amsterdam. Through the years, Chris served as Vice-Chair of the Marrakesh Campaign and upon his retirement from Sightsavers several years ago, continued to provide his extensive knowledge and support as Technical Advisor for the Campaign. In recent years, Chris has been working closely with members in Africa and the Caribbean to help advance their efforts for Marrakesh ratification and implementation. Chris also has decided to now enjoy his retirement full time and so has stepped down as Technical Advisor but as with Maryanne, we have their email addresses and will continue to call on them from time to time for information and support.

Maryanne and Chris, we thank you most sincerely for your commitment and support to help make our dreams a reality.

Maryanne and Chris are passing the torch to a very able and knowledgeable leader. Scott LaBarre, a senior member of the National Federation of the Blind and lawyer in the United States, has also been actively involved in our Right to Read work since 2009. He too was actively involved in the meetings with WIPO in Geneva, at the Diplomatic conference in Marrakesh and has been the lead from the North America/Caribbean Region supporting the ratification and implementation efforts for many years. Scott has also been WBU’s official representative on the WIPO Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) Board since it was established soon after the Marrakesh Treaty was adopted. Scott has been serving as Co-Chair of the Right to Read campaign since the end of 2016 and has been supporting several of our initiatives related to the Marrakesh Ratification and Implementation Project funded by the Open Society Institute Foundation over the past two years.

We really thank Scott for his willingness to take on this new challenge and know that his continued leadership and support will be instrumental as we continue to advocate for ratification of Marrakesh worldwide and for implementation of the Treaty to ensure it will fulfill its promise of improving access to information for blind, visually impaired and print disabled persons.

# NEW APP ENABLES ACCESS TO BRAILLE

The World Blind Union (WBU) is thrilled to share the news about a new app which has been developed to enable blind and partially sighted people to access information in braille, large print and audio formats.

The app, called EasyConverter Express, has been developed by Dolphin, with support from the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and grant support from Google.org, as a gift to the World Blind Union (WBU) and International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI). The app is available worldwide in English, French & Portuguese and can be downloaded from [www.YourDolphin.com/easyconverter-express](http://www.yourdolphin.com/easyconverter-express). **It is a free download for users in developing countries.**

Over the years, the WBU has continued to strongly advocate for human rights of print-disabled persons by promoting availability of books and information in accessible formats. About 253 million blind and partially sighted people around the world lack access to printed works and cultural materials in accessi­ble formats. Less than 10% of published works in developed countries are available in accessible formats while less than 1% are available in developing countries.

The development of the new EasyConverter Express app is therefore significant for our members especially in developing countries as they can download the app for free and have optimal access to information and literacy materials.

Kevin Carey, Chair of the World Braille Council and outgoing Chair of RNIB, said: “I truly believe EasyConverter Express is a game changing development for the millions of people living with sight loss in developing countries. It is a fabulously simple product, specifically designed to get braille, large print and audio to blind and partially sighted people in the world’s poorest countries. It’s free for people in developing countries and immediately available and I hope that it will make a big difference in terms of access to information and literacy.”

The World Blind Union believes that access to information is a human right that must be enjoyed by all as a precondition for equal participation in society. We therefore call upon governments and the private sector to emulate Dolphin and Google's partnership efforts in providing alternative ways to access information without creating barriers to its use.

For more information about the new app, read full Press Release: <https://yourdolphin.com/news?id=359>

Read WBU's position statement on [Access to information](http://content.worldblindunion.org/English/resources/Pages/WBU-External-Position-Statements-and-Resource-Papers.aspx).

# WBU SCHOLARSHIPS

Four scholarships are currently offered through the World Blind Union. Preference is given to blind and partially sighted applicants from low income countries.

The scholarships are:

1. **The Hermoine Grant Calhoun Scholarship:** This scholarship is offered to blind and partially sighted women attending college or university courses in any field of study within their own country. Women from least developed countries and low middle-income countries will be given priority. All scholarships will be for at least $100 USD or a maximum of US$750 is granted for any one course.
2. **The Pedro Zurita Youth Fund:** This scholarship is for blind and partially sighted young men and women aged 15 to 30 years old. The scholarship is available for courses of study or programs with a duration of more than one year, but funding is not guaranteed for the full period of the course of study.

**Scholarships available through the World Braille Foundation (applications available on WBU website)**

1. **The Barbara Marjeram Braille Literacy Scholarship:** Applicants for this scholarship must be blind and partially sighted girls or women between the ages of 14 to 30 years. They must be enrolled in a recognized educational program in their own country. Applications are also accepted from students enrolled in a recognized distance learning program. They are expected to possess Braille reading and writing skills or be willing to pursue a course to learn Braille either on location or through an approved distance learning program. Applications must be accompanied by a 500-word essay describing the proposed course of study or program.
2. **The Gerald Dirks Scholarship for the Advancement of Braille** **Literacy** is available for blind and partially sighted men and women aged 18 to 35 years old from Africa that work with Braille. Applicants are expected to possess Braille reading and writing skills. Preference will be given to candidates who have pre-requisite education or training to qualify either as a teacher of blind pupils; or train as a teaching assistant working alongside a qualified teacher in the classroom; or be involved in a creative Braille literacy project.

More details about these scholarships and application forms are available on [our website](http://content.worldblindunion.org/English/resources/Pages/Scholarships.aspx).

