



BRAILLE HOUSE

THE WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

www.braillehouse.org.au



Annual Report 2023



Photo of Dinner setting at Government House with Braille menu



GOVERNOR OF QUEENSLAND

Message from the Governor of Queensland

I am pleased to provide this message of congratulations to the Queensland Braille Writing Association on another year of support and advocacy for people who are blind or have low vision.

Earlier this year, I welcomed members of the Braille House Management Committee and their distinguished guests to Government House to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the official opening of the Braille House Library.

Opened in 1899 thanks to the efforts of 31 women and men who had worked on braille transcriptions for years prior, the library has become an invaluable resource.

The focus then, as it is now, was on providing crucial access to literature and learning for the blind community, in particular children, who cannot learn the skills of spelling and grammar through methods other than braille. Without the ability to read and write – the fundamentals of education – these children would undoubtedly struggle to progress and access opportunities their sighted peers take for granted.

Every book Braille House has produced represents an opportunity to learn and engage more meaningfully with the world around us. Importantly, braille also brings joy, excitement and wonder to the fingertips of children and adults alike. In the words of one blind reader, who wrote a moving letter of thanks to the Association, its value lies in the pleasure of being able “to enjoy the minds of great men and women”.

Across many decades, and countless transcriptions of books and other texts, the library has served as a busy hub for those dedicated to meeting the braille and moon needs of people around Queensland. As the only free lending Library for children and adults in the state, borrowing is substantially increasing every year, with an additional 265 new titles released in braille in 2023.

As Patron and Governor of Queensland, I offer my sincere gratitude to everyone who has helped build a strong foundation upon which this treasured institution can advance and serve Queenslanders for another century and beyond.

Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM
Governor of Queensland



Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM
Governor of Queensland

CONTENTS

03

Forward from our Patron

06

Braille House Values

07

Management Committee

08

Management Report

10

Abridged Financial Statement

11

Library in Numbers

13

Tourism Accessibility

14

Braille Awareness Shows

15

Challenge and more

16

Client Story - Sean

17

Grants Received/Golf Day

18

Supporters, Donors & Members

19

Thank you to Volunteers

20

New Building

21

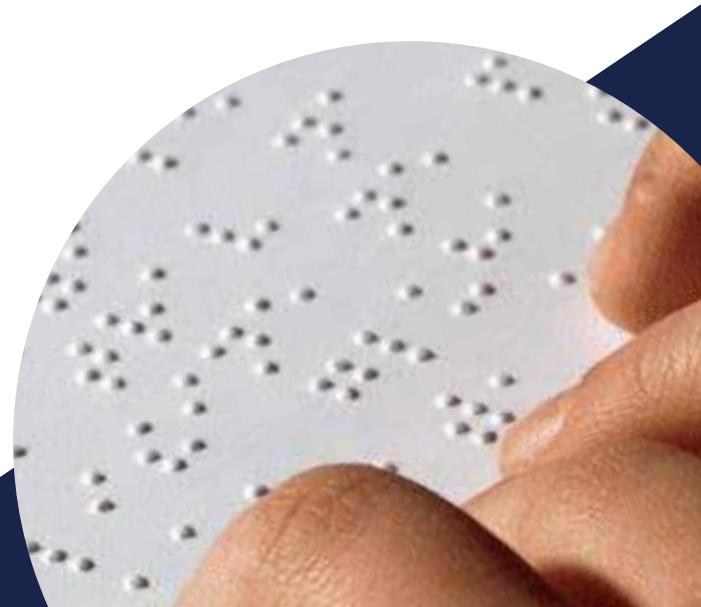
Braille House Library

22

Braille House Services

23

How to get involved



Braille House Values

Integrity

We do what's right and act with kindness, transparency, and honesty.

Respect

All our interactions are constructive, collaborative, and considerate of others. Together we deliver our best.

Empowerment

We provide opportunity for all - clients, volunteers, and staff - to be involved and do their best.

High Expectations

We are committed to providing our clients, the community, and one another with high-quality service and resources.

Sustainability

Building on our foundations, we look forward and adapt to change to ensure longevity.



Braille House staff and volunteers have embraced the Values of Sustainability, Integrity, High Expectations, Respect and Empowerment. Our agreed values guide our decisions and set the tone for how we conduct ourselves. In 2023, each week a different value was reviewed and worked on. Proactively living these values was focused on in staff meetings and in the staff and volunteer newsletter.

Recognising our values is one thing, but living the values is a powerful way to maintain a successful organisation that demonstrates sustainability and integrity.

Our organisation values are the standards by which people across Braille House share and show our respect to others. They represent the things we cherish

Page 6

and aspire to; they guide our day-to-day decisions and shape our individual and collective behaviour!

Empowerment in the Braille House workplace means enabling everyone to take ownership of their work and contribute to meaningful decision-making. In a culture of empowerment, leaders delegate responsibilities, share information freely and seek out input from others.

High Expectations are expected both internally and externally at Braille House. We need to go above and beyond each time we interact, and consistently provide a service that meets other's expectations of us.

Management Committee

The Management Committee consists of the following members:



Jacqueline Parker – President
Previously Managing Director
and owner of HN Financial
Partners (Financial Planning)
and currently consultant and
owner of My Age Pension
(Age pension consultancy).



Barry Oliver – Treasurer
Associate Professor (Honorary)
at the University of Queensland
Business School, Managing
Director and CEO of Financial and
Statistical Consultants and CEO of
Unorthodox Hypnotherapy.



