

The Braillists Foundation
World Braille Day Conference 2025
4 January 2025
11:00 AM-4:00 PM
New College Worcester

Contents

Welcome from the Chair: Dave Williams	3
Welcome from New College Worcester	4
Conference Agenda	5
Hospitality	6
Keynote Speaker: Eleanor Stollery	7
A Touching Experience: Tactile Fundamentals Workshop with Melanie Pritchard and Chantelle Griffiths	8
The Braille Bar comes to New College	9
Hands-on with Braille History	11
Our Exhibitors	12
Meet our Sponsors	13
Give Us Your Feedback	19
Thank You for Joining Us	20

Welcome from the Chair

Dave Williams

As Chair of the Braillists Foundation, it is my huge pleasure to welcome you to the UK's first World Braille Day conference held face to face here at New College Worcester.

I am sure you will join me in paying tribute to our dedicated team, including Braillists Foundation volunteers and staff at New College, who I know have been working hard for many months behind the scenes to bring together this truly historic event to celebrate braille and tactile literacy. Thank you all for helping us make this dream a reality.

I also want to acknowledge the very generous support of our incredible sponsors and exhibitors, without whom we would not be here. These remarkable individuals and organisations continue to drive forward the development of innovative braille products, services and understanding. I urge you to spend some quality time getting hands on with as many braille items as possible during your visit.

I hope you find our agenda of fascinating braille presentations stimulating, and that you are able to use this opportunity to connect with thought leaders from across our braille community.

The Braillists is an entirely community-led organisation, and in 2024 we saw the efforts of our work reach an even wider audience. Our Braille for Beginners course gives anyone who wishes to learn to read braille by touch the opportunity to do so, completely free of charge. Many of you will have attended one of our masterclasses, where we take a deeper dive into an aspect of braille, whether that is a new product on the market or how to make the most out of the braille you already know. Nothing exemplifies our grass roots nature quite like our weekly book club, where Braillists members come together to support each other with their braille reading, both hard copy and electronic.

I look forward to meeting you and sharing in your passion for braille's power to transform lives, enable us to work, learn, and live independently.

I wish you a productive and thought-provoking conference. Thank you for being here and we look forward to celebrating braille and tactile literacy together.

Welcome from New College Worcester

We are absolutely delighted to welcome you to Worcester today as the venue for this wonderful event—it is an honour for us to be your hosts for the day. Thank you to the Braillists Foundation for inviting us to be part of it.

We hope that most of you will be familiar with the work of NCW and the role we play in the lives of the young people who attend our school. Indeed, there may be even some NCW alumni in the room! For anyone who isn't familiar with us, the focus here is on each student achieving their highest academic potential and learning vital skills for life to enable success and independence beyond NCW. Alongside independent living skills, mobility and access technology, braille remains as important to us as ever and our braille department is thriving. We actively encourage our students to develop their braille skills, both for accessing their learning and also as a crucial skill to enable access to the world and to be an independent adult in the workplace and the community.

As such, it is an honour to be co-hosting this event marking 200 years since the braille code was created. We hope you all have a wonderful day—connecting, collaborating and celebrating.

Long live Braille!

From all at NCW

Conference Agenda

- 11:00: Welcome and overview of the day – Matthew Horspool
- 11:05: Welcome from NCW – Susan Potter, Head of Braille
- 11:15: Chairman's message – Dave Williams
- 11:25: Insights from a young person – Eleanor Stollery
- 11:45: Exhibition area opens
- 12:00: A Touching Experience: Tactile Fundamentals Workshop – Melanie Pritchard and Chantelle Griffiths
- 1:00: The Braille Bar opens
- 3:30: Update from the Braillists – presenting planned projects and activities for 2025
- 4:00: Conference ends

Hospitality

Tea, coffee and a buffet lunch will be provided during the conference, and staff from the college will be available to assist with serving food and providing allergen information.

Both men's and women's toilets can be accessed from within the building. A disabled toilet is also available, please speak to one of our volunteers or a member of NCW staff if you need this.