# RESOURCES

# FUNDING SUPPORT AND THE WBU RESOURCE GUIDE TO DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

By Charles Mossop, President, North America-Caribbean Region

The issue of funding is never far from anyone’s mind. Money seems always to be in short supply. Whether it’s core funding for daily operations, or special funds to cover requirements such as upgraded computer hardware or software, the demands on available financial resources seem never-ending. And if a much larger issue is being faced, the challenges only multiply.

It is not the aim of this article to provide a guide to fundraising in general, but to encourage you to think a little bit about the possibilities of acquiring financial support from international funding bodies. With that in mind, therefore, we would like to draw your attention to the information available to you on the [WBU website](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/resources/Pages/Toolkits.aspx), especially the Resource Guide to Development Agencies located under Toolkits on the Resources page.

The resource guide is what one might call a step one document. By that we mean it aims to provide initial information on potential funders which can be referred to as you do your initial research to identify agencies which may be receptive to an approach from your organization. In it, you will find a considerable amount of information and many suggestions on how to make your first approach to one or more of these agencies. Many of them maintain local or regional offices and it may be possible to approach them in person, but in most cases, it will probably require a contact by mail or email.

The important point to stress here is that the guide is not intended to assist in the preparation of proposals; that requires certain specific skills which are beyond the scope of the guide. Rather, it is intended to assist you in taking the all-important first step, that of becoming known to the agencies you have decided could be receptive to the challenges you face in your region or country. It goes without saying that all agencies do not fund all things; each one has its own priorities and themes, and your goal is to find agencies that fit with your needs. This is precisely where the resource guide can help.

To this end, the guide provides a lengthy list of international agencies, United Nations agencies, foundations, and corporate funders that are active in developing countries. The guide also summarizes information about these funding bodies, their goals, aims, priorities, and geographical concentration, if any. Where possible, information is included regarding their history of development work in the field of disability.

The first thing to do is to become known to potential funders and, where feasible, build relationships with them. The guide will help you do that because it contains many helpful weblinks, templates, and other features. We sincerely hope you will take the time to review the guide’s information. Yes, it is a lengthy document, but we believe it’s worth the effort. The hyperlinks will help you go quickly to sections you want to read. It does not need to be read from end to end; it is a reference source, and the WBU hopes it will become a valued part of your research into potential sources of short or long-term funding support. Agencies look more favorably on proposals if they know at least something about the organization making the approach, and, after all, no one knows your needs better than you do.

# LATEST TRENDS IN DONORS GIVING

A recent survey of 4,084 donors worldwide, has uncovered significant trends in how donors prefer to give and engage with their favorite causes and charitable organizations.

According to the **2017** [Global Trends in Giving Report](http://givingreport.ngo/index.html), 42% of online donors worldwide cite social media as the tool that inspires them most often to give. Of these donors, 62% say that Facebook inspires them the most. 15% say Twitter. 10% say Instagram.

In Africa, 16% of donors prefer to give through mobile devices which is the highest of any region. Mobile technology in the region is how most people first get access to the Internet and giving to and engaging with NPOs and NGOs on mobile devices is a fast-growing trend.

In Latin America, 38% of donors are also inspired to give by social media. Specifically, Facebook (58%), Instagram (16%), and Twitter (13%). Like in Africa, WhatsApp is also popular and inspires 9% of giving. Unique to South America is that email is the least impactful on giving at only 8%.

Meanwhile, 91% of donors say that positive emotions, such as hope and empathy, are the motivating factors behind their giving. According to the report, only 9% say anger and sadness. This implies that organizations can stand out by sharing positive stories and calls-to-action.

The survey was sponsored by the [Public Interest Registry](http://pir.org/) and researched by [Nonprofit Tech for Good](http://www.nptechforgood.com/2017/11/22/25-must-know-global-trends-in-giving/), a Fundraising & Social Media Blog for Nonprofits. The report summarizes donor data across six continents about how online and mobile technology effects giving. The report also explores the impact of gender, generation, and ideology upon giving and volunteerism.

25 key findings of the report are available at: [Nonprofit Tech for Good](http://www.nptechforgood.com/2017/11/22/25-must-know-global-trends-in-giving/) website.

**Source:** [Nonprofit Tech for Good](http://www.nptechforgood.com/2017/11/22/25-must-know-global-trends-in-giving/)

# PROJECT ASPIRO: CALL FOR SUCCESS STORIES, CAREER PLANNING AND EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

We remind you to visit our [Project Aspiro](http://projectaspiro.com/en/Pages/default.aspx) website regularly for inspiring success stories and resources about employment, education and career planning. In this issue, we feature [the story of Tony Takei](http://projectaspiro.com/en/success-stories/Pages/TonyTakei.aspx) a legal counsel at a communications company in Japan. Tony attained his LLM (Master of Laws) from New York University School of Law. He also worked for a law firm in New York before moving back to Japan. In this video, Tony discusses the importance of working and living independently for him following the challenges he faced growing up with decreasing vision.

We invite you to share your stories and inspire thousands of others around the world. Tell us how blindness or low vision impacts day to day life, challenges, capabilities and successes. You can submit a short video or audio (about 3-5 minutes). The preferred format for an audio file is an mp3 file. Videos files may be submitted in any of the following formats: .MOV, .MPEG4, .AVI, .WMV, .MPEGPS, .FLV, .3GPP, or .WebM.

For more information on suggested formats and interview questions, please visit the [Project Aspiro website](http://projectaspiro.com/en/success-stories/Pages/default.aspx) or contact [terry.mutuku@wbu.ngo](mailto:terry.mutuku@wbu.ngo).

