

Learning how to use ICTs is not always a straightforward process. Students need to try out different software and train to use them effectively. They often need to retrain themselves on how to learn because the traditional method they were taught does not work for them (i.e. going from reading text instead of listening to it). For this reason, I suggest that students with LD should learn how to use ICTs as early as elementary school and high school. In fact, the school system should be obligated to teach them to do this. Using ICTs effectively is after all, a cross-curricular competency! This way, students can learn how to better incorporate technology in their daily academic tasks. ICTs can help students with LD succeed academically; they just need to learn how to use them before beginning Cégep.

For more information about the study or about ICTs in general, please visit our website at www.adaptech.org

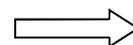
Technology

The Power of Choice: Braille in the Educational System

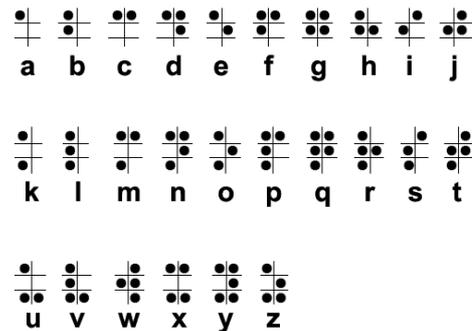
By Natalie Martiniello, B.A

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Nowhere in history is there an invention as pervasive and influential as the printed word. Indeed, print is everywhere, yet we often take its power for granted. In school, learning to read and write is the backbone for later success, inclusion and societal participation. Arguably, the most liberating aspect of the modern age is the power of choice: we can often choose to access information electronically or in print, depending on what is most ideal for the situation at hand. But what about those who do not read print? It is time to reaffirm the importance of Braille for those who use it, and to consider innovative ways to provide our blind and low vision students with the same level of choice and freedom that is provided to their sighted peers.

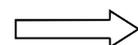


Less than 5% of the western world's information is available in an alternative format (e.g. electronic texts, large print, Braille); however, this percentage is significantly lower when assessing the availability of Braille alone. In the developing world, where 90% of persons with visual impairments reside, less than 1% (!) of published material is accessible to non-print readers. Logistical red-tape (such as copyright laws) protect the interests of authors, yet these same laws prevent countries from sharing the accessible formats they produce, thus requiring much duplicative reproduction of materials (a process that is both costly and which greatly delays access to Braille).



Some textbook publishers are beginning to provide electronic versions of their books to students who need them, but for those who would like the option to review material in Braille, financial support is sometimes required. Refreshable Braille displays (that connect to computers through a USB port and provide instant Braille output) may improve availability to Braille, but this product is expensive (often costing several thousands of dollars). In a recent study by the Adaptech Research Network, students with disabilities commented on the barriers that hinder their ability to complete their programs of study, and access to information ranked among the top four obstacles noted by respondents.

1. CNIB/INCA. (2012). *Reading re-imagined: A national digital hub to support service delivery to Canadians with print disabilities - Conceptual model/business plan*. Page consultée le 2 août 2012 http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/CLAAatWork/Committees/HUB_Business_Plan-Final_March30-2012.pdf.
2. McClanahan, P. (2012). Publishing a closed book to blind poor. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Le 1^e août 2012. Page consultée le 2 août 2012 <http://www.smh.com.au/world/publishing-a-closed-book-to-blind-poor-20120731-23cun.html>.
3. Martiniello, N., Barile, M., Budd, J., Nguyen, M.N., Fichten, C.S. (2012). Hotline: Students with disabilities speak out! Présentation lors de la conférence AQICESH. Montréal, Québec. Le 6 juin 2012. Page consultée le 2 août 2012 <http://dc160.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/adapt2/Presentations/MartinielloAQICESH2012.pdf>



Screen-reading programs (such as JAWS) and off-the-shelf accessible computers with voice-output (such as Apple products) provide students with a wide variety of options, but these options can work in conjunction with Braille. Audio formats alone are a poor substitute for learning how to spell and communicate in writing – skills that can only be learned through Braille or print. And while accessible technology is a great equalizer, what can truly replace the timeless satisfaction of being able to turn the pages of a book, or being able to read a menu on your own without a second thought, just like everyone else?



More than 200 years since the 13-year old Louis Braille invented the Braille code, Braille still continues to be relevant, and I write today to affirm that it is, by no means, replaceable.

Technology

A Stich in Time Saves Nine: The Importance of Offering Alternative-Format Textbooks in a Timely Fashion

By Alexandre Chauvin,

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For many years now, accessible education has been a major concern for Canadian postsecondary institutions. With the steady stream of students with varied interests and needs entering postsecondary institutions, service providers all across the country have been faced with the challenge of providing these students with diverse accommodations.