James Grant – Secretary
Director at KPMG.



Richard Barker is General
Manager at Braille House and
brings 40 years of media and
commercial radio experience
to the role, as well as time
as the CEO of Queensland
Rugby Union. As the General
Manager (who commenced in
2022), he works closely with
the Management Committee
which provides strong
governance and strategic
direction to Braille House.



Nigel Harris AM – Member
Managing Director, Nigel
Harris & Associates



Vicki Anderson – Member
Owner and Managing
Director of Vicki Anderson
and Associates, Vision
Rehabilitation Specialist.



Heidi Monsour – Member
Marketing and Fundraising



Amanda Acutt - Member
Senior Policy Officer
Queensland State
Department of Youth Justice

Management Report

As you read through these pages, you will see the stories, activities, and support for Braille House through 2023. We are honoured to be its custodians to guide Braille House through new opportunities and growth.

Many achievements were made in 2023 and it is hard to believe that it has just been one year since we put together the last report.

Braille House updated its Constitution to remove the uncertainty of its predecessor by adopting (to the extent that it was possible) the model rules for incorporated associations provided by the Justice and Attorney Generals Office.

The sale of the property adjacent to Braille House was finalised in 2023, helping to secure the future of the organisation. Following the sale, the next major key priority is addressing the desperate need for a new, purpose built facility and the renovation of the current Braille House building.

For 126 years Braille House has provided essential resources and services to the community.

The current facilities revolve around:

1. An old Queenslander home moved to the site 70+ years ago
2. A two-story building constructed 50+ years ago.

Neither structure was designed to accommodate the contemporary needs of the organisation and overall, lacks accessibility and functionality to support the important work of staff members and volunteers, as well as visitors. Urgently needed are facilities that create a workplace and visitor environment which is functional, easy to navigate, efficient, inclusive, and accessible.

The new Braille House will be a purpose-built space to fit the needs of our clients, staff members and volunteers. It will be built on-site adjacent to the historic Braille House. The current Braille House building will be converted to a Braille museum which will feature items from the extensive collection, including an overview of the history of Braille House, the evolution of Braille technologies and interactive braille pieces. See page 20 for more information.

In the meantime, the funds received from the property sale have been allocated and invested in line with the adopted investment strategy, as we work through the 2022-2025 strategic plan building project.

Braille House has had a successful year of grants and fundraising. We sincerely appreciate being the beneficiary of the Xavier Dinner. We value the support from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund and Civic Solutions.

Braille House received funds from the Queensland Government to support Accessible Tourism. This grant enables developing collateral and training for more

inclusive tourism. Please take the time to read about the Accessible Tourism program on page 13.

For the first time in the 2023–2024 budget, the Queensland Government recognised the Braille House Library as the public library service that it is, and made provision of funds. In doing so, the state government demonstrated the principles of equality and equity, and honoured the Queensland's Disability Plan 2022-2027. For this, we are very grateful, and sincerely thankful.

Key library statistics reflect incredible growth in borrower membership and the remarkable work of both our Braille House volunteers and members of staff. As an example, in 2023:

- 265 new titles were released into the library
 - 170,471 pages of braille were produced
 - Library membership increased by 41%
 - Library loans increased by 57%, with picture book loans increasing by 179% for our younger readers.
 - Plans commenced for employing a full time librarian and library consultant.
 - Our technology is being upgraded so it is contemporary and supportive of our work.
 - We began planning for a new library management platform which will bring with it accelerated library automation and knowledge management, resulting in ease-of-use for library staff and borrowers, in a new fully secure and accessible environment.
- Braille House staff and volunteers embraced the Values of High Expectations, Respect, Integrity, Sustainability

and Empowerment. During 2023, each fortnight in the Good News Stories, there was a focus on a different Value from our Strategic Plan. The sections unpacked what each value meant, the implication for our organisation and asked readers to consider how they live the value, how do they empower others to live the value, and how they have seen the value lived at Braille House.

Braille House has engaged with Ipswich City Libraries on a number of occasions recently to promote disability awareness and inclusion, most notably their Tales and Trails initiative (which is still ongoing in the parks across the region), as well as the hosting of Braille Awareness Shows. The demand for Braille Awareness Shows has increased, having travelled to 12 Libraries and 3 schools across Queensland.

Braille House commends Ipswich City Council on the Story in a Box project which will increase accessibility to Braille for those with low vision or who are blind, break down societal barriers, and promote inclusion and education in the local community. Braille House supported the Story in a Box initiative by producing the Braille for the books included in the kits, together with Braille alphabet cards and other resources which will enhance the outcomes for families.

The Dickinson Memorial Literacy Competition again attracted talented competitors and was once again supported by Brisbane City Council. Volunteers and staff are to be commended on the work they put into this event.

The Braille Literacy Challenge continues to grow and strengthen. Participants demonstrated their Braille reading skills, while enjoying a day of chat, laughter, and friendly competition. Congratulations to everyone involved in this day.

Coverage of the Braille Literacy Challenge by ABC News and several other media outlets has brought much needed attention to Braille House, and has led to generous donations.

Braille House has effectively relied on the tremendous generosity of dedicated volunteers and in recent years a small number of staff members. The open heartedness of our volunteers and staff continues. During 2023, 59 volunteers again demonstrated that they are the backbone of Braille House, typing, transcribing, and constructing books week after week enabling Braille House to provide outstanding library service. We cannot thank you enough for your dedication. Braille House is continuously in need of more volunteers who can, so selflessly, dedicate their time and skill.