# WBU STATEMENTS

**World Braille Day**

On this year's World Braille Day, January 4, the World Blind Union issued a statement focussing on the critical need to expand braille literacy globally. In the statement, WBU argued that braille is still the primary literacy medium for blind people despite a massive increase in audio resources. Braille also gives a massive boost to employment opportunities. To ensure the survival of braille, the WBU called for the following actions:

a) We must make sure that braille is available to far more children and adults;

b) We must ensure that braille producers, no longer limited by the need to make hard copy braille products, produce far more braille titles for use on braille displays.

Read full statement on the [news section of our website](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/news/Pages/WBU-statement-for-World-Braille-Day,-January-4,-2018.aspx).

**International day of persons with disabilities**

On International day of persons with disabilities, December 2017, the WBU also issued a statement urging governments to ensure effective implementation of international human rights instruments including the UNCRPD, SDGs, and the Marrakesh Treaty. The WBU called on governments to consider the following actions:

* To implement monitoring and follow up mechanisms at the national level.
* To consult representatives of disabled people organizations when designing and implementing policies related to people with disabilities.
* To collect disaggregated data on disability.
* To provide financial resources for full inclusion of people with disabilities in development processes.
* To take into consideration issues experienced by vulnerable groups such as blind and partially sighted women and children, migrants, people living in rural areas and refugees.
* To promote staff training in all sectors to ensure that human rights of blind and visually impaired people are respected, protected and promoted.

The full statement is available [on the website](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/news/Pages/WBU-Statement-on-International-day-of-persons-with-disabilities,-December-2017.aspx).

As always, we encourage members to modify these statements to suit their local advocacy needs and circulate them widely to their networks and local media.

The next statement will be released in March to mark International Women's Day.

# UPDATES FROM THE REGIONS

# EUROPEAN UNION VOTES TO RATIFY MARRAKESH TREATY

The World Blind Union is delighted by European Union's vote to ratify Marrakesh Treaty. 597 members of the European Parliament out of 627 voted in favour of the Treaty, on January 18. Only 8 members voted against and 25 abstentions.

"I am extremely happy that the European Parliament has finally voted in favor of the decision that allows EU to ratify Marrakesh Treaty," said Ms. Barbara Munoz-Martin, a key member of the WBU Marrakesh Implementation and Ratification Campaign Committee.

"Now we will have to wait for the deposit of the instrument at WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) to see EU in the list of ratifications, and from that moment three more months to apply it! I do hope that happens by the end of 2018," said Ms. Munoz-Martin.

The CEO of the World Blind Union Dr. Penny Hartin congratulated members of the WBU-European Region for their intense advocacy campaigns over the years to push for the ratification of the Treaty.

"We are extremely thrilled to hear this news and happy that majority of the EU members have voted to ratify the Treaty", said Dr. Hartin.

Meanwhile, the European Blind Union (EBU) acknowledges and appreciates the rapidity of the Council and the Parliament in proceeding with the vote.

"This procedure allows the Council to fulfil the ratification and later deposit the Treaty in Geneva at WIPO, an important step that completes the already approved implementation of the exception within the legislative acquis of the Union," said EBU in a press release.

"Thanks to this legislation, the adaptation and cross-border exchange of copyrighted books will be assured for non-profit uses to serve blind and visually-impaired people," said the EBU.

Over 90% of all published materials cannot be read by blind or print-disabled people, leading to a "book famine." Current copyright rules within most countries prevent the ability to reproduce published materials into accessible formats, such as Braille, large print, and audio editions. Working with WIPO, the WBU led the international campaign to develop the Marrakesh Treaty that would facilitate Access to Published Works by people with print disabilities.

The Marrakesh Treaty signed in Morocco on 28 June 2013, is a legally binding international agreement that creates mandatory exceptions to national copyright law to protect the human rights of individuals with print disabilities. To date, 33 countries have ratified the Treaty. An addition of 25 EU countries will be a milestone achievement for the WBU's effort to enhance the human rights of print-disabled people.

More information about the Marrakesh Treaty is available on the [WBU website](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/our-work/our-priorities/Pages/right-2-read-campaign.aspx)​.

# WORK ACCOMPLISHED BY LATIN AMERICAN UNION OF THE BLIND TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MARRAKESH TREATY

By the Latin American Union of the Blind (ULAC)

2017 was a very busy year for the Latin American Union of the Blind (ULAC). It was devoted to effective implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty in countries that had already ratified it and to the promotion of its ratification by countries that had not done so up to now.

The Second Sub-Regional Workshop of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) on the Production and Exchange of Works in Accessible Formats took place in San José, Costa Rica, on June 13 to 15, 2017. Central American and Caribbean countries participated including: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama and the Dominican Republic. Leaders from Cuba and Nicaragua were also invited to make them understand the importance of ratifying the Treaty.

In June 2017, ULAC President, Volmir Raimondi, and 1st ULAC Vice President, Fernando Galarraga, met with WIPO and ABC leaders in Geneva (Switzerland) to establish better collaboration and information exchange. The main outcome of this meeting was that ULAC agreed to provide permanent advice to WIPO and ABC on their actions for the implementation of the Marrakech Treaty in the region.

In August, Raimondi and Nadia García visited Ecuador and participated in a workshop on legal tools and technology to access texts in accessible formats. The WBU Guide to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works was introduced and discussed at the workshop. Emphasis was put on the human rights approach and the participation of people with disabilities in the implementation process of this international instrument.