If you have brought your guide dog, there is a designated spending area, and water is available in shared bowls.

Complementary Wi-Fi is available for the duration of the event. Please connect to the following networks:

- Windows 10/11 devices: NCW Campus x
- All other devices: NCW-Campus

When prompted, use the following login details:

- Username: Guest11
- Password: Br19ille

Keynote Speaker: Eleanor Stollery

Eleanor Stollery is a remarkable 13-year-old advocate for braille literacy. Blind from a young age due to an optic pathway hypothalamic glioma, Eleanor has already made an extraordinary impact on both the arts and accessibility.

In 2019, at just eight years old, Eleanor made her professional stage debut as Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol* at London's Old Vic Theatre, reprising the role in 2020 and 2021. She is also a talented voice actor, bringing the character Lark to life in the animated series *Milo* on Channel 5's *Milkshake*. Most recently, she was featured in *My Life: How I See It*, a CBBC documentary which followed her journey to audio describe a live show at the National Theatre.

In February 2024, Eleanor became the first blind young person to deliver live audio description for a UK theatre performance. Collaborating with the National Theatre, she described a schools' performance of *The Witches* using a braille script and hands-free technology to operate the audio description console.

As the keynote speaker for our World Braille Day Conference, Eleanor will share her unique perspective on the importance of braille and accessible technologies, telling us how she uses braille as a young blind student and actor.

Find out more about Eleanor at eleanorsvoice.com

A Touching Experience: Tactile Fundamentals Workshop with Melanie Pritchard and Chantelle Griffiths

Time: 12:00 PM-12:45 PM

Location: Youth club

Whether you are new to braille or a seasoned professional, join Melanie Pritchard and Chantelle Griffiths from our Braille for Beginners course to explore some practical, tangible ways to hone in on your sense of touch. In this workshop we will dive deeper into some of the fundamental principles we need to improve our tactile and braille technique. We'll explore the surprising intricacies of hand scanning, the power of reset objects and the principle of context versus code, to name a few. Learn in real time alongside readers of all abilities and ask any questions you may have about the art and science of braille reading. With lots of practical, actionable tips, tricks, exercises and techniques, there's something here for everyone, no matter where you are on your braille journey.

Melanie Pritchard is the lead tutor for our Braille for Beginners course. She can often be found as a panellist at our popular Braille Bar events and as a room leader in the Book Club. Mel has a wealth of experience as a braille teacher and is currently an assistive technology volunteer with Warwickshire Vision.

Chantelle Griffiths is Co-Founder and CEO of New Zealand's Tactile and Technology Literacy Centre and uses braille for everything from reading recipes to learning music. She has been a braille instructor, proofreader, transcriber and assistive technology consultant for many years and regularly moderates Braillists events.

The Braille Bar comes to New College

Time: 1:00 PM-3:30 PM

Location: Youth Club

For the first time ever, we are taking the Braille Bar on the road, bringing it to you in person at New College Worcester! Previously held online as a popular drop-in event on Zoom, the Braille Bar has been a go-to resource for anyone with a burning braille-related question.

The Braille Bar is a dedicated space where you can connect with braille experts face-to-face. Whether you are new to braille or have been using it for years, the Braille Bar is an informal and friendly space where you can seek advice and discuss braille with a like-minded community.

Drop in and discover why the Braille Bar has become such a valued part of the Braillists programme.

Our Braille Experts

Matthew Horspool is the Treasurer and General Manager of the Braillists Foundation. He hosts the Braillecast podcast and can often be found hosting or moderating various Braillists events. As an assistive technology specialist and braille transcriber, Matthew weaves together his expertise in braille technology with his extensive knowledge of the braille code and its use and implementation. As a result, he is a dynamic leader in the local and international braille community and is involved in many braille-related initiatives. In his spare time, Matthew tinkers with computer code and sings in the choir at Coventry Cathedral.