2024, is aiming to be a year of growth as we encourage widespread use of the Braille Library, develop a

sustainable Braille training business, develop viable 'fee for service' opportunities, advocate for touch literacy, and work with like-minded partners.

Jacqueline Parker, President
Richard Barker, General Manager
Braille House Management Committee

Braille House Mission

To empower people of all ages who are blind or have low vision through alternative formats.

Through the power of literacy Braille provides children and adults who are blind or have low vision with support to live independently, attain their desired level of education, increase opportunities for employment, and engage with their communities.



Braille House Management Committee and
General Manager

Abridged Financial Statement

Queensland Braille Writing Association

ABN 93 456 085 512

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

| | 2023 \$ | 2022 \$ |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| Revenue | | |
| Donations | 555,195 | 221,762 |
| Grants | 196,483 | 119,185 |
| Braille production | 89,185 | 100,061 |
| Fundraising events and activities | 70,896 | 27,514 |
| Tutoring courses | 11,899 | 5,200 |
| Rental income | 1,129 | 7,654 |
| Sponsorship | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| Other income | 12,589 | 7,421 |
| Interest income | 38,328 | 78 |
| | 980,704 | 493,875 |
| Other Income | | |
| Gain on disposal of assets | 823,804 | - |
| | - | - |
| | 823,804 | - |
| Expenses | | |
| Employee benefits expense | 511,654 | 419,137 |
| Depreciation | 32,947 | 36,288 |
| Braille production costs | 12,554 | 11,742 |
| Insurance | 17,987 | 13,342 |
| Postage and stationery | 5,954 | 13,184 |
| Repairs, maintenance and cleaning | 27,459 | 10,012 |
| Electricity, gas and rates | 8,749 | 7,313 |
| Computer expenses | 14,525 | 7,218 |
| Other expenses | 102,750 | 41,958 |
| Consultancy fees | 46,225 | - |
| Fundraising expenses | 67,573 | 209 |
| Advertising and promotion | 11,161 | 835 |
| Reduction in fair value of investments | - | 4,358 |
| | 859,538 | 565,596 |
| Operating result | 944,970 | (71,721) |
| Other comprehensive income for the year | - | - |
| Total comprehensive income for the year | 944,970 | (71,721) |

Queensland Braille Writing Association

ABN 93 456 085 512

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 31 December 2023

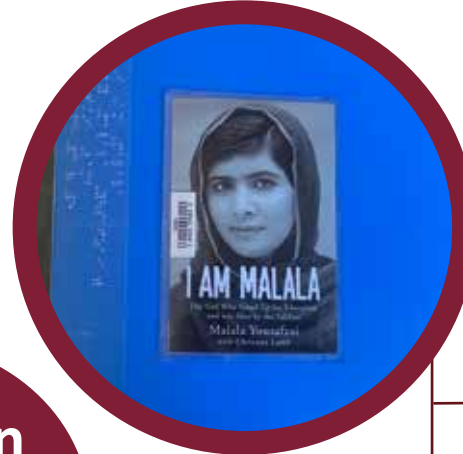
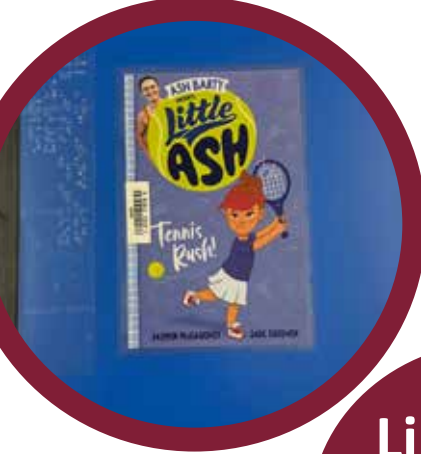
| | Note | 2023 \$ | 2022 \$ |
|--------------------------------------|------|------------------|------------------|
| ASSETS | | | |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 4 | 3,054,502 | 511,007 |
| Trade and other receivables | 5 | 3,863 | 4,514 |
| TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS | | 3,058,365 | 515,521 |
| NON-CURRENT ASSETS | | | |
| Property, plant and equipment | 6 | 1,302,358 | 2,598,474 |
| TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS | | 1,302,358 | 2,598,474 |
| TOTAL ASSETS | | 4,360,723 | 3,113,995 |
| LIABILITIES | | | |
| CURRENT LIABILITIES | | | |
| Trade and other payables | 7 | 23,154 | 32,044 |
| Employee benefits | 8 | 64,687 | 43,710 |
| Deferred income | 9 | 279,606 | - |
| TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES | | 367,447 | 75,754 |
| NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES | | | |
| Employee benefits | 8 | 21,789 | 11,724 |
| TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES | | 21,789 | 11,724 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES | | 389,236 | 87,478 |
| NET ASSETS | | 3,971,487 | 3,026,517 |
| EQUITY | | | |
| Retained earnings | | 2,899,515 | 827,721 |
| Asset revaluation reserve | 10 | 1,071,972 | 2,198,796 |
| TOTAL EQUITY | | 3,971,487 | 3,026,517 |