Several actions also took place in the countries that have not ratified the Treaty:

* Raimondi visited Nicaragua where he explained to leaders of organizations and blind people in general, the benefits that the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty will bring to blind and people with low vision in the country. The outcome was the establishment of a working group constituted by several leaders of different organizations that had been advocating for the promotion of this step at governmental level, with ULAC support.
* Last November, ULAC Second Vice President, Zilpa Arriola, and Nadia García, mentor in this area from El Salvador, participated in a discussion meeting on “The Marrakesh Treaty and access to reading as a right included in the UNCRPD”. It was attended by delegates of organizations of people with visual impairment and local actors. They met local Parliamentarian Wilber Torres who committed to requesting an interview with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to find out what had been done in this field. In 2018, a Forum for civil servants on this issue will be organized.
* Additionally, in November, Galarraga and ULAC Secretary General, Lucía Nieves, met with Bolivian leaders of the main organizations of the blind to explore a joint strategy to achieve a fast ratification of the Treaty.
* ULAC President and Tatiana Vasconcelos, ULAC Administrative Secretariat, visited Paraguay to meet executive officers from public organizations that are in charge of the effective implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty.
* In Venezuela, counselling and training were held for the main representatives of the Venezuelan Federation of the Blind (FEVIC) via Skype and other technological tools.

We face many challenges in 2018. However, the most important one is to achieve the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty by Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. ULAC will continue with the training of the leaders involved in this area, dissemination of information to the local communities, lobbying and visits to the countries.

We also aim to ensure that implementation actions, which are already taking place, are successful, and ULAC will continue providing information so that the countries may implement the Treaty efficiently.

# "MAKING INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL": A RESOURCE GUIDE ON ACCESSIBILITY OF PRINTED AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS

The European Blind Union (EBU) has developed a resource guide focusing on accessibility of printed and electronic documents. The guide is intended for a broad audience including websites, books, invoices, letters, leaflets etc.

The document is supported under the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS.

The guide is also available in [nederlands](http://www.euroblind.org/publications-and-resources/informatie-toegankelijk-maken-voor-iedereen), [français](http://www.euroblind.org/publications-and-resources/rendre-linformation-accessible-tous), [deutsch](http://www.euroblind.org/publications-and-resources/informationen-fur-alle-zuganglich-machen) and [español](http://www.euroblind.org/publications-and-resources/como-hacer-que-la-informacion-sea-accesible-para-todos).

This publication is written for a broad audience since almost everyone creates documents, be it the minutes of a meeting, a leaflet for an upcoming event, a news item for the website or a questionnaire. Everyone who creates documents contributes to the accessibility of the final product.

More details about this resource are available on the [EBU website](http://www.euroblind.org/publications-and-resources/making-information-accessible-all#Who_should_read_this_publication).

Meanwhile the EBU website was overhauled recently to improve accessibility and usability. The EBU office team welcomes feedback.

# WBU ASIA-PACIFIC CALLS FOR GREATER INCLUSION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WITH PRINT DISABILITIES

PRESS RELEASE 1 December 2017, Wellington, NZ

Ending the lack of equitable access to information and knowledge among persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled is key to realizing an inclusive world for all, says a new Issue Brief for the Asia-Pacific region developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Blind Union – Asia Pacific (WBUAP) and the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL).

Released in the run-up to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December, the Asia-Pacific Issue Brief on the Marrakesh Treaty provides a succinct summary of the complex subject, describes the key benefits and calls on all countries to join the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

The World Blind Union estimates that less than 1 percent of published books in developing countries, and 7 percent in developed countries, are ever made into formats that are accessible to print disabled persons, such as braille, audio, e-books or materials with large print. This situation, often referred to as a ‘book famine,’ is preventing millions of persons with print disabilities around the world from making the most of human development opportunities, leading to exclusion, social isolation and poverty. Persons with disabilities remain among the poorest of the poor across societies, being left behind from economic, social and cultural progress.

To end the book famine, an international copyright treaty – the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled – was adopted by member states of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a UN agency, in 2013, which entered into force last year. This is the first copyright treaty with human rights principles at its core. However, only seven countries in the Asia-Pacific region have become part of the Treaty so far.

“The ‘book famine’ all too often excludes persons with print disabilities from access to education, employment, health care, culture or participation in just about any aspect of political, economic and social activities,” said Michiko Tabata, President of WBUAP. “Civil society loses out just as much as print disabled people do from their exclusion. We call upon all countries in the Asia-Pacific to join the Marrakesh Treaty and end the book famine.”

Joining and implementing the Marrakesh Treaty will also significantly contribute to achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are guided by the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’.

“For too long, people who live with visual impairment and other reading disabilities have lacked sufficient access to published works in the Asia-Pacific region,” said Nadia Rasheed, Team Leader, HIV, Health and Development, UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub. “Expanding the ratification and implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty to more countries in the region is of critical importance to ensure realization of the fundamental right to information and knowledge and to realize a more inclusive world for all.”

The Asia-Pacific region is estimated to have the world’s largest number of persons with blindness (21.4 million) and moderate to severe visual impairment (135 million). A rapid populating ageing and the rise of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes in the region will further increase the number of print disabled persons, heightening the importance of greater access to published works in accessible formats to achieve disability-inclusive and sustainable development.

"Throughout the world, libraries are one of the primary sources of reading materials in accessible formats,” said Rima Kupryte, EIFL Director. “EIFL is strongly committed to speedy ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty that creates new opportunities for libraries to vastly improve services to people with print disabilities, thereby improving lives and increasing life-chances.”