James Bowden is the Braille Technical Officer at RNIB. He is an expert in all things braille code and is responsible for maintaining the Liblouis braille tables used by many braille translators and devices. James has an extensive knowledge of the braille music code and is heavily involved in music-related initiatives. He regularly presents masterclasses for the Braillists Foundation on topics such as the Duxbury Braille Translator and the UEB code. He is a regular panellist on our Braille Bar, where his passion for unusual braille codes and little known signs shines through.

Chantelle Griffiths is Co-Founder and CEO of New Zealand's Tactile and Technology Literacy Centre and uses braille for everything from reading recipes to learning music. She has been a braille instructor,

proofreader, transcriber and assistive technology consultant for many years and regularly moderates Braillists events.

Connor Scott-Gardner is an assistive technology trainer, accessibility consultant, and advocate for Braille literacy. He works with blind people in education and employment, training them to use tools such as screen readers and Braille displays. As a Disabled Students Allowance Needs Assessor, Connor provides tailored recommendations for technology, software, and support, enabling disabled students to succeed in higher education. In his spare time, Connor is a writer and travel enthusiast. He documents his journeys on his blog, where he shares advice on navigating airports, finding accessible accommodation, and making the most of cultural experiences. He also highlights positive examples of accessibility in museums and public spaces, aiming to encourage blind people to engage with culture and history. Currently, Connor is working on the first draft of a travel book, and is planting metaphorical seeds that he hopes will grow into a tactile museum exhibit in the near future.

Hands-on with Braille History

Part of recognising just how much Braille has transformed lives involves taking a look back into the past. This is also a way for us to learn about our collective history as blind people—something many of us are denied, whether through unintentional neglect or active exclusion from the community.

Since Louis Braille invented the Braille code, it has evolved to meet the changing needs of blind people and keep pace with innovations in technology. Our heritage display gives you the opportunity to explore the many and varied ways blind people have written Braille over the years, as well as the tactile codes that were proposed as alternatives.

Meet the Experts

Alan Thorpe has been servicing braille machines for over 18 years. He has an interest in mechanical machines and currently has a collection of over 20 braille writers.

Manisha Patel has been teaching at Queen Alexandra College for over 30 years. She previously taught ICT and Maths, and for the last 7 years has been teaching Braille, Braille technology, and the NVDA screen reader.

Tilly Guthrie is a PhD researcher at the University of Sheffield. She studies correspondence amongst blind communities in 19th century Britain, including the use of tactile alphabets before the standardisation of Braille. Previously, she worked as the Music Librarian at RNIB, and trained as a Book Historian at the University of St Andrews.

What You'll Find at the Display

The heritage display will feature a fascinating range of items, including but not limited to:

- Embossed type samples of tactile fonts that competed with braille for use by blind people.
- A shorthand machine.
- The Stainsby braille writer.
- A selection of writing frames.
- A variety of Perkins brailers—some which you may never have seen before!

Our Exhibitors

We are pleased to welcome the following organisations to our conference today. Please take the time to visit them and find out more about their products and services.

- AccessMind
- Braille Pop-It
- Bristol Braille Technology CIC
- Dot Inc.
- HumanWare
- Index Braille AB
- jw.org
- Paige Braille
- Torch Trust
- Visionaid

Meet our Sponsors

AccessMind

AccessMind is a new enterprise founded by Orbit Research and a team comprising Adi Kushnir and Avi Mann, with a mission to transform the Assistive Technology industry by bringing the benefits of mainstream technologies to products for people who are blind or visually impaired. With decades of experience in the Assistive Technology industry and a proven track record in developing world-leading breakthrough products and technologies at affordable prices, the AccessMind team brings a unique combination of a modern, innovative mindset and tremendous depth of skills and experience to usher in a new era in Assistive Technology.

For more information, visit accessmind.net

All Formats

All Formats is delighted to sponsor the world's first Braille conference created by Braille users, for Braille users in celebration of 200 years of the invention of the Braille code and World Braille Day.

All Formats has been producing Braille, large print, audio and accessible digital information for 30 years. Our clients include major banks, commercial printers, insurance companies, utilities, charities and sector related organisations who rely on our quality and timely services to effectively and efficiently communicate with their vision impaired customers.