Note: A full financial report is available on the Braille House website

Library in Numbers 2023

Library Books Transcribed

Library Loans



Adult
50 books / 253 volumes - Braille
90 books - Ebraille

Magazines
184 magazines - Braille
32 magazines - Ebraille

Moon
9 books- Moon

Young Adult
5 books / 17 volumes - Braille

Junior Fiction
38 books / 132 volumes - Braille

Twin Vision
126 books - Braille

Adult
341 books / 1927 volumes - Braille
11 books - Ebraille

Magazines
494 magazines - Braille
81 magazines - Ebraille

Adult Moon
8 Books

Young Adults
11 books / 29 volumes

Junior Fiction
164 books / 499 volumes

Twin Vision
943 books - Braille

Total Produced 2023
412 Books & Magazines - Braille
122 - Ebraille

2023
Braille pages produced 170,471

Total Loans
2,053 books / 3,900 volumes
across all Braille, Ebraille and
magazines borrowed by readers
in 2023



Embracing the Year of Accessible
Tourism now and beyond 2032
Facilitator - Mark Olsen, CEO
Tourism Tropical North Queensland
Dylan Alcott AO



Accessible Tourism Workshop in Cairns

Making Tourism Accessible for Visitors who are Blind or have Low Vision

In 2023, Braille House was one of only five successful applicants to be awarded an Accessible Tourism Enabler Grant by the Queensland Government (as part of its 2023 - 2024 Year of Accessible Tourism).

Since the project's commencement in September 2023, under the leadership of Project Coordinator Margo Carwardine, this initiative has been steadily advancing, engaging in a collaborative process amongst stakeholders to ultimately enable people who are blind or have low vision to function more independently and with equity and dignity in the tourism and visitor setting.

The focus of the project is around delivering a package of resources through the Braille House and other websites to accommodation, hospitality and tourist destination providers.

The materials are designed to assist these businesses to:

- better understand of why investing in accessibility for blind and low vision visitors is important,
- undertake a self-assessment audit of facilities, staffing, procedures, customer experience, and marketing and communication to identify barriers, gaps and areas for improvement,
- learn through case studies,
- develop their accessible tourism business strategy,
- draw from a practical suite of accessibility focused business / destination support materials, and
- enhance their provision of accessible information and marketing, particularly to visitors who are blind or have low vision.

The Making Tourism Accessible for Visitors who are Blind and Low Vision project will be officially launched mid-2024, in conjunction with the Queensland Government and the four other successful grant recipients.

Destination Q

Complementing the Braille House accessible tourism project was a special invitation from the Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport to attend the Destination Q Forum in Cairns in November 2023. Over 700 people gathered at the Cairns Convention Centre for two days and the event provided the perfect opportunity for Braille House to continue collaborating with government and businesses to boost tourism accessibility for those visitors who are blind or have low vision. Braille House is extremely proud to be part of the movement for a more inclusive world, starting right here in beautiful Queensland.



Braille Awareness Shows

Important to our Braille House Mission is promoting inclusion. Some years ago, Braille House developed Braille Awareness Shows designed to promote understanding through an informative, interactive presentation and workshop which fosters acceptance, inclusion, integration, and equality. The presentations are offered to early childhood centres, schools, libraries, community centres and other groups.

In 2023, Braille House presented Awareness Shows at several Brisbane City Council Libraries, including libraries at Annerley, Nundah, Stones Corner, New Farm, Holland Park, Banyo, Fairfield, Corinda, Carina, Mt Gravatt, Kenmore and Toowong Libraries, together with St Joseph's and Baringa State school

In late 2023, we were delighted to welcome Tiana Offord to the Braille House team, notably as a valued team member of the Braille Awareness Shows. Tiana very much enhances the delivery of the presentations, with children and parents alike especially captivated when Tiana reads to everyone one of our twin vision books. Aside from the regular show features, Tiana has also demonstrated how a Perkins machine works (and embossed with the children's name on them to take home), as well as how her mobility cane assists her to navigate the world.

Braille House has developed a positive partnership with Ipswich City Council Libraries, and in 2023, participated in Council's Tales and Trails events through offering our Braille Awareness experiences. These occasions feature the First 5 Forever books; copies which Braille House has transcribed into twin vision – not just the books, but twin vision signage which tells the story as visitors walk around a particular Ipswich precinct. The events draw hundreds of visitors each time. Locations and books featured in 2023 in twin vision included:

- Ipswich Workshops Rail Museum attracted over 430 visitors (children, parents and carers), featuring the book 'Koalas like to...'
- Tulumur Place in the Nicholas Street Precinct, featuring the book 'Hotel for Bees', which Braille House produced in twin-vision.

Braille Awareness Shows are also offered to adults, and in 2023, shows were presented to education, government and community groups. Interest and engagement were high across presentations.

The Queensland Government's Cross-River Rail project team asked Braille House to present at one of their Lunch and Learn sessions. The aim of the presentation was to raise awareness of the background and workings of Braille, and the role Braille can play in the lives of those who are blind or have low vision. This is particularly important as many staff members are, for the first time, experiencing the use of Braille, within the context of their project and how this presents and impacts on lives within the context of the transport system.

Southbank TAFE also invited Braille House to present and raise Braille awareness for their students from the Caboolture and Southbank campuses who were studying for a library qualification.

In 2023, Braille House was invited by Deafblind Australia, as part of the Seen and Heard Project – Queensland to present an introduction to Braille workshop. The session aimed to give people who are deaf and blind information about Braille and update their skills. In addition, it opened doors for participants to communicate with each other, better understand their needs, share skills, safety issues and improve self-esteem to make the Deafblind community strong.