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**AFRICAN UNION ENDORSES THE AFRICAN DISABILITY PROTOCOL**

The African Union Special Technical Committee (STC) on Justice and Legal Affairs endorsed the Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, popularly known as the African Disability Protocol, last November.

The African Union of the Blind (AFUB), in partnership with the African Disability Alliance, the Christoffel Blind Mission and the European Union, is campaigning towards the ratification of the Protocol by a large number of African States once the Protocol is open for ratification. This will expedite its entry into force.

“The endorsement of the African Disability Protocol yet another important milestone in the journey towards the adoption of a continental instrument to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in Africa” said Martin Kieti from AFUB. “We hope that the Heads of States will be equally committed to the Protocol.”

The African Union of the Blind was established in 1987 through a resolution of the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to promote the rights of blind and partially sighted people in Africa and to ensure that their unique needs are met. The campaign for the ratification of the African Disability Protocol is one of its several advocacy engagements with the African Union.

More details are available on the [AFUB website](http://www.afub-uafa.org/press-release/)

# **UPDATES FROM GLOBAL PARTNERS**

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR THE HOLMAN PRIZE FOR BLIND AMBITION

San Francisco’s LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired announced a new call for submissions for the Holman Prize, a global $25,000 award for blind adventurers and creators.

Submissions opened January 16 and close on February 28th at noon PST.

Created specifically for legally blind individuals with a penchant for exploration of all types, LightHouse’s initial 2017 prizes will provide financial backing for as many as three individuals to explore the world and push their limits through travel, connections, construction and communication.

The ideal candidate is someone who is willing to probe their environment and eager to savor the richness of a world that is so often thought of as inaccessible to the blind. This exploration may involve travel, community organizing, scholarship, daring art or projects never considered before.

In January, the contest began with a challenge: blind applicants must submit a first-round pitch, in the form of a 90-second YouTube video.

Now in its second year, the Holman Prize was launched by LightHouse for the Blind in San Francisco as a means of enabling legally blind people from around the world to make their dreams a reality, and to demonstrate to the public at large that in an accessible world, blind people are capable of doing anything that their sighted peers can do.

More information is available on the [Holman Prize website](https://www.holmanprize.org/).

# WHO CALLS FOR PAPERS ON VISION

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced a call for papers for special bulletin issue on Vision. Papers are welcomed around the central theme of ‘what works’. The theme issue will supplement a forthcoming World report on vision. The report is expected to provide evidence on the prevalence and magnitude of eye diseases/conditions and vision loss globally, as well as its prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. It will offer recommendations, including a number focused on ensuring universal access to quality comprehensive and integrated eye care services in countries.

WHO welcomes papers for the theme issue that provide evidence across all health strategies (promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation) and systems building blocks, in particular, those that focus on best practices, innovation and the use of technology. Papers that identify gaps and provide solutions to ensure equitable access to services are encouraged. Papers should seek to integrate examples from low- and middle-income countries and different age groups. WHO also strongly encourages papers that address health system issues, rather than focusing solely on one specific disease or condition.

The deadline for submissions is 15 March 2018. Manuscripts should be submitted in accordance with the Bulletin’s [Guidelines for contributors](http://submit.bwho.org/) and the cover letter should mention this call for papers.

More information is available in the [WHO Bulletin](http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/95/10/17-202952.pdf).

# FACT SHEET: BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

* An estimated 253 million people live with vision impairment.
* 36 million are blind.
* 217 million have moderate to severe vision impairment.
* 81% of people who are blind or have moderate or severe vision impairment are aged 50 years and above.
* An estimated 19 million children are vision impaired.
* Of these, 12 million children have a vision impairment due to refractive error.
* Around 1.4 million children have irreversible blindness, requiring access to vision rehabilitation services to optimize functioning and reduce disability.
* Globally, more than 80% of all vision impairment can be prevented or cured.
* The major global causes of moderate to severe vision impairment are: uncorrected refractive errors, 53%; un-operated cataract, 25%; age-related macular degeneration 4%; glaucoma, 2%; diabetic retinopathy 1%.
* The major causes of blindness are: un-operated cataract, 35 %; uncorrected refractive error 21 %; glaucoma 8 %.
* Overall, the prevalence of vision impairment worldwide has decreased since early estimates in the 1990s.
* However, it is estimated that the number of people with vision impairment could triple due to population growth and ageing.
* By 2050 there could be 115 million people who are blind, up from 38.5 million in 2020.

**Source:** [World Health Organization](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs282/en/). Updated October 2017

# INDEX BRAILLE LAUNCHES DONATION PROGRAM

Index Braille has launched a donation program to promote braille literacy. The Index Donation program will be an annual event starting 2018. The purpose of this program is to donate one Everest-D V5 braille embosser and one Acoustic Hood Everest to an organization or an individual or group of individuals. They must have a need to produce braille with the purpose of promoting braille literacy, whilst having limited financial resources. Organizations or individuals can apply for the program January through November each calendar year. One donee will be chosen by Index and announced on Index website on the World Braille day, January 4th, the following year.

