East Wind No. 29

October 2019

Official Newsletter of the World Blind Union – Asia Pacific (WBUAP)

“The Voice of The Blind and Visually Impaired in The Asia Pacific Region”

Please visit the World Blind Union – Asia Pacific website
www.wbuap.org

In this issue

Editorial by Mary Schnackenberg ................................................................. 2
Meet our Secretary General ........................................................................ 2
Enhancing public awareness of the visually impaired to realise our long-term vision 3
E-scooters and International White Cane Day ........................................... 3
Sendai Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction ................................. 5
News from Thailand .................................................................................. 6
SDG Spotlight: Improving Life Chances Through Accessibility ............... 8
New Zealand joins the Marrakesh Treaty .................................................. 11
Made-in-Vietnam text-to-speech app reads to the blind ......................... 11
WBU-ICEVI General Assemblies 2020 ..................................................... 13
East Wind Editorial Team Contact Details ............................................. 14
Upcoming Dates for East Wind ................................................................. 14
Editorial by Mary Schnackenberg

Thank you for joining us again for another issue of East Wind. And special thanks to our several writers who keep me posted and our networkers who send me important information for you.

In this issue we visit Hong Kong, Thailand, Vietnam, and more. We meet Jason Ho. We learn about the work of the Accessible Books Consortium that has grown out of the Marrakesh Treaty. And we spend a little time in my country, New Zealand.

We welcome your contributions. There's a list of dates for the next five issues of East Wind at the end of this issue.

Meet our Secretary General

Mary Schnackenberg writes:

In Ulaanbaatar during the WBUAP Mid-Term Regional Assembly Jason Ho was elected the Secretary General for this region. He succeeds Teddy Kahil who assumed the role at the 2016 WBU General Assembly. Here we learn about Jason Ho.

Jason Ho writes:

As well as being the WBU AP Secretary General, I am a member of the WBU Youth Engagement and Leadership Committee and I am the Vice President of the Hong Kong Blind Union. So I am actively involved in the advocacy for equal rights for persons with visual impairment, both locally, regionally and internationally.

Apart from serving the blind community, I am a registered social worker, serving the general public in need at a not-for-profit organisation in Hong Kong.

I am a braille user and always use a braille display to support my work. I read contracted English braille and Cantonese braille. As Hong Kong is working on the full implementation of Unified English Braille (UEB), I am involved in the technical committee to work on the localisation of the UEB code. For instance, we need to consider the best symbols to use to separate the Chinese and the English braille.

When I use a computer to read documents, I usually read them with braille. But when I use my iPhone, I use the speech output when I am walking around or on my way somewhere, switching to braille output when I am in meetings to read documents. When I am using Jaws to read documents, it says Cantonese and English words correctly. But I usually read documents in braille to learn the details of them. Speech output works for me for quick access. For the iPhone, the Chinese braille is still not 100% accurate and the Hong Kong Blind Union is working with Apple on it.

In my spare time I enjoy playing the piano and love the music composed by Chopin and Mozart. I do read braille music score. I learnt when I was very small, around the age of 6. I also like jogging and reading fiction.

About ten years ago an audio description service was started for films in Hong Kong. I used to watch the films with my sighted friends while my friends whispered the
movement of the characters for me. Now, with audio description, I can enjoy the films on my own.

******

Enhancing public awareness of the visually impaired to realise our long-term vision

By Jess Shek, General Secretary of Hong Kong Blind Union

In the past few months, there were a few incidents about the misunderstandings of the visually impaired that grabbed the local media spotlight.

The first incident: A blind man was using his smartphone while waiting for a bus in a queue. He was being filmed and the video was posted on an online forum. Netizens (members of the online forum) accused him for pretending to be blind and jumped in a queue, just because he was able to use a smartphone.

Another incident: A visually impaired soccer fan was watching a football match with his telescope at a stadium, as the telescope could help him to see the movement of the football players and the ball clearly. It aroused discussion among the audience that he was a member of a soccer betting gang, and without understanding him, the audience called the police. After police investigation, they learnt that the telescope is an assistive aid for him to watch the football match.

One more incident: A police officer stopped a blind pedestrian at a train station, mistaking his white cane for a weapon.

From the above incidents, we can see that there is still a lack of public awareness of the needs and capabilities of the blind and the partially sighted. Only if we join hands to raise the awareness and shatter misconceptions of blindness, we are able to realise the long-term vision of the World Blind Union: “A world in which we, as blind or partially sighted people, can participate fully in any aspect of life we choose.”