All Formats is a not-for-profit company owned by Queen Alexandra Charity with roots tracing back through Birmingham Royal Institute for the Blind, established 1848; the opening of a school for blind and partially sighted children and the continuous teaching of Braille to the present day.

At All Formats, the journey starts with a conversation. Talk to us today to find out how we can help you connect and communicate with a significant minority community to which we are proud to belong.

Email Us at allformats@qac.ac.uk

Find Us Online at allformats.org.uk

Or call our friendly team on 0121 803 5471

Aspire Consultancy

Aspire Consultancy are proud to be agents for the orbit research family of products. Orbit Research is a company that develops innovative and affordable braille and tactile products designed to enhance accessibility for people who are blind or visually impaired. Orbit products are known for being cost effective when compared with more traditional braille products. Their products are robust and designed to withstand frequent use, and they focus on creating user friendly interfaces that work across multiple languages.

Their line-up includes products for both reading and writing braille, viewing tactile graphics, and establishing communication between braille and non-braille users.

Orbit Research aims to bridge the accessibility gap by making braille technology more accessible for education, work, and daily life. You can find out more about the Orbit line of products, as well as other technologies offered by Aspire Consultancy, by visiting aspire-consultancy.co.uk

Bristol Braille Technology CIC

Bristol Braille Technology CIC is proud to sponsor the Brailleists Foundation.

BBT are a not-for-profit organisation and the inventors of the Canute 360, designed in close collaboration with the Brailleists' community as the original affordable multi-line Braille display.

We are pleased to be demonstrating the new Canute Console Premium, a tactile workstation for viewing and editing text, tables, charts, vectors, maps and code over nine lines—or 360 cells—of refreshable Braille.

We are looking forward to meeting attendees to experiment with new applications. Whether you are a student, professional, entrepreneur or simply a keen brailleist, let's talk about how to make your chosen career and interests as accessible as possible.

Website: bristolbraille.org

Dot Inc.

Dot Inc. is a leader in developing innovative assistive technology solutions for the visually impaired including revolutionary braille cell technology and access to multi line text, tactile images and graphs, leveraging new technologies in collaboration with mainstream technology providers to deliver scalable solutions for generating accessible content. Dot Inc. products and services greatly enhance access to information in education, employment and daily life.

Dot's technology is integrated into public transportation kiosks in Busan, Korea, enabling blind people to access essential information such as tactile maps.

A standout product is the Dot Pad, the first smart tactile graphics display. Equipped with 300 braille cells, it can render both Braille text and tactile graphics in real-time, allowing users to access visual content such as maps, graphs, photos, and equations from any source. The device includes a 20-cell Braille display for text, enabling simultaneous interaction with text and graphics.

Website: dotincorp.com

HumanWare

Since 1988, HumanWare's inspirational vision has resulted in the development of more than 50 highly intuitive and intelligent solutions that change the lives of people living with visual impairment and vision loss. For use at home, in the classroom or in the workplace, our technology has helped more than 1 million people worldwide to see things differently and live independently.

Since the year 2000 with the first BrailleNote, Braille Technology has been in the DNA of all HumanWare staff. Understanding the importance of refreshable Braille in providing further access to literacy and real-time information, this drive and vision for improving technology has culminated in Monarch, a multi-line dynamic Braille display that renders both Braille and tactile graphics simultaneously.

For more information, visit humanware.com

Index Braille AB

Index Braille is the world market leader when it comes to Braille embosser production. By continuously raising the technical level, Index Braille has made braille more accessible for people worldwide.

Our success is attributed to the collaborative efforts of our dedicated team in Gammelstad, Sweden. With a focus on human-centric design and a commitment to constant improvement, we've created an attractive and unique workplace. Our organization embraces a flat structure, fostering a “family feeling” with low staff turnover.

We are driven to make an impact, rather than just being a manufacturer. We explain ourselves as purpose and value-driven, as we continually strive for improvement, inclusivity, and environmental responsibility.

Another description we like to use is that we are a “Närodlat” (locally sourced) business. We value and prioritize sustainable, local practices. This is what we believe makes our products so high end, from inside and out.