The Braille Awareness shows in 2023 were the Judged Winner Best Volunteer Led Activity or Class for Children in the What's On 4 Kids Awards.





Braille By Zoom

Braille House is using Zoom to connect with Braille students. The blind and vision-impaired students can learn Braille without leaving the comfort of their own home.

Advances in technology and software have seen the development of videotelephony software which allows a student to remain at home and have an interactive Braille lesson with their teacher. By incorporating programs, like Zoom (developed by Zoom Video Communications), into the delivery of our Braille by Touch courses, we have the ability to teach in remote areas where in-person lessons have until now, been non-existent.

Braille House has a Zoom account and can set up the meetings prior to the lesson time. All the student needs to have is the Zoom app/icon downloaded to their device. The meeting link is then forwarded to the student and on the day of the lesson, the student just has to click on the link at the scheduled time.

102nd Dickinson Memorial Literary Competition

Many talented competitors submitted their entries again this year in 2023. The competition was a great success.

The 2023 Dickinson Memorial Literary Competition is Proudly Supported by the Brisbane City Council. Thank you to Councillor Vicki Howard and her fantastic team at Brisbane City Council! Their support is very much appreciated by Braille House, and we could not do it without them.

A special tip of the hat to Heather Jacobs for judging the competition again this year. Your time and expertise are truly appreciated. Thank you for taking the time.

Last but not least, thanks to the volunteers, staff and the public for voting and showing your support. You all make the Braille House community shine!

Braille Literacy Challenge

The 2023 Braille Literacy Challenge, was a great success and saw over 40 students from all over Queensland compete and all levels of braille were represented from very beginners to advanced braille readers.

The challenge provides an opportunity and context for social networking and peer support for students who learn Braille. Students who are blind or have low vision enjoyed the opportunity to talk, laugh and compete with other children.

The event also acknowledges the significant contribution of Braille House to the educational access, participation and achievement of Braille reading students across Queensland. The challenge itself consists of reading and writing tasks which are designed to assess the braille skills of each individual student.

The Veronica Maguire Remembrance Award was established in 2005 in honour of the late Veronica Maguire and was a highlight of the day. This is the award all participants are aiming for. Veronica loved being an educator and was a strong role model for students, showing that anything is possible when taken on with a positive attitude. Her courage and her 'never, never give up' attitude was inspirational to all who knew her.

This event would not be possible without the generous support of the wonderful Braille House volunteers and staff, they work tirelessly in the lead-up to the event transcribing and embossing braille reading and writing pieces for the students to practice and even produced the books that were given to each participant as a gift.

Braille House would like to recognise Angelique and the team from the Alternative Format Library for the work and support they give for the Literacy Challenge.

ABC Television provided wonderful coverage of this year's Braille Literacy Challenge. To see highlights of the day scan this QR code.



Over 12 Years with Braille House

Education, music, career, fun and friendships – that is how Sean described the impact that Braille House has had on his life. Sean was introduced to Braille House in 2012 when he entered his first Braille Literacy Challenge while he was in Year 1 at school.

“I can’t believe it has been over 12 years since I started coming to Braille House for the Literacy Challenge. The Challenge days were always filled with laughter and catching up with the other kids, who you could just be yourself with. You weren’t the odd one out. The event is like any game; off the field you are friends but, on the field, you are archenemies. You want to win,” Sean said with a smile. He is proud to have won the challenge a few times.

Sean remembered getting together with his friend at Braille Club, held at Braille House, “One year we had the most amazing day at the Ekka. We followed a tactile map to get around. It was exciting. Our group had the chance to touch the animals and there was a goat that kept trying to get our attention.”

Sean spoke of how learning to read Braille was the foundation of his education and that his mother helped him read the dots and learn the basics with him. From Year 1 to 4, knowing how to read Braille was especially important

to him so that he could be in class and learn with his peers. Sean admits he isn’t very good at spelling and that he should have read more Braille to help with that. He reminisced that, “I found that when I read Braille, I can remember the information more than hearing it on audio.” Now, he enjoys books on World War II and stories of survivors, though Sean mentioned that it is difficult to get books that are written in Braille on these subjects.

Sean also learnt to read Braille music and has been learning to play the drums. He said, “I have become quite good, but I need an excellent teacher to take me to the next level. I am looking for one, if you know anyone.”

Sean is considering his future career. He is currently studying a Certificate IV in Massage Therapy, aiming to advance to Remedial Massage, and then wanting to work with athletes. Sean said, “Working with the Australian cricket team and travelling around the world is my ultimate dream. It would just be



amazing!” Sean currently plays Goalball, a three-person team sport on a court where you throw the ball into a soccer style net. All players wear a blindfold and the ball has bells inside to assist with orientating the player. “This game is fast paced, keeps me fit and it’s great hanging out with my friends,” Sean said. This gives him an excellent balance of study, sport, music, and friends.

Sean hasn’t finished with his adventures at Braille House. He is coming back to the Braille Literacy Challenge in September 2024 as a judge and continues to access books from the library. Stories like Sean’s demonstrate the importance and impact Braille House is having on the lives of children, young people and adults to live a successful, independent life. Congratulations!