******

E-scooters and International White Cane Day

Mary Schnackenberg writes

Jess Shek's story about a blind man's white cane being mistaken by a policeman as a weapon leads us nicely into our joining with the WBU Toronto office to honour this year's International White Cane Day.

Living as I do in Auckland, New Zealand, this year's White Cane Day has special meaning as it's the first anniversary of the introduction of e-scooters to New Zealand. Almost without warning, they hit our streets first in Auckland on 15 October 2018.

What's an e-scooter some of you may be asking? When I was a little girl I had a scooter, a child's vehicle that typically has two wheels with a low footboard between them, is steered by a handlebar, and is propelled by pushing one foot against the ground while resting the other on the footboard. Trying out a scooter was a great way to begin improving my balance in a safe environment at our home.
But a year ago, e-scooters were launched on my city's footpaths. An electric motor has been added and the handlebars have been raised to accommodate adults who are supposed to drive them sensibly on our footpaths. Because of a problem in New Zealand's road laws, e-scooters are not allowed to ride on the roads. The commercial providers of e-scooters use a system where you log on to a website and hire the e-scooter, paying for the few minutes of use on your credit card.

Sadly, no one thought about the effect on blind people. First of all they can travel at speeds of up to 30 kilometres per hour. One of our blind East Wind Auckland readers meets at least one e-scooter on his way to and from work in central Auckland almost every working day. Some e-scooter riders, when they have arrived at their destination, simply dump the e-scooter on the footpath forcing a blind pedestrian with cane or guide dog to somehow find and navigate around them without tripping over them. Other riders put the e-scooter upright on their stand. But if a fast-moving white cane using blind pedestrian hits an upright e-scooter hard enough there's a high chance he or she will knock it over off its stand. Because of the electric motor, e-scooters are quite heavy, that is, you wouldn't want to have one fall against you especially if you are a smaller person.

Some Australian cities are doing battle with e-scooters on footpaths. So far I have not read about e-scooters in any other WBU AP countries.

Blind Citizens NZ and Blind & Low Vision NZ (previously the Blind Foundation) have lodged strong protests with central and local government. New Zealand officials and politicians are struggling to figure out how to manage e-scooters safely. And I applaud WBU's statement on International White Cane Day which we reprint below.

**WBU statement on White Cane Safety Day.**

The World Blind Union (WBU) joins the rest of the world in observing White Cane Safety Day on Tuesday 15th October 2019.

White Cane Safety Day reminds the world of the importance of the White Cane as a tool for independent living for blind and partially sighted persons.

The World Blind Union takes this opportunity to advocate for policies, laws and proper infrastructure in all countries to allow independent and safe travel of blind and partially sighted persons in their homes, educational institutions, work environment, and their community.

This is in keeping with Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) which requires countries to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers and ensure that persons with disabilities can access their environment, transportation, and public facilities. It is also in line with Article 19 which states that persons with disabilities must be able to live independently, to be included in the community and to choose where they want to live: and Article 20 which states that personal mobility and independence are to be fostered by facilitating affordable personal mobility training in mobility skills and access to mobility aids.

In addition, Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals stresses the importance of making cities and human settlements inclusive and safe for all. It is necessary that countries work towards achieving this Goal as universal access will eliminate some
of the challenges currently experienced by blind and partially sighted White Cane
users in our member countries.

As we commemorate this important day, it is our hope that policy makers recognize
the importance of the right of blind and partially sighted persons to travel
independently and safely in a universally accessible environment, and the use of the
White Cane.

We believe that a more inclusive, accessible and equal society will lead to better
living conditions for our community.

*****

Sendai Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction

Martine Abel-Williamson, Treasurer of the World Blind Union, writes:

From 12 to 17 May I participated, as part of the International Disability Alliance (IDA)
delegation, in the Sendai Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2019.
The conference was held in Geneva, Switzerland, convened and organized by the
UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

It was the first time I experienced working at UN working group level, and it was a
great opportunity to work along-side many international and regional organisations,
including RIADIS (a regional Latin American pan disability organisation), the
International Federation of People who are Hard of Hearing, the Pacific Disability
Forum (PDF), etc. The PDF is already doing great work in the DRR and related
fields.

