*CANBERRA BLIND SOCIETY (CBS)*

*September 2020 Newsletter* 421

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# From the President’s Chair – Peter Granleese

Welcome once again to the CBS Newsletter. September usually heralds the end to Canberra’s winter months with the zub-zero nights and gloomy days and a perceived slow-down in the tempo of life. This winter has been bleaker than usual, due in part to the lockdown caused by the Covid-19 Virus.

Spring is in the air at last with some bright sunny days although the nights are still a bit on the chilly side. The easing of restrictions have allowed more freedom to be out and about meeting up with friends and engaging in a range of other activities, provided social distancing is observed.

With the easing of restrictions, I am often asked when will CBS be re-opening for business.

In point of fact, CBS has not closed and has been using the time during the lockdown to reorganise its administrative structure in preparation for its re-activation as a service provider. New furniture has been purchased while the kitchen has undergone a makeover with the installation of a convection stove, billy hot and cold water system and dishwasher. New computers and a multi-line phone system have also been purchased. The fit out of the retail outlet has been completed and stocked with a range of items, mainly an extensive range of Eschenbach magnifiers. We also have a small range of large button telephones, kitchen and bathroom scales (two models of each) and a talking kitchen thermometer.

Prior to 2014 and the introduction of The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), CBS ran a comprehensive outreach program that was highly thought of by the ACT Government who partly funded the program for many years.

With two grants provided by the NDIS under the 2019 and 2020 Information, Capacity and Linkages (ILC) Funding Rounds, CBS is back in business as a service provider. The grants will enable CBS to re-establish its outreach program through the appointment of an outreach officer who is scheduled to commence work by the end of September.

By that time, CBS expects to be open for business during its normal working hours from 10:00 am to 4:00pm Tuesday to Friday, subject to any changes to the lockdown rules. If there are unforeseen changes to the opening date we will let you know via the newsletter email circulation list. The number of people that can be in the office at any one time will be restricted in order to comply with the social distancing requirements that there be two square meters between each person. Group activities held in the back room cannot accommodate more than six people under the two square meter rule. This will affect the weekly Braille group, monthly cooking class and book club if there are more than six people in the room at any one time. Melbourne Cup and Christmas Lunch will not go ahead this year as the function rooms at The Griffin Centre are not large enough to cater for large gatherings while practicing social distancing. All other activities involving small groups of people meeting face to face, should not be affected providing social distancing is practiced.

In the meantime, the office will be open by appointment for anyone wanting to purchase items from the Society’s retail outlet or for any other reason. For more information please contact the office on 02 6247 4580 or send an email to [canblind@canberrablindsociety.org.au](mailto:canblind@canberrablindsociety.org.au).

As part of the move back to a service provider, the CBS Board has developed a three-year Strategic Plan the plan that sets the future direction of the Society over the next three years. It takes into account the goals in the Society’s Mission Statement as well as its obligations under the two ILC funding agreements.

The Plan identifies three main objectives, relating to the quality and effectiveness of services, the development of a broad client base built on public awareness of CBS services within the ACT community and an organisation that is well governed and managed. Each of the three Objectives have Strategies containing a range of activities to achieve the plan’s objectives. The Strategic Plan is extensive in its scope and will constitute the Society’s work plan for the next three years. Watch this space.

# The Way I see It – Graham Downie

The frustration for people who are blind completing a task on the internet, only to be defeated by a visual challenge, is overcome to some extent by hCaptcha.

I came across this recently when setting up an account with Bunnings. To complete the set up, one had to select all the blue cars, or a similar visual challenge. Some sites offer an audio challenge. Frequently, the audio is of such poor quality that completing it is either very frustrating or not possible. Apparently, audio captchas are easily defeated by modern machine learning techniques, which is why they have become increasingly difficult, with noise, odd timing and unusual word combinations to defeat attackers.

The Bunnings site did not offer an audio challenge, but directed screen reader users to the hCaptcha website which offers an accessibility account to bypass visual challenges. Plonk in your email address, and you receive an email with a link to an accessibility cookie.

The email says, “Save this email, then open it and click the link again in order to refresh the cookie if you start to see challenges again.”

The cookie apparently lasts about 30 days. Refreshing it is quick an easy, and it works, as long as the website uses hCaptcha. My experience using the cookie is limited so I cannot give definitive details on how it works. On some of the few occasions I have used it, a code appeared, which I selected and pasted into an edit field. On other uses, it simply let me check the box to say I was human.