Grants 2023

- **SDSS Grant – (Specialist Disability Support in Schools Program)** The Specialist Disability Support in Schools (SDSS) Program provided funding for Braille House to transcribe and produce Braille literature for Queensland schools, to aid in improving access to and participation in curriculum and the educational outcomes for eligible school-aged students who are blind or have low vision. \$86,810.90
- **The National Library of Australia for Community Heritage Grant** (for \$6,050.00). This grant provided funding to employ a heritage consultant to visit Braille House and complete a Preservation Needs Assessment on the collection and prepare a report.
- **The 2023 Xavier Dinner.** The dinner was held in August and Braille House staff and members of the Management Committee attended. Steve Sparrow performed early in the evening during the pre-dinner drinks component and another good friend of Braille House, Jamie Teh, spoke of the value of Braille and Braille House in his life and demonstrated technology. The event was a huge success, raising \$102,292 for Braille House. Prior to the evening, Braille House made the commitment that any funds raised would be dedicated to supporting the production of literature for our younger readers, as well as the purchase of technology.
- **Lord Mayor's Better Suburbs Grant** provided \$11,000 to repaint and re-carpet the front and main rooms of the House, as well as to rejuvenate the two toilet areas. This funding was complemented by a Braille House contribution of \$3,722.72.
- **Brisbane City Council** gave \$5,500 in sponsorship for the Dickinson Literary Competition, provided funding to support the competition prize money.
- **Sheargold Foundation** – This organisation reached out to us following viewing of the ABC Breakfast News report, and we were encouraged to submit an application. \$10,000 was received to be put towards 'Narrowing the Great Divide in Literature Availability for Young Braille Readers'; an ongoing priority for the core work undertaken at Braille House.
- **Guide Dogs (Victoria)** provided \$4,700 to support our luncheon in July for volunteers, staff and some members, as well as some items for the student gift bags for the Braille Literacy Challenge. An additional \$2,000 grant was given to transcribe twin vision books with indigenous content.
- **Lord Mayor's Better Suburbs Grant** – Our second application for 2023 for this grant initiative was successful and the grant funded new floor coverings for the Binding Room, Tutoring Room, and Multipurpose / Hall Space in the original house with painting of the Multipurpose Space and kitchen ceiling. The total amount provided towards this work was \$ 7,802.
- **Gambling Community Benefit Fund** The \$72,579.99 received was put towards much needed technology upgrades, including a refreshable braille device, servicing several of our Perkins Brailers, as well as purchasing new devices, a number of laptop and desktop computers, webcam technology, and assistance with a redesign of the Braille House website.
- **Lord Mayor's Community Fund** provided \$550.00 to assist with cost of hosting a Christmas gathering, morning tea and carol sing-along for volunteers and members.
- **Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust Christmas Grant** for \$2,000 to support costs for our Volunteer and Staff Christmas Lunch.
- **Civic Solutions** Following the news story on ABC 7.00pm News on 16 September 2023 which focused on Braille House, the Braille Literacy Challenge and our quest for funding (especially capital development), the Chair of Civic Solutions Inc. reached out to us. We were invited to apply for funds to dedicate towards our new fit-for-purpose building, and received \$50,000.

Golf Day - Celebration of Friendship

The November 2023 Golf event could not be dampened by the massive storm which swept across the Gold Coast about an hour after the 112 players left the clubhouse to tee off. To the sound of warning sirens, all players made a swift return to the clubhouse for approximately 45 minutes to allow the storm to pass, before returning to the fairways and greens.

After an enjoyable and entertaining round of golf, players and organisers then enjoyed an evening of fine food, entertainment by guest speaker Richard Champion, raffle draws, a blindfolded putting competition and a live auction. The event was not just about teeing off; it was about teeing up support for Braille House!

We send a huge thank you out to our sponsors and to the incredible team at 'Celebration of Friendship' for creating and managing this event and generously donating all funds raised to Braille House. The amazing amount raised on the day was \$26,351. A huge thank you to Renee, Meyrick, Richard and Margo for their above and beyond time and efforts in contributing towards this successful event.



Thank you to Members 2023

Amanda Acutt
Vickie Anderson
Joy Ashe
Richard Barker
Bonnie Boon
Leslie Buchanan
Margo Carwardine
Angela Davoli
James Grant
Nigel Harris
Gina Kerr

Heidi Monsour
Barry Oliver
Jacqueline Parker
Wendy Sara
Gail Smith
Jackie Sorensen
Malcolm Thomas
Sandra Vinson
Sue Wagner

Life Members

John Davenport
Penny Harland
Gwen Hay OAM
Margaret Hinkler
Mhairi McDonald
Jan Moody OAM
Dell Purtill OAM

Family membership

James Grant & Family
Bruce & Victoria McCaul
Graeme & Anne Tann

Corporate library memberships

Cardiff South Public School
Mount Carmel College
Next Sense
Woollahra Municipal Council Preschool

All members are given the option to appear in this publication.

Thank you to all Supporters and Donors

Grants

Brisbane City Council
Guide Dogs Victoria
Lord Mayor Better Suburbs Grant
National Library of Australia
Specialist Disability Support in Schools Program
Qld Government
Gambling Community Benefit Fund

Not-for-profits

Brisbane Writers Festival
Hand Heart Pocket
Guide Dogs Queensland

Foundations and Trusts, Individuals

G Brennan
Celebration of Friendship
Goodwill Projects Pty Ltd
John Davenport
Dr K. P. Mahoney
McCaul Family
Mirry Glavan
Motorama Charity Foundation
NAB Foundation
Sandoll Pty Ltd atf Sandoll Foundation
Sheargold Family Foundation
The Lord Mayors Charitable Trust
Xavier Dinner 2023

Corporate Partners

Billykart Kitchen
Brisbane Airport Corporation
Civic Solutions
Community Co Recycling Pty Ltd
Containers for Change
Meyrick Adams
Mode Design Corp
Mullins Lawyers
Play for Purpose
Qld Hotel Association
SAMTAY Group
Shergold Foundation
Unity Alliance
Zavia Foundation

All donations are sincerely appreciated; due to the number of donors and for privacy, not all donations are recognised in this publication.