I shared with the other stakeholders a resource prepared by New Zealand's Ministry
for Primary Industries (MPI) that has a list of what we should have ready in an
evacuation backpack for our assistance dogs including our guide dogs. Many people
refused to evacuate during Hurricane Katrina which struck New Orleans in August
2005, as they were not allowed to take their pets with them. You can read the
evacuation pack check list at https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-

Other topics covered during the May DRR conference included:
• Early warning systems,
• Reconstruction following a disaster,
• Accessibility of refugee camps where there are many and often uncounted disabled
  forced displaced persons,
• Disabled persons as first responders,
• Mobile apps and how accessible those are or not.

Our delegation's statement to the UN was published in the WBU E-Bulletin for July
2019.

We also had the opportunity to discuss some draft inputs on next year's Asia and
Pacific Ministerial Conference on DRR. This next conference is part of the Sendai
Framework monitoring process and is held every two years. The conference will be
held in Brisbane, Australia in June 2020.

*****
News from Thailand

Thipyaporn Khempila writes about three events:

Policy Platform Workshop

On March 28, 2019, the Thailand Association of the Blind (TAB) organized the policy platform workshop on “the Mobilization of Problems, Needs and Suggestions of persons with disabilities for Purposing the Policy Proposal to the Government”. This was held in the offices of the Thailand Association of the Blind in Bangkok.

Thailand is the current Chair of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN). It's important to bring the rights of the population in the ASEAN region to the attention of the Thai government.

At the 33rd ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN Master Plan 2018-2025 was launched. This adopted the rights or the international laws of persons with disabilities into the region's actions such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Bali Declaration. The ASEAN Master Plan aims to integrate the rights of persons with disabilities into mainstream rights. Persons with disabilities must be able to access their rights such as accessing the equality of education, accessing the transportation facilities as well as having a stable, prosperous and sustainable economic status.

In this workshop, representatives from the Thailand Association of the Blind, the Association of Disabilities Thailand and the Association of Parents of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities of Thailand came together to brainstorm issues and problems, needs and suggested solutions to present to the Thai government. Based on groups working at this workshop, the first three priorities with suggested solutions were:

1. Accessibility of all domains of education for persons with disabilities;
2. Accessibility of source of capital (financial assistance including loans); and
3. Accessibility of facilities, transportation and services from the public sector.

22nd TAB National Convention and 7th ASEAN Community Blind Forum

On April 20-24, 2019, the Thailand Association of the Blind (TAB) organized the 22nd TAB National Convention at Thong Tarin Hotel in Surin, Thailand. This is the annual TAB National Convention which moves to a different venue around the country each year. The theme this year was “the Blind's Empowerment: From the Rights-based Policy and Legislation towards an Inclusive Society”.

The 7th ASEAN Community Blind Forum (ACBF) was held together with the 22nd TAB National Convention. This year there were 11 representatives from six ASEAN countries: Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand. Education, employment and access to information were key topics.
International seminar of 80th Anniversary of the Education of the Blind in Thailand

On May 10-12, 2019, the Thailand Association of the Blind (TAB) collaborating with the Foundation for the Blind in Thailand, under the Royal Patronage of H.M. the Queen and other organizational networks, to organize the international seminar of the 80th anniversary of the Education of the Blind in Thailand. The theme was “Opening the Ceiling of Expectations for Sustainable Development of Quality of Life”. The seminar was at the Ambassador Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

The president of the Foundation for the Blind in Thailand, Mr. Khan Prachuabmor, welcomed attendees to the opening ceremony. The president of the Thailand Association of the Blind, Mr. Torpong Selanon, spoke about the objectives of the seminar. The Education Minister Dr. Teerakiat Jareonsettasin chaired the opening ceremony.

This international seminar aimed to brainstorm ideas about approaches to managing the education of the blind in Thailand. Educational experiences were shared from other international guest speakers including:
- Dr. Fredric K. Schroeder, President of the World Blind Union;
- Dr. Frances Gentle, President of the ICEVI;
- Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa, Programme Specialist, Education, UNESCO Bangkok;
- Dr. Sharifah Mariam Aljunied, Principal Educational Psychologist, Psychological Services Branch, Education Programmes Division, Ministry of Education, Singapore;
- Mr. Chan-Yau Chong, President of the Hong Kong Blind Union;
- Dr. Yasuko Futaba, Research Associate, Center for Barrier-free Education, The University of Tokyo, Japan;
- Ms. Dinh Viet Anh, Vice President of Vietnam Blind Association;
- Mr. Wong Yoon Loong, Manager Centre for Advocacy, Research and Empowerment for the Blind National Council for the Blind Malaysia.