**Requirements**

1. A donee is an organization/company/individual/group of individuals, which key objective is to improve literacy for blind persons.
2. A donee is responsible for production and supply of braille materials for a minimum of 10 persons.
3. A donee completed the Index Donation Program Application Form, including; organization name, full address details, contact persons, and a well substantiated, personal story how production and reading of braille as well as literacy of blind persons is promoted by them. Furthermore it is including links to pictures and videos further supporting a donee's story.
4. A donee has to be registered as a user at [www.indexbraille.com](http://www.indexbraille.com).
5. A donee has to use Donation Program Submission form to apply. This includes; Organization name, address details, contact person, and a personal story how braille is promoted and include any links to pictures and videos supporting this.
6. In case a donee is selected, the donee takes responsibility for freight charges, custom clearances and possible local taxes, in order to enable Index to ship the donated products to the donee.
7. The financing of a donee's organization/company is made internally or is based on charity or on donations. Publicly founded organizations cannot be selected.
8. A donee must provide documents to support their key objectives of their organization and financial statements.
9. Index Braille has the right to use the supporting personal story about your organization and its key objectives to promote literacy, the production and reading of braille, pictures and video for marketing purposes. If you would like us to link to your website or tag on social media, please include this information in your application.

More information is available on the [Index Braille website](https://www.indexbraille.com/en-us/braille-embossers/index-donation-program).

# VISCARDI ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The World Blind Union congratulates Mr. Vashkar Bhattacharjee of Access to Information (a2i) Program, Bangladesh’s Prime Minister’s Office on being awarded the 2017 Henry Viscardi Achievement Award.

The Viscardi Center announced nine recipients of the 2017 Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards at a special ceremony held in New York City, December 4.

These international Awards, first bestowed in 2013, recognize exemplary leaders within the disability community and their extraordinary societal contributions, while remembering the spirit and legacy of the Viscardi Center’s founder, Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr., who himself wore prosthetic legs. As one of the world’s leading advocates for people with disabilities, Dr. Viscardi served as a disability advisor to eight U.S. Presidents, from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Jimmy Carter.

Since inception, the Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards have drawn nominations from cities throughout the U.S. and countries around the world. Nominations have included individuals with a wide range of disabilities from academia, healthcare, government, non-profit and corporate sectors

As National Consultant for Accessibility in the Access to Information (a2i) Programme, Vashkar Bhattacharjee is dedicated to innovating digital accessibility for people with disabilities. Born with a visual disability himself, he currently strives to make accessible ICT a priority at the University of Chittagong, one of the largest and most prominent universities in Bangladesh.

For more information, visit the [Viscardi Center website](https://www.viscardicenter.org/2017-henry-viscardi-achievement-awards/)

# FEATURES

# TRAVELEYES PROVIDES INDEPENDENT TRAVEL FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED

By Liz Frankland, a blind traveller

It was long ago and beneath the clearest blue Southern French summer sky that my desire to travel the world was born. I was studying French for my degree back in the UK and, for my sins, I had been sent to Avignon to practice the language on its own turf for an entire academic year. For someone like myself, who had barely left the North of England in all her 21 years, this sun-baked Mediterranean land was paradise. I fell in love with the sunshine, the cicadas, and, of course, the local brew, ‘pastis’.

In terms of my travelling “career” it was merely the beginning. I had never experienced anything so exotic as the South of France, but, it was so delicious that it left me craving more. I was very lucky that a few travel opportunities abroad came my way during the next few years, even taking me as far as New Zealand. However, at the end of each vacation, there was often no plan nor any realistic possibility of travelling somewhere else again. I became immensely frustrated that I was unable simply to book a trip for myself, using any vacation company to any destination of my choice. There was no choice because I needed someone to guide me and it was rare that friends or family were available to fulfil this role.

Then, just when I thought I would go insane, Traveleyes burst onto the runway of my life. I had seen a number of advertisements for this company in various magazines to which I subscribed, but I hesitated to act on my instinct. I was a little concerned that there might be a prevailing attitude of: let’s take the poor blind people out because we feel sorry for them. Eventually, I took the bull by the horns and I booked to go to Andalusia in September 2006.

This vacation quickly disabused me of my fears. The point was gently but firmly made that the sighted and the visually impaired travellers were all on an equal footing and the emphasis was very much on being sociable. There were people of all ages and backgrounds and everyone was out to have a cracking good time.

We explored the “pueblos blancos”, snuggling in the mountain hollows, and together we passed leisurely mealtimes, savouring tapas and the local wine. I made friends with people who I had never met before, and the bonds were such that a friend I met on that very vacation is coming to stay with me in a few weeks’ time.

I have since been to many destinations with Traveleyes and thoroughly enjoyed them all. I’ve been drenched under Niagara Falls, basked in the tranquillity of Lake Titicaca and stroked lions in Zimbabwe.

In all cases, I have found the organisation of people, hotels, luggage, food, transport and excursions to be absolutely top notch. Traveleyes’ speciality is that there are always at least the same number of sighted travellers as there are visually impaired. This means that all the visually impaired people always have the luxury of their own guide and no sharing of guides is necessary. Each day, everyone swaps round so that everyone is paired up with someone different, allowing everyone to get to know everyone else.

Traveleyes is extraordinary in its uniqueness. There is no other company like it, (to the best of my knowledge), in the entire world, and people from America, Australia, Europe & all over the world often join these vacations.

It’s time to take the bull by the horns, as I did, and book something with this fantastic company. Come and join the Traveleyes family and tell your friends about it too!

**Traveleyes** is a leading organisation offering worldwide adventures for blind and sighted travellers. Each blind or visually impaired traveller is paired with a sighted traveller, for each day of the vacation. In return for being the eyes for blind travellers, the sighted travellers receive a discount of their trips, subsidised entirely by Traveleyes. This means that blind travellers don’t pay any more for accessible travel, and benefit from one on one guiding for the whole trip as well as live audio description.

