

**2ND WBU-AP EMPLOYMENT SYMPOSIUM
BEIJING CHINA
SEPTEMBER 2012**

**Bridge the knowledge gap,
remove the barriers of Access to
information"**

**Presented by Grace Chan
on behalf of Maryanne Diamond**



GREETINGS

Before I begin, Maryanne has asked me to pass on her apologies for not being here in person. She is disappointed that she is unable to join us, but asked me to wish all of you an enjoyable, informative and successful symposium.



CONTENT OF PRESENTATION

This presentation will talk about: problems resulting from a lack of access to information, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and finally how to use the CRPD to change the current situation.

THE PROBLEM

Let me ask you:
Who here would
accept an education
system for your child
knowing that it is very
likely they will not
learn to read?



THE PROBLEM

Who here would find it acceptable to be amongst the more than 70% of workforce age people actively seeking work knowing they will very likely never find it?



THE PROBLEM

Who here would accept that reading to their children is not an option?

Who here would accept that they cannot read the latest novels and share the experiences with family and friends?



THE PROBLEM

Who here would be comfortable to constantly rely on someone else to locate and read to them essential and personal information?

Well, this is how it is for most people who are blind or have a print disability



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THE PROBLEM

Today there are 285 million blind and low vision people in the world and this number is growing.

Extend this to print disabled and you have an even greater number of people who cannot read a conventional book, magazine or website as they are either unable to see the print, hold the item or access the website.



THE PROBLEM

Less than 5% of published material, i.e. books, and less than 20% of websites are accessible to persons who are blind or have a print disability.



THE CRPD

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007.

THE CRPD

The Convention is intended as a human rights instrument with an explicit, social development dimension. It adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.



THE CRPD

It clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights and areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced.



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THE CROD

Within 2 years and thereafter every four years, countries that have ratified the convention must provide a report to the UN against the Convention. There are a number of articles which deal with access and information. However, Article 21 of the Convention addresses access to information.

This article reads:

ARTICLE 21 - FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OPINION, AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice, as defined in article 2 of the present Convention, including by:

ARTICLE 21

(a) Providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost;



ARTICLE 21

(b) Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions;



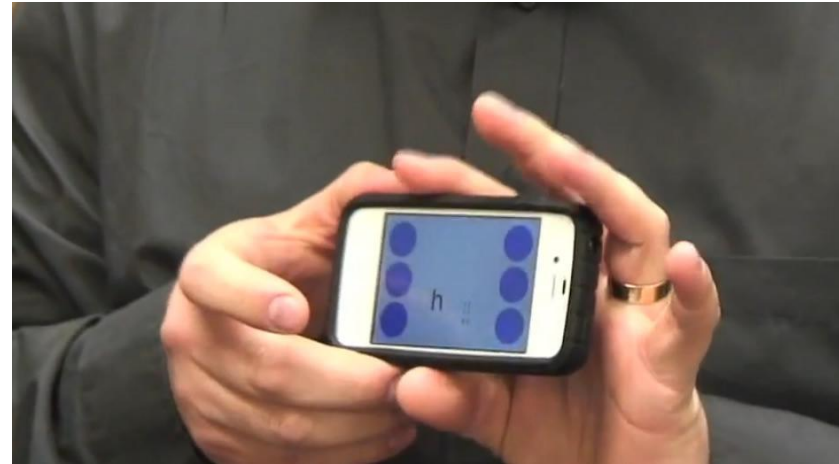
ARTICLE 21

(c) Urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities;



ARTICLE 21

- (d) Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities;
- (e) Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages.



SOME COMMENTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WBU ON THIS ARTICLE:

All information in the public domain should be made available in accessible formats in a timely manner and without additional cost. These formats include, but are not limited to, Braille, audio, large print and electronic text. These should be provided regardless of any copyright laws. Included in this is all correspondence and information from public services, such as hospitals, public utilities and government departments, as well as those providing an essential service such as banks.

SOME COMMENTS

Blind and partially sighted persons have the “right to literacy through free instruction in methods of reading by touch such as Braille, and in methods of communication for deafblind people.” Interpretation services for deafblind people at no extra cost are also essential in order to realize this right.



SOME COMMENTS

The right to free postage of Braille or audio material for the blind is one that needs to be protected in order for all blind and partially sighted persons to have access to materials.



SOME COMMENTS

Another means of access is the provision of adapted equipment and access to software to enable blind and partially sighted people to access the Internet and any other information that is electronically stored.



COMMENTS

All government websites and those offered by public services must meet full accessibility standards for access by blind and partially sighted persons using screen access technology.



COMMENTS

A key element of our work to improve access to information over recent years has been our work at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).