They spoke on the topics of “Raising the Bar, Closing the Gap, Ways Towards Quality Education”, “Towards Inclusive Education with High Expectations”, “Accessibility to Quality Inclusive Education”, and “Educational Provision for the Blind in ASEAN Countries”.

The Education minister spoke about the future education policy for blind children. Dr. Monthian Bunton, blind member of the National Legislative Council, also spoke on the topic of “Opening the Ceiling of Expectation on the Sustainable Development”. Other Thai guest speakers were invited to shared their own experience involving educational management of the school for the blind and their life experience based on their career with participants from the organizations of the blind all over the country.

Held in conjunction with the seminar was the exhibition “More Than Eyes Can See”. The exhibition was divided into four sections:

1. Photos by the Blind: Cooperating with the Facebook Page “Photos by the Blind”, this section presented photos taken by blind people using phone cameras or other types of cameras. There were shots of nature, places and the monument to Miss Genevieve Caulfield, “mother” of the education of the blind in Thailand.
2. Braille for the Blind demonstrated the process of braille production and the production of tactile materials for blind students. Visitors could observe or try to use braille writing tools (slate and stylus) to write the braille code.

3. Technologies for the Blind demonstrated mobile applications that blind people use in their daily lives such as social media, food ordering, taxi booking and the TAB2Read app for listening to audio books. There were demonstrations of screen reader programs for using the computer and low-tech items such as the braille watch, talking watch, a tool of water level measuring, and so on.

4. Products made by the Blind were on display and available for sale.

This exhibition was open to the public from 24 May to 2 June at the National Bank of Thailand in Bangkok. Feedback from the public was very positive.

Thailand’s only guide dog and blind owner

Editor’s note

This article gives us a glimpse of what it's like to be the only guide dog owner currently in Thailand. It was published on 4 August 2019. See https://www.channelnewssasia.com/news/asia/thailand-only-guide-dog-and-blind-owner-11773114?cid=fbcna

*****

SDG Spotlight: Improving Life Chances Through Accessibility

Editors note

Our thanks to Martine Abel-Williamson for bringing this to our attention. Martine now serves on the Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) which is led by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). ABC leads co-operation between countries who have acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty.

ABC news

In September, world leaders will gather at United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York to signal how they will boost action to respond to the climate emergency and ensure the health and well-being of people everywhere.

WIPO’s Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through helping increase the number of books worldwide in accessible formats and making them available to people who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled.

WIPO stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the entire UN family, actively working to help unlock the innovation, creativity and competitiveness that are key to achieving the 17 UN SDGs. ABC brings together all of the key players to work on improving the lives of the 253 million visually impaired people (WHO, 2017) worldwide.
ABC's ongoing project in Argentina has funded the production of 4,200 accessible educational books in Spanish for students who are print disabled in primary and secondary schools. Funding for the project with Tiflonexos in Argentina has been provided by both WIPO and the Republic of Korea.

To date, ABC has helped organizations in 17 developing and least developed countries to produce and deliver accessible books through training and technical assistance in accessible book production, as well as funding for the production of over 9300 educational materials in national languages for primary, secondary and university students who are print disabled. In a world in which, according to World Blind Union (WBU) estimates, less than 10% of all published materials can be read by blind or low vision people, the work of ABC is changing lives.

**A path to higher education**

Nguyen Manh Hung is a blind student who benefitted from ABC activities and one of the first blind people in Viet Nam to obtain a master's degree.

Through ABC training and technical assistance provided to the Sao Mai Vocational and Assistive Technology Center for the Blind (Sao Mai) – a not-for-profit organization in Viet Nam that works with print-disabled persons – Sao Mai was able to produce accessible books with funding provided by the Government of Australia. In this manner, Nguyen was able to obtain the university-level educational books he needed in accessible formats.

He is a particular supporter of e-books, having quickly realized after starting university that they are a great way to help tackle the shortage of learning materials.

“After doing two theses, one for my first degree at university and one for my master's degree, I completely understand the values and benefits of e-books. If I, as a blind person, could not use those electronic resources, it would be impossible for me to work on academic research papers.” Nguyen Manh Hung, Master of Psychology, Vietnam.