Here is the bad news. Only about 15 per cent of websites use hCaptcha. Others use protection such as Google’s reCAPTCHA, which the nice lady from hCaptcha says has somewhat inferior accessibility options and disables them entirely in many cases.

She said, “There are several display modes of hCaptcha, including the so-called invisible mode in which it only requests a challenge infrequently, but all modes are accessible, accept the hCaptcha cookie, and identify themselves as hCaptcha to screen readers when triggered.”

After using the nearly acquired cookie on the Bunnings website, I wrote to support@hCaptcha.com to seek more information. In particular, its email says, “Please note that the number of requests per day is limited, and your IP and account will be banned in the event of abuse.”

In a prompt reply, the spokeswoman said, “In practice you are extremely unlikely to be banned as a normal accessibility user: we look for various signals that make us very confident of abuse, like trying to quickly register many accessibility emails from one IP.

Similarly, the cookie issued will rapidly extend its lifespan up to about 30 days if you appear to be normal. The goal is that you should only need to bookmark the email link and click it about once a month in normal use.”

Encouragingly, she said, “Making sure we deliver a pleasant and fully accessible solution is quite important to us. Some of the people at our company are unable to reliably complete audio challenges, so we wanted to take a simpler approach.”

Perhaps the easiest way to get an hCaptcha account is from the website: hCaptcha.com and click the accessibility link.

Unfortunately, my transaction on the Bunnings’ website did not end well. Though I proved I was human, I still could not complete the transaction. So I phoned Bunnings’ support line, and was transferred to the Belconnen shop where a helpful man took my order. The goods were delivered next day.

Positively, I placed an order on Summit Gear’s website - Summitgear.com.au - which was the most accessible website I have used. I sent feedback to thank the business. This required getting passed hCaptcha, which, with my cookie active, was also a simple process.

With the current high demand for online shopping, this is a good time to remind merchants they will lose custom if their websites are not easily accessible. The methods for having websites accessible by screen readers are well established. Merchants which do not comply should expect to pay as people shop elsewhere.

# Retail shop at CBS

CBS has a number of products that may make life easier for people who are blind or have low vision. Each month we will showcase an item or two to let you know what is available.

CBS has talking meat thermometers, talking weight scales (both for cooking and people), and magnifiers from Eschenbach – everything from pocket magnifiers to lighted stand magnifiers. We have display items at the CBS office and we can arrange an appointment for you to come and have a look.

# In the kitchen

**Sweet and Sour pineapple chicken wings**

Ingredients

3/4 cup pineapple juice

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1/4 cup tomato sauce

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

1.5kg chicken nibbles (Chicken nibbles are chicken wings that have been cut in half at the joint and the tips discarded. You can use other cuts of chicken if you prefer.)

Method

Step 1. Combine pineapple juice, sugar, tomato sauce and Worcestershire sauce in a jug. Place chicken nibbles, in a single layer, in a ceramic baking dish. Pour over sauce. Turn to coat. Cover. Refrigerate for 6 hours or overnight, if time permits, occasionally turning chicken in marinade.

Step 2 Preheat oven to 200C/180C fan-forced. Remove chicken from fridge. Stand at room temperature for 15 minutes.

Step 3 Bake chicken in marinade for 35 minutes, turning twice during cooking, or until browned and cooked through. Serve.

# Tech Updates

**How to keep your glasses from fogging up while wearing a face mask.**

You know what’s not fun? Wearing a face mask to help slow the spread of COVID-19 like a responsible citizen, and then getting fogged-up glasses. Yes, we’d rather get foggy glasses than catch or spread this unprecedented virus—or go against CDC recommendations to wear a face covering in public.

Back in 2011, two scientists published a [study](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3293317/) in the Annals of The Royal College of Surgeons of England that illuminates a simple, at-home hack for this very phenomenon, which “can be a nuisance and even incapacitate” medical staff. Anti-fogging spray products do exist, but this trick requires zero shopping and adds no risk of putting harsh chemicals near the sensitive eye area.

Here’s how it works: Right before putting on a face mask to head to the grocery store, wash the glasses with soapy water and shake off the excess. Then, let the glasses air dry or gently dry off the lenses with a soft tissue before putting them back on. Now the lenses should not mist up when the face mask is worn.