For more information contact:

The Traveleyes Team

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Phone: UK: 0044 (0)113 834 6094 │USA/Canada: 646 867 3937

Australia: 02 8006 1393 │ New Zealand: 09 889 2393

Web: <http://traveleyes-international.com/>

# CREATING A CITY WHERE WE CAN ALL LIVE HAPPILY

An interview with World Blind Union Treasurer, Ms. Martine Abel-Williamson, about her work as a Specialist Advisor in the Community Empowerment Unit, of Auckland Council, New Zealand.

**What made you want to work for the council?**

I previously worked in a systemic advocacy and activist role, but I felt that if I really wanted (to quote Ghandi) 'be the change we want in this world', I needed to 'be at the table' where decisions and discussions around design and implementation with disability access were happening within local government.

I'm hoping my contribution will help others be able to fully function in society as capable achieving disabled people.

**So what does our organisation do well to make the services we provide more accessible for all our customers?**

We've put a Disability Operational Action Plan in place which has been really useful in guiding our organisation and CCOs on what we can do when making decisions on our services. The council also has the Disability Advisory Panel that advise on accessibility matters too.

**And what could we be doing better?**

We could be more proactive at including disabled persons and stakeholders at the start of programme planning and initiative design with focus groups and forums.

As we aspire for our workforce to reflect our diverse and inclusive city, I'd like to see more skilled and capable disabled Aucklanders working within our organisation too.

**You're part of the Number 8 Wire network. Can you tell us about this?**

We're a fun impairment support group that's about possibility, not disability. The network was created between the former Manukau City Council and Auckland City Council to introduce disabled colleagues to each other for peer to peer support.

The network strives to improve conditions for our impaired people both at the council and in the wider community. We support impaired staff all over the council family, so drop me an email if you want to know more!

**It was the International Day of Disabled Persons on Sunday and the Number 8 Wire network is hosting an event this Tuesday to celebrate the day. What's so unique about this event?**

The event will see most of the network come together for the first time in a while. It's difficult for the entire group to physically get together on a regular basis as we're so spread out across the region, so it's great that we can come together. And it's even better when it's to celebrate an important day to the group.

**And what does the International Day of Disabled Persons mean to you?**

It's an opportunity to showcase to the organisation the work that disabled persons do to improve accessibility with our facilities and services across Auckland.

**How can we help Auckland become a world-class city?**

We're on the right track! Our organisation has the talent and potential to set the direction for the rest of New Zealand and not just be a follower. We need to be brave, take risks and be innovative.

**How would you describe your job to a child?**

When we dream about what we want to be when we grow up, my job is to help Auckland become a place where everyone's dreams can come true. I want our city to be the place where we can all live happily ever after and not in a land far away.

**What's your biggest achievement?**

In my volunteer role on the board of an international disability advocacy organisation, I travel to various foreign destinations for meetings. On this occasion, I had to travel to Mongolia and due to quarantine and custom issues I couldn't bring Westin (my guide dog), with me. I also couldn't afford a sighted guide in Mongolia either, which meant I either travelled to the meeting on my own or not at all.

I ended up doing it all by myself and had a ball of a time, working my way through language barriers and trying to ask for help when they couldn't even make a visual sign to assist me. We can often do things we thought we couldn't!

**And lastly, how will you and Westin be spending the summer break?**

I do a lot of travelling in my various volunteer roles which is quite draining. This summer, I'll be doing as little as possible, so I can recharge the batteries. I'll be spending a lot of time near the water where Westin and I can go for lots of walks with my family. Oh, and lots of escapism reading – murder mysteries and spy novels!

**Source:** This Interview was reproduced with permission from Number 8 Wire network. It was conducted to celebrate International Day of Disabled Persons.

# TECH UPDATES

# NEW APP USES SMART TAGS TO PROVIDE AUDIO INFORMATION ABOUT ITEMS AROUND THE HOME AND OFFICE

Two architects with vision loss launched WayAround™, the smart assistant that gives on-demand details about everyday things for anyone with vision loss. The WayAround system uses custom smart tags plus an app for iOS or Android to provide audio information about items around the home and office.

"As architects, our job is to provide information to contractors, municipalities, customers, and others in a way they can best use it," said Darwin Belt, co-founder and manager of WayAround. "Most of the information in our world is presented visually, which is not very helpful for people who are blind. Our goal is to make information accessible to anyone with any degree of vision loss."

The WayAround app works together with small, inexpensive smart tags that can be placed directly onto everyday items. These innovative WayTags use emerging technology and manufacturing to make them both small and versatile. They are about the size of a quarter, and are available as stickers, magnets, buttons, or clips.

Through an accessible interface on the WayAround mobile app, users add a description of any item as well as other details like laundering instructions, allergens, best-before dates, and more. Once information is added, users hold their compatible smart-phone near the WayTag to hear the information read aloud. The app is free and will be available in December 2017 for iOS and Android.

"When I first lost my vision, I felt a lot of fear and frustration just trying to understand the world around me," said Armand Fisher, co-founder, who lost his vision over a six-week period at age 53. "WayAround provides much-needed information, but more importantly it gives independence and hope."

The WayAround information system works for anyone with any degree of vision loss, including people who are blind, deafblind, or have color blindness, night blindness, or low vision. Though WayAround is designed for people with impaired vision, the inclusive design standard means sighted people can also benefit. WayAround products are available for pre-order and will ship when the WayAround app releases later this year.