Dam Le Kim is a student at Vien Hong High School in Vietnam. She also benefited from ABC help through Sao Mai. She is in the 9th grade and was concerned that no books would be available for next year. Fortunately, she was relieved when teachers from Sao Mai introduced her to the newest textbooks produced through the ABC project. She now uses her computer and smartphone to read these accessible books.

Dam le Kim would like to graduate from grade 12 and continue with her higher education.

“I was so glad because I had been worried that next September, I wouldn't have the textbooks of newer version for grade 10. I am really grateful to Sao Mai and WIPO for producing these accessible textbooks. They help me read faster – as fast as my sighted friends in class!”

**A helping hand to finish high school**

Christy is one of the beneficiaries of ABC activities in Indonesia, also supported by funding provided by the Government of Australia. In April 2019, Christy was scheduled to take her junior high final exam and thanks to the reading device
provided by ABC she was able to obtain the textbooks needed to better prepare for the exam.

“I can now read books on my own, and I don't depend on someone else like I did before. I am very happy.”

She was also able to become more independent, by learning new computer skills through the Mitra Netra Foundation, ABC’s partner in Indonesia, which in turn helped her access additional reading material.

Christy wants to continue reading books during secondary school and is passionate about music and learning piano. She is also eager to learn new languages, such as Mandarin and Japanese. Her dream is to become a classical music composer who speaks several languages.

**ABC Calls for Applications for Training and Technical Assistance from Organizations in Developing and Least Developed Countries**

October 9, 2019

The Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) is now inviting capacity building project applications from organizations (or partnerships of organizations), working to produce books in accessible formats for persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled.

The “Call for Proposals” is open to organizations worldwide and geographical balance will be considered when evaluating applications.

Interested and eligible organizations should read the Guide to Submitting an ABC Application Form for Training and Technical Assistance PDF, and complete and send the Application form PDF, to Accessible.Books@wipo.int by December 31, 2019. Following this, the ABC Secretariat will evaluate and make a short-list of organizations. Projects generated from the short-list will then be developed further with the ABC Secretariat and selected finalists will sign a contract with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).


**ABC Global Book Service**

ABC, in addition to providing training and technical assistance in the latest accessible book production techniques, also manages the ABC Global Book Service, which is an on-line catalogue that allows participating libraries for the blind and organizations serving people who are print disabled, known as authorized entities, to obtain easily the accessible content they need.

• Approximately 540,000 titles in 76 languages in a range of accessible formats.
• Over 7,000 music scores (partitions) in braille.
• A secure, automated mechanism to transfer accessible digital books across borders.

By using the ABC Global Book Service, authorized entities can:
• add accessible digital books to their collections free of cost;
• provide a wider range of accessible digital books in different languages to patrons;
• go to one source for the international exchange of titles from countries that have ratified and implemented the provisions of the Marrakesh VIP Treaty, as well as those that have not;
• review only one exchange contract – no need to have separate agreements with other authorized entities.


*****

**New Zealand joins the Marrakesh Treaty**

On 3 October 2019 New Zealand deposited its instrument of accession to the Marrakesh Treaty with the World Intellectual Property Organisation. This means that the Marrakesh Treaty will enter into force for New Zealand on 3 January 2020. The amendments to the New Zealand Copyright Act 1994 that will implement New Zealand's obligations under the Marrakesh Treaty will also enter into force on 3 January 2020.

Now that New Zealand has lodged the instrument of accession at WIPO, it will mean that by the start of 2020 when it finally comes into effect in that country, twelve countries in our region will have become members of the treaty. They are:

- Singapore
- Republic of Korea
- DPR Korea
- Mongolia
- Australia
- Japan
- Thailand
- Philippines
- New Zealand
- Kiribati
- Cook Islands
- Marshall Islands

*****

**Made-in-Vietnam text-to-speech app reads to the blind**

When she was a student, Nguyen Thi Thu Trang was part of a volunteer group that made audio books for visually impaired people.

Meeting with many people who couldn't see daylight, Trang said they had a huge desire to access knowledge.

“They want to be able to read books, newspapers and search the Internet. But few tools were available to support their needs, while books in Braille are costly,” she said.

While she was working, she realised that merely recording books was not the best solution because it required too much time and effort.
As a student with background in technology at the Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST), Trang believes there could be a big pivot with technology and disabilities.