How simple is that? But it’s scientifically sound, promise. As study authors Sheraz Shafi Malik and Shahbaz Shafi Malik explain, wearing a face mask directs warmer, exhaled breath upward (rather than outward, like normal) where your glasses sit. The warm water vapor condensing on the cooler surface of the lenses causes them to form tiny water droplets and get misty. “The droplets form because of the inherent surface tension between the water molecules.”

The soapy water’s sneaky role, then, is to leave behind an undetectable surfactant film that reduces said surface tension and allows these water molecules “to spread evenly into a transparent layer.” The authors also note this unassuming trick, or “surfactant effect,” can be used in any day-to-day attempt to prevent fogged-up glass surfaces.

**Laundry Lens Now Accessible for VoiceOver Users**

Laundry Lens is the perfect companion for doing the laundry.

Just point your camera at a care label and you will be presented to the proper instructions on how to take care of your clothes and garments. By swiping up, you can also look up the laundry symbols manually and discover many others.

Laundry Lens includes a full list of symbols, from washing to ironing, and even professional ones, so you know exactly what type of care your laundry requires. Requires iOS 13.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.

# Medical News

**Multinational researchers develop treatment to prevent blindness avoiding transplantation.**

The team was co-led by May Griffith, a researcher at Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital Research Centre, which is affiliated with Université de Montréal and is part of the CIUSSS de l’Est-de-l’Île-de-Montréal.

The results of this multinational project have just been published in the journal Science Advances.

“Our work has led to an effective and accessible solution called LiQD Cornea to treat corneal perforations without the need for transplantation.”

May Griffith, Full Professor, Department of Ophthalmology, Université de Montréal “This is good news for the many patients who are unable to undergo this operation due to a severe worldwide shortage of donor corneas,” she said.

“Until now, patients on the waiting list have had their perforated corneas sealed with a medical-grade super glue, but this is only a short-term solution because it is often poorly tolerated in the eye, making transplantation necessary.”

A synthetic, biocompatible and adhesive liquid hydrogel, LiQD Cornea, is applied as a liquid, but quickly adheres and gels within the corneal tissue. The LiQD Cornea promotes tissue regeneration, thus treating corneal perforations without the need for transplantation.

Griffith praised the work of her trainees, Christopher McTiernan and Fiona Simpson, and her collaborators from around the world who have helped create a potentially revolutionary treatment to help people with vision loss avoid going blind.

“Vision is the sense that allows us to appreciate how the world around us looks,” said Griffith. “Allowing patients to retain this precious asset is what motivates our actions as researchers every day of the week.”

For Sylvain Lemieux, president and CEO of the CIUSSS de l’Est-de-l’Île-de-Montréal, “This innovative treatment in ophthalmology confirms the level of expertise of the Centre universitaire d’ophtalmologie de l’Université de Montréal (CUO) at the Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital (HMR).”

“The HMR has one of the largest teams of ophthalmologists in Quebec and one of the best-equipped ophthalmology research laboratories in North America,” he said. “The hard work of our scientists and clinicians contributes daily to best practices and knowledge development.”

“The multiple therapeutic possibilities resulting from our fundamental research, particularly in regenerative medicine, benefit and give hope to people suffering from ophthalmological diseases not only in Quebec, but in the rest of the world,” he concluded.

# Audio Book Club – Bob James

Audio Book Group will meet again by telelink on Wednesday 5th at 10:00 for an hour or so chatting about books, ideas, and the pleasure of sitting down or walking along with a good yarn in our ears. This month’s book is

“The French Photographer” [known in the US as “The Paris Orphan”], by Natasha Lester. Please join us, first time members are most welcome, its best to have read the book, but join us anyway. Inquiries to Bob James on 6296 26444.

In October we may find a way to meet face to face in our usual place, the CBS Office, this will depend on space available and any changes to the Covid-19 restrictions.

# Thanks to our Sponsors

Canberra Blind Society thanks our sponsors for supporting our local community

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| **Southern Cross Club Community Rewards Program**  Members of the Southern Cross Club can help us raise funds by taking part in the Southern Cross Club’s Community Rewards program. Nominate the Canberra Blind Society as your organisation to benefit under the rewards program and five percent of your purchases made on food and beverages in the public restaurants, bars and grills are included. |

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