Thank you to Volunteers 2023

Amanda Acutt
Wendy Alexander
Vickie Anderson
Jennifer Baker
Denise Blumke
Ailsa Boyd
George Brennan
Linda Brookbank
Vera Cahill
Margo Carwardine
Frances Cooke

John Davenport
Angela Davoli
Margaret Elson
Jeannie Gamble
James Grant
Sue Greenall
Julie Hammond
Nigel Harris
Gwen Hay OAM
Matthew Hicks
Margaret Hinkler

Karen Ho
Shirley Horton
Karen Jones
Mary Kentish
Dale Kentish
Heather Landers
Donna Longland
Jan Lorimer
Karen McClure
Helene Merker
Heidi Monsour

Tess Murray
Barry Oliver
Jacqueline Parker
Kathryn Pell
Margaret Rein
Cathy Roseman
Sue Schwartz
Jackie Searle
Linda Slemint
Gail Smith
Jackie Sorensen

Max Stephens
Darren Stuart
Anne Tann
Graeme Tann
Malcolm Thomas
Sue Wagner
Rosalin Xie

All volunteers are given the option to appear in this publication.

Why do I volunteer for Braille House?

Volunteer Transcriber Sue

"Many many years ago, a friend of mine, who is blind, volunteered at Braille House. Each week, I would drive her to Braille House. Later I decided to stay and volunteer myself. I learnt Braille and this meant that when I went to England for a while, I could write to my friend in Braille, and she could read the letter for herself. It meant a lot to her to be able to read her own mail.

I continue to volunteer at Braille House as it is important, to me, to be useful. The work we do is vital to the blind community. The books we are helping to create in Braille are bringing enjoyment to those who read them. We are a happy team that work and support each other.

Volunteering has given me the opportunity to strengthen friendships, learn and develop skills, and gives me the knowledge that I am contributing to the community."

Volunteer Binder Marget

"I have been volunteering at Braille House for the past ten years. When I started, I didn't know anyone who was blind, but I wanted to help at an organisation where I could help make a difference.

I have done a basic Braille course. Most of the work I do is in the binding room, putting the Braille pages together. I aim to do about 14 volumes per week, so about two novels.

It is lovely to see the kids interact with each other at the Literacy Challenge. People don't realise how many kids are vision impaired and what a difference days like today make for them."

Volunteers
have been the
strong backbone of
Braille House for
over 125 years.



Braille House Plans for the Future



The new Braille House will be a purpose-built space to fit the needs of our clients, staff members and volunteers. It will be built on-site, adjacent to the historic Braille House. It will have specially designed areas for book production, including transcribing and binding of Braille books and materials, as well as a dedicated education centre.

There will be meeting spaces, a recording studio where audio books can be produced, and areas where clients can meet to better access Braille House services. The functionality of this new space will greatly assist the efficiency of our Braille production by our volunteers.

Page 20

The new building will contain a dedicated children's library, where we can increase the number of books available, including Twin Vision books. By making more books available through the Braille House Library, more children who are blind or have low vision can access reading materials that they are unable to get anywhere else.

A sensory garden will be part of our new outdoor area for patrons to enjoy while visiting. The building includes underground car parking for staff and visitors.

The historic Braille House will be converted to a Braille

museum. It will feature items from its extensive collection, including an overview of the history of Braille House, the evolution of Braille technologies, and interactive Braille pieces.

The renovation of the historic Braille House will include painting of the exterior of the building. The ramp access will be improved with a weather covering, and accessible toilets added to create greater accessibility for all visitors.

The Braille House Library: Over the years

(Words by Eva Lo)

In 2021, I returned to university to study librarianship and archiving. I saw a call out for volunteers for the Braille House Library and decided to sign up. At the time I didn't know that I was joining a long history of volunteers who have kept the library operating for over a century.

On the 22nd of March, 1899, the Queensland Braille Writing Association (the QBWA, which would be later known as Braille House) opened the doors to its free lending library. At the time it consisted of 54 books on "a very good bookcase" (donated by Messrs Smellie and Company) in the Telegraph Building on Queen Street, Brisbane. Among the original 54 books was "Dr Marigold" by Charles Dickens. This book can still be found at Braille House and is considered one of the oldest examples of braille transcription in Australia. The volume is 85 pages long, double-sided and transcribed by an unidentified K. Crothy, whom we only know of because their name is written on the inside cover.

The first volunteer librarian was Miss Naomi Waugh, who held the position for six years. Miss Waugh was involved with the QBWA for over thirty years, holding positions of transcriber, librarian and secretary at various times, before she passed in 1958. She is remembered by her family for her strong personality and being a tireless worker for charities. Her name is one of many on an honours list of volunteers who have transcribed over 50 braille volumes by hand.