In 2009, when she was a professor at HUST, Trang herself organised a project to record audiobooks for visually impaired people.

The wishes of the blind people she met were her motivation to start a 10-year journey working on a Vietnamese reader that features text-to-speech technology. She and her two colleagues later set up a company in 2018 and named it Vbee: Vietnamese – Be your Eyes.

Text-to-speech technology has actually been researched and used around the world for many years, and is widely applied in services such as consulting, customer interaction, smart homes and smart traffic.

What makes Vbee stand out is that it is the first technology developed in Viet Nam for Vietnamese people, with Vietnamese language as the output voice, Trang said.

“The characteristics of the Vietnamese language are complex with different accents and dialects, so it is much harder to apply the technology,” Trang said.

The desire to have an artificial voice with the same emotion and tone of a Vietnamese human voice is the difference that the Vbee team cares about.

“It took us a lot of time to create a voice with an intonation that is attractive and close to the user, other than the regular reading tools that Google and Microsoft provide for the Vietnamese market,” she said.

Vbee’s text-to-speech engine also features male and female accents from the North and South, and can be trained to learn a new language in four hours.

It was not an easy path for Trang and her co-workers, because the process of Vietnamese speech synthesis is a complex one.

“We have to analyse components such as sentences, words, languages and phonemes, and identify the contextual and tonal characteristics of these components. Then we have to create a model for the duration, prosody and other acoustic parameters to generate the corresponding speech,” Trang said.

Therefore, in addition to her knowledge of computer science, Trang also had to learn about speech processing and linguistics.

Khuc Hai Van, who was born blind, and an user of Vbee, said he loves the app.

“I felt like a real person with a Vietnamese voice reading information and newspapers to me,” he said.

“I hope Vbee will develop more useful applications that can support people like me,” he said.
More applications

During the development of the tex-to-speech reader for the blind and visually impaired, Vbee's leaders realised the potential of its text-to-speech engine (TTS engine) in other fields, said Ho Minh Duc, co-founder of Vbee.

One of these applications is VADI, a "virtual assistant" for drivers.

The first is directions and traffic warnings. Information is collected and updated by a software development team, while people with the app can send in traffic updates themselves.

The second function featured on VADI is audio coverage of news and directions. Compared to similar applications, virtual assistance provides information in a natural human-like voice.

"VADI has received very positive feedback from mobile users," Duc said.

“We look forward to contributing Vbee solutions using artificial intelligence to the market, helping businesses and users to have new solutions to better serve customers while saving more,” Duc said.

Trang said although there are many text-to-speech products in the market, with products that are tailor-made for Vietnamese people built from our TTS engine, she believed Vbee has a chance to stand out.

In order to apply research on a product, it takes a lot of time and effort, and she was proud that her team had overcome such periods to bring our product to the market.

With the advantage of experienced engineers in application research, products development, marketing and sales, Vbee is constantly updating its core products and adapting them to market needs.

“Although there are large corporations providing the same service, the advantage Vbee has is that it can respond quickly and customise well to quickly fill the niche market,” Trang said.

Vbee will focus on completing its core solution and its smart call centre product. Other potential projects relating to text-to-speech technology in the future include an automated movie dubber, virtual MC and digitalised lectures.

Source: https://www.asiaone.com/digital/made-vietnam-text-speech-app-reads-blind
1 October 2019.

******

WBU-ICEVI General Assemblies 2020

The next joint General Assembly of the World Blind Union (WBU) and the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) will be held on 19-24 June 2020 in Madrid, Spain. For further information and instructions, please visit the General Assembly website at:
https://www.worldblindnesssummit.com/en
Upcoming Dates for East Wind

Here are the dates for the next five issues of East Wind. Please can you put these dates in your diaries so you can get your news to the Editor in good time.

Issue No. 30 is due in December 2019. Please send your news by 30 November.
Issue No. 31 is due in March 2020. Please send your news by 29 February.
Issue No. 32 is due in June 2020. Please send your news by 31 May.
Issue No. 33 is due in September 2020. Please send your news by 31 August.
Issue No. 34 is due in December 2020. Please send your news by 30 November.

We may edit submissions due to space limitations. Please send your contributions to Mary's email address: mary@aicomms.co.nz.

You should also check out our website www.wbuap.org. If you go to our home page you can sign up to receive updates from our website direct to your inbox or use our RSS feed.

That concludes this issue of East Wind No. 29, October 2019.