**About WayAround**

WayAround is the smart assistant that provides on-demand details about everyday things for people with vision loss. WayAround believes that better information is the key to more independence. Started by two architects with vision loss, WayAround employs people with vision loss and gives back at least 10% of our profits to organizations working with blindness.

For more information, visit <https://www.wayaround.com/>

Contact: Jessica Hipp

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**Source**: This article was reproduced with permission from Wayaround.

# DAISY RELEASES OBI 4.1

Obi 4.1 is an incremental release that implements the first set of features requested by DAISY community in the Obi-Tobi survey-2017. It brings enhancements to existing features like importing audio files in existing structure of sections, calculation of total duration of audio content in a set of contiguous phrases, enhancements to multi-phrase operations and multi-sections operations dialog, along with some other improvements. This release initiates the incorporation of requested features and the implementation of major features is planned for future releases.

The 4.0 release upgraded Obi to .NET framework 4.0 to keep pace with the new technology. It also provided reference implementation for the Media Overlays playback requirements, which allows EPUB 3 reading systems to produce the behaviour similar to DAISY TOC navigation. The other important enhancements of the release were automated page generation in a specified time interval, quick glance at project structure via Multi-section Operations dialog, preservation of characters while importing old NCC files, and more.

Read more details on [Daisy website](http://www.daisy.org/obi/)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## WBU - ASIA PACIFIC MASSAGE SEMINAR

The World Blind Union - Asia Pacific Regional Massage Commission will host the 14th Regional Massage Seminar, to promote employment opportunities for visually impaired masseurs, strengthen inter-regional exchange and cooperation in blind massage and to enhance the development of blind massage in the Region. The seminar will be held in Fuzhou, Fujian province, China on 8 to 10 May 2018.

More details are available in the October issue of [the E-bulletin](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/resources/publications/Pages/ebulletins.aspx).

## 14TH GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON AGEING

The International Federation on Aging (IFA) will hold it's 14th Global Conference on Ageing in **Toronto, Canada**,August 8-10, 2018.The title of conference, “Towards a Decade of Healthy Ageing – From Evidence to Action,” is in response to the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Report on Ageing and Health and the subsequent goals of the WHO Global Strategy and Action Plan (2016).

The conference will revolve around four key themes related to the field of ageing: Toward Healthy Ageing, Combating Ageism, Enabling Functional Ability, and Addressing Inequalities. Under the theme Toward Healthy Ageing, the IFA has created a sub-theme specific to Eye Health.

For more information, visit the [conference website](https://www.ifa2018.com/).

## INTERNATIONAL WEB FOR ALL CONFERENCE

The 15th International Web for All Conference (W4A) will be held in Lyon, France, 22-24 April 2018.

The 2018 theme is "Internet of Accessible Things". Submissions that address the following topics are now open: Making IoT More Accessible; New IoT to Improve Accessibility; IoT Applications in the Connected Workplace; Novel Application of IoT to Improve Accessibility; IoT Use and Expectations by People with Disabilities; Machine learning and AI for Accessibility; Standards for IoT Accessibility; Cloud Computing and IoT that Deliver Accessible Experiences Everywhere; Leveraging IoT for Inclusive Work and Education; Accessible Smart Homes, Cities, and Transportation; Wearable Devices and Technology; Access, Digital Assistants, and Intelligent Agents; Remote Healthcare and Robotics; IoT, Big Data, and Analytics.

All submissions will be published in the [ACM Digital Library](https://dl.acm.org/event.cfm?id=RE143). Intuit will award $2000 and $1000 respectively to the best technical and communication papers. IBM will provide travel grants to the winners of the People with Disabilities Student Award. Awards for the Accessibility Challenge and Doctoral Consortium will be announced shortly, along with full details of the Hackathon and Poster Track.

For more information, please visit the [w4a website](http://www.w4a.info/2018/).

AER International Conference 2018

The next AER International Conference will be held on July 25-29, 2018 in Reno, Nevada USA. AER, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, provides resources to empower professionals who serve blind and visually impairedpeople.For more information, visit the [AER website](https://aerbvi.org/event/) (<https://aerbvi.org/event/>)

REMINDER: CONTACT INFORMATION

Friendly reminder to members: Please check your contact information on our website to ensure that it is up to date at: Member Regions and Organizations: <http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/about-wbu/membership/Pages/Member-Regions-and-Organizations.aspx>

Should you change your contact information any time please update us. You can contact Ianina at [ianina.rodriguez@wbu.ngo](mailto:ianina.rodriguez@wbu.ngo)

# THE WBU REGIONS

Our regions are the bridge between the international level of work and the local level. Policies and treaties constructed at global levels are then carried out by our members in their own countries. Most of the regions have their own websites where they post updates on their work, member activities, and upcoming events in their area.

## AFRICA

<http://www.afub-uafa.org>

## ASIA

Website is currently unavailable

## ASIA-PACIFIC

<http://wbuap.org/index/>

## EUROPE

<http://www.euroblind.org>

## LATIN AMERICA

<http://ulacdigital.org>

## NORTH AMERICA/THE CARIBBEAN

Website is currently unavailable

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The World Blind Union is registered in Canada as a charitable organization in order to raise funds for our work. Donations from individuals or groups are always appreciated and can be made via the “Donate Now” button on our website: <http://www.wbu.ngo>.

# OUR SPONSORS

Members listed below provide funds beyond their membership fees to support the work of the World Blind Union. We are grateful to these members and organizations for their valued contributions.

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* Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE) <http://www.once.es/new/>
* Sightsavers International [http://www.sightsavers.org](http://www.sightsavers.org/)
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