Just two months after the library was opened, it was reported at the annual general meeting held on the 30th May, 1899, that the library wasn't large enough to meet demand as the number of applicants for books had exceeded all expectations. With the support of donations of both money and supplies, the work of the volunteers continued and the library expanded, with 51 volumes (about 30 books) added by the next year.

Louis Braille created the braille code in 1824 but formal uptake of the code occurred slowly, with the school system in Paris only adopting the code in 1854. As such, Braille House Library has been around for a majority of the existence of Braille. From books being transcribed by hand to today's embossers, the library's collection is a living example of Braille's 200-year history, the dedication and ongoing passion of the volunteers, and the importance of Braille in the community. In 2023, an external assessment found that no organisation represented the breadth and depth of Braille technologies better than that at Braille House in Australia. The collection has been deemed significant in representing Australia's heritage by the National Library of Australia.

With societal changes and new trends coming and going, the library has seen its fair share of challenging and interesting books. In 1940, "Gone with the Wind" made news with its size, comprising of 18 volumes. Seven years later, in 1947, Braille House made news again when "David Copperfield" was added to the library, thanks to the effort of an unnamed Warwick resident who made the monster effort of completing the 20 volumes in just 20 months. And in 1972, an interview with Mrs Hannam, secretary of Braille House, was published about the addition of "The ABZ of Love", a sex manual previously banned in many parts of Australia, to the library. Due to the increase of marriage in library borrowers, sex instruction books were in demand – though, according to Mrs Hannam, the transcriber had to be chosen very diplomatically.

As Braille technology developed, quicker and more effective transcription meant new ventures could be pursued. In 1949, the QBWA purchased a Crabb Duplicator, a Braille printing press that could emboss 100 sheets of paper with Braille at a time. With the ability to mass produce magazines, the QBWA began publishing its own magazine, produced exclusively in braille. This early version would eventually become "The Dr

Ellice Dart, In Touch Magazine".

In 2017, Braille House made its first foray into the digital world, with the introduction of eBraille books. "Legacy" by Tamara McKinley was the first book to become available in as a brf (Braille Ready Format) but by the end of 2017, over 100 .brf files would become available for borrowing from the library. The eBraille collection continues to expand today.

I believe the significance of the collection and the work of volunteers is best summarised in an address given by Mr Kingsbury the year the library opened on the behalf of students from the Queensland Blind and Deaf and Dumb Institution (now the Narbethong State Special School):

"We, the readers of the books you have so kindly transcribed, desire to gratefully acknowledge your self-denying labours on our behalf. As we are shut out from the many works of literature, which people with sight can and do enjoy, it is a great pleasure to many of us to have these works given to us in raised type, so that we, like yourselves, can enjoy the minds of great men and women, who, by reason of sight, are able to write of and describe things which we can understand when we read them ourselves, and thereby gives us new thoughts and ideas, and to help to take away the gloom that so often settles down on those who have lost their sight." (Taken from The Brisbane Courier, 31st May 1899).

Today, the library has over 8000 volumes across a range of picture books, children's literature, and the Braille and Moon library, both digital and physical, but demand still exceeds the size of the collection. However, I hope that this is an ongoing problem even as Braille House grows. It serves as a humble reminder of how important this historic service continues to remain to blind and vision impaired Australians across the country.

Our Services

Braille House services exist to provide more than half a million vision impaired Australians with access to the Braille and Moon literacy training and resources required, to enjoy their right to live independently, live fully and take part in all aspects of life.

Services include:

- A free lending library of Braille, Moon and eBraille books and magazines
- Braille teaching
- Braille transcription
- Production of all Braille and Moon documents
- Production of tactile maps and other tactual resources
- Consulting on all things Braille.

Braille House also produces “Twin Vision” — picture books where Braille is added to make them accessible to both visually impaired and sighted children. When a blind child is reading the same text, in the same format, in the same environment as a sighted child, parent or carer, they enjoy the social educational benefits of reading together.



How to get involved



Volunteer - Volunteer and benefit from developing new skills or updating existing skills, whilst making new friends and feeling a sense of community and personal satisfaction.

Become a Member - Become a borrower of our Library for FREE or membership to Braille House for \$25 per person. Membership provides a vote at the Annual General Meeting, an invitation to a Member's Christmas morning tea, as well as VIP offers, discounts and communication on all the other events and activities happening in our community and partners.

Donate - Approximately 56.6% of our funding comes from donations and fundraising. Your support will Bring the World to our Fingertips. Visit the Braille House website for details on how you can give your support - www.braillehouse.org.au

Corporate Involvement - Braille House works with all types and size of organisations to create mutually beneficial partnerships based on common values and shared objectives. Many of the involvement opportunities may provide a tax deduction/benefit. Please contact Braille House on 07 3848 5257 to discuss opportunities further.

Gift in Will - Your bequest to Braille House, no matter how small, will be greatly appreciated and your legacy will support us and our community to continue our vital work.

Fundraise for Braille House - Your fundraising enables everyone to fundraise for us. Whether it be a morning tea, sponsored team in a walk/run, an a-thon of sorts or an event like a wine tasting, fundraising is fun and satisfying.

Get Involved - Visit our website www.braillehouse.org.au for more information on how you can get involved, follow and like us on social media, or call us on 07 3848 5257 to learn more.




BRAILLE HOUSE
THE WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS
www.braillehouse.org.au

507 Ipswich Road
Annerley QLD 5257
07 3848 5257
www.braillehouse.org.au
ABN: 93 456 085 512
Charity Registration Number: CH0028