Index Braille products are distributed by HumanWare in the UK. You can find out more about us and our products at indexbraille.com

Paige Braille

Paige Connect is an affordable adaptation for your classic braille writer that connects it wirelessly to any phone, tablet or laptop for instant braille translation and gamified learning. The Paige Connect board is posted to you in a package that fits through your letterbox and simply replaces the base of your braille writer to transform it into a Bluetooth keyboard. This makes it compatible with any software that accepts SDFJKL braille input, including these tools:

- paigebraille.com/translate
- paigebraille.com/learn
- paigebraille.com/compatibility

You can hear a short demonstration of Paige Connect with RNIB's Dave William's at audioboom.com/posts/8476150-csun-2024-paige-braille. We would love to meet people in person at New College Worcester on the 4th of January. If you cannot attend for any reason, please book an online demo at paigebraille.com/buy or reach out to us at hello@paigebraille.com

Sight and Sound Technology

Sight and Sound Technology is the leading supplier of assistive technology in the UK and Ireland. We offer assessment, technology solutions, training and lifetime support so that our clients are able to make best use of the technology. We represent some of the world's biggest names in the assistive technology sector, including Vispero, Selvas and OrCam as well as being master distributor for many innovative new low vision and blindness products.

Sight and Sound Technology is part of a Joint Venture called Study Tech that has been awarded the contract to deliver and support AT to some 30,000 Higher Education students in the UK.

Our passion for Braille shines brightly, not only in our innovative product line, but also in how we engage with the blind and low vision community. We work closely with education professionals to support and advocate for Braille as a crucial literacy tool. Our portfolio now features an exciting array of single and multi-line Braille products, and we continually seek out new and groundbreaking technology. We're delighted to be part of the Braillists World Braille Day event in Worcester, and we can't wait to meet Braille users throughout the UK and beyond to share our enthusiasm for this transformative code.

Visit sightandsound.co.uk for more information.

Thomas Pocklington Trust

Thomas Pocklington Trust strives for equality of blind and partially sighted people in every aspect of society. We are a charitable organisation with a dedicated staff—over half of us are blind or partially sighted—and over 200 volunteers who have lived experience of sight loss.

Our work is focused on championing the needs and aspirations of blind and partially sighted people, fully recognising the depth and complexity of the challenges faced. We address these challenges not only within our local communities across the country through direct action by members of our Sight Loss Councils, but also at the heart of our national government and policy structures. We are a leader in providing direct grants that target systemic change and improvements for blind and partially sighted people.

Our mission is to support blind and partially sighted people to bring about equity and inclusion in society and their own lives.

For more information, please visit pocklington.org.uk

Give Us Your Feedback

We are delighted you have been able to join us for the first World Braille Day event of its kind. We hope you have enjoyed it!

We would like to gather some feedback about how you found the day. Please be as honest as possible—we know we are not perfect! The feedback we collect will help shape other events like this which we might hold in the future, and will help us raise much-needed funds to continue the Braillists' work.

Please complete our short survey at braillists.org/wbdfeedback

Thank You for Joining Us

The Braillists Foundation would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who made the World Braille Day Conference 2025 a success. We knew we wanted to bring blind people together to celebrate braille and connect with one another, and there was no better day for us to do this than World Braille day.

This event would not have been possible without the support of our sponsors, volunteers, speakers, and attendees. Your passion and commitment helps us continue celebrating the legacy of braille and advancing its future.

Acknowledgements

- New College Worcester, for graciously hosting this event.
- Our sponsors, for their generous contributions.
- Our volunteers and organisers, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes.
- All attendees, for your enthusiasm and engagement.

Stay Connected

Keep the conversation going by using our official hashtag:
#Braillists25

Follow us on social media:

- X (formerly Twitter): @Braillists
- Facebook.com/BraillistsFoundation

Visit our websites:

- braillists.org
- braillecast.com

Donate to the Braillists: braillists.org/donate

Thank you for being part of this journey.

The Braillists Foundation Team.