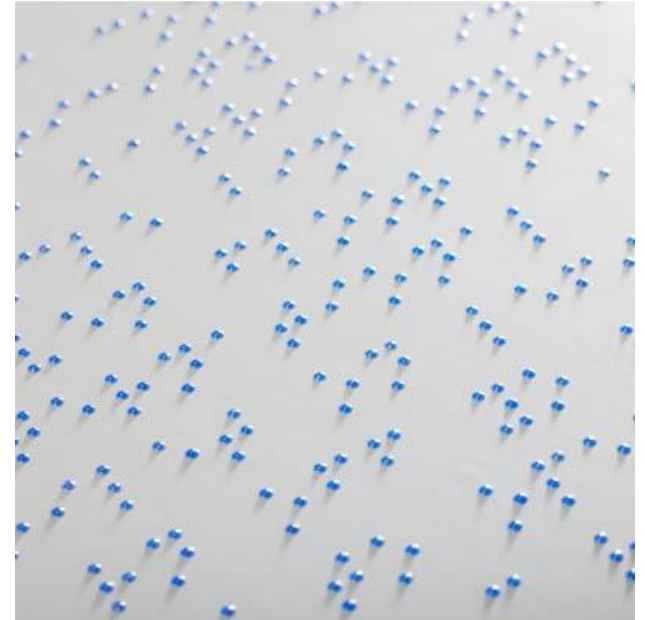
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COMMENTS

In May 2009, Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay tabled a proposal for a treaty at the WIPO Copyright Committee, known as the “SCCR”. This has become known as the WBU Treaty, due to our involvement in its drafting.

COMMENTS

As you will know copyright law is national law. Books created into alternate format under exceptions in one country cannot be shared with another country. We know that some books are converted into an alternate format in more than one country in the same language.



COMMENTS

Often this work is done by organisations which have limited resources which need to be spread across many areas of work.



ABOUT THE TREATY

The Treaty Proposal would:
Make it legal for print disabled individuals and specialist organisations to make accessible copies of published works in all countries which sign the treaty



ABOUT THE TREATY

Make it legal for accessible books to be sent internationally without permission from publishers

Prevent contracts with publishers from undermining copyright exceptions for print disabled people (currently they sometimes do)

THE PROGRESS

Progress to achieve this treaty has been slow. We now have a single text with some important issues to resolve. We have a timeline that if kept, will provide for a diplomatic conference to be held in 2013. If we achieve this, it will have a huge impact on the number of books available to persons who are blind or have a print disability in all countries.

THE PROGRESS

At the same time, the DAISY Consortium has been working with publishers to agree on a standard digital file format used for all published books. It appears that the DAISY format will be incorporated in E-Pub3 which will assist in effectively and efficiently making books available in alternate formats.

GREATER WORK NEEDED

There continues to be a great deal of work being undertaken to ensure that mainstream electronic books are accessible and the devices such as the Kindle, are accessible.

HOW TO USE THE CRPD

The acceptance and coming into force of the CRPD are really just the beginning steps for us in our quest for substantial change. For the CRPD to truly make a difference, it must be implemented and monitored at the national level.

MY PLEDGE

While the WBU can and does make the voice of blind and partially sighted persons heard at the global level, it is our national members within each country in the world who must work with their members, with other organizations of disabled persons and with their governments to ensure that the provisions included in the CRPD are realized.

TOOL KIT

The Toolkit has been developed for the use of members of the World Blind Union. It is a collection of resources to help individuals, groups and organizations understand and use the CRPD.

MY PLEDGE

Countries that have ratified the CRPD must include disabled people in their monitoring mechanisms and this resource will provide a starting point for blind and partially sighted people and their supporters.

THE WBU CRPD CHECKLIST

The WBU CRPD checklist, one of the documents contained in the toolkit, is a comprehensive guidance to assess the degree of community accessibility for blind and partially sighted people.

THE WBU CRPD CHECKLIST

The questions are based on the different Articles of the CRPD. Answering no to any questions indicates areas that can be improved.

THE WBU CRPD CHECKLIST

This list represents an ideal community if every item is met. It is unlikely that every point will be met in every situation, and in some situations very few will be met.

THE WBU CRPD CHECKLIST

While this may be discouraging, the checklist does provide an end point to work towards, and might be used in the creation of action plans for progress, and in setting priorities since an attempt to remedy everything would be impossible.

THE WBU CRPD CHECKLIST

Some parts of some Articles may require local action; others may be better worked on at a national level. Some aspects of accessibility may be pursued alongside other groups of disabled people in strategic alliances.

THE WBU REGIONAL NETWORK

The WBU has also established Regional Networks to help promote our CRPD advocacy and monitoring work at the national level. We are encouraging all national members to designate CRPD Champions who would in turn participate in Regional CRPD Networks under the leadership of a Regional CRPD Coordinator. The role descriptions for the Regional Coordinators and national CRPD Champions is contained in the Appendices.

ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

The WBU has hired an Advocacy Coordinator, funded by CBM for one year initially. The role of the Advocacy Coordinator is to support the World Blind Union and its members with respect to developing implementation and monitoring strategies related to the CRPD and to support the WBU and its members to represent the needs and views of blind and partially sighted persons through other UN instruments. There are many opportunities to influence implementation plans and monitoring reports and this activity normally happens at the country level

THE ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

The Advocacy Coordinator will work with members who need support in advocating for implementation plans that include blind and partially sighted persons' needs, and so support members to contribute to the monitoring of these UN instruments.

THE ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

We know that these processes can be quite complex and so it is hoped that our Advocacy Coordinator will be able to support our members in a way that is meaningful and that will make a difference for blind and partially sighted persons in your countries.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, information is power! Access to information is necessary in every part of our lives. Whether, participation in our communities, for education, for work, recreation, for cultural participation and more.



CONCLUSION

It is important for us to know our rights and exercise them. It is necessary for all of us to know the CRPD, be part of the monitoring and implementation at the national level and use it.





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