



# LOW VISION NEWS

Issue 7

International Society for Low-vision Research and Rehabilitation

April 2004

## President's Message

Since our last newsletter, many exciting things have happened within ISLRR. First, the Royal National Institute of the Blind has made a great deal of progress on what promises to be the largest and most successful international low vision conference to date. See the article by Deborah Beale in this issue for more details. I am hoping that all ISLRR members will attend and will take advantage of the substantial discount given to ISLRR members.

Second, L'École d'Optométrie du Montréal and L'Institut Nazareth et Louis Braille have put together a fabulous bid to host the 2008 meeting in the beautiful city of Montréal, in Québec, Canada. ISLRR Secretary Gary Rubin and I visited the city in September and were highly impressed with the conference facilities and organization, the high quality and motivation of the multidisciplinary organizing team (Jacques Gresset, Line Ampleman and Olga Overbury) and with the city itself, which offers a great deal in terms of charm, reasonable cost, and tourism opportunities. We were also particularly impressed by the collaborative spirit in which all these groups work together. In late December, the 15-member Executive Committee voted to accept Montréal's bid. See the article by Jacques Gresset in this issue for more.

Finally, ISLRR, in collaboration with Lighthouse International, has decided to co-sponsor an invitational conference to take place in Oslo, Norway, in October, to address the global impact of low vision. A group of 30 geographically, as well as professionally diverse invitees will participate, and produce a report that will serve as both a research agenda and a position paper. Results will also be reported in London at Vision 2005. I am delighted that Anne Corn and Krister Inde, who first conceived of this

project, have invited me to serve with them on the organizing committee.

Please look out in your mail for announcements for Vision 2005, take advantage of early registration discounts, and please submit your work to this exciting event!



*Aries Arditi*

## Membership Renewal Time

It's time to renew your ISLRR membership for 2004. If you have not already done so, return your renewal invoice with your dues payment and changes to your contact information. If you need a new copy of your renewal invoice, please contact Lorna Frazier-Lindsey (lor-nafl@adelphhia.net).

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## Vision 2005 Conference

By Deborah Beale, RNIB

Be sure to note these dates in your diary: 4-8 of April 2005. For that is when ISLRR's 8th International conference will happen, in Parliament Square, London. Vision 2005 looks set to be the biggest and best gathering yet, bringing the high quality of networking and debate you expect, with a vast choice of exhibitions, seminars and workshops, assisted by web casting and multimedia facilities. For details of how to register and early booking discounts, please visit [www.rnib.org.uk/vision2005](http://www.rnib.org.uk/vision2005)



The main themes of the Conference are

- Epidemiology and world blindness
- Visual function assessment and visual performance
- Education across the lifespan
- Advances in technology, designing and constructing for an inclusive environment
- Employment
- Clinical care and integrating rehabilitation

To fan the flames of debate, we have a speaker's list that includes **Professor Gordon Legge** from Minnesota University, who developed the MNREAD Acuity Chart; **Professor Anne L. Corn**, known for her studies and writings on accessing transportation and psychosocial aspects of low vision; **Dr. Raymond Kurzweil**, the founder of Kurzweil Technologies, as well inventing of the first text-to-speech synthesiser; and **Professor Allen Foster**, the Medical Director of CBM International, which provides disability rehabilitation services in over a 100 countries.

In addition to the daily exhibitions and formal discussions, there will also be social events to enjoy, where delegates can meet and talk in a relaxed atmosphere. The conference starts with a welcome reception, offers a theme dinner at Conran restaurants, before finishing with a final networking opportunity in the Science Museum!

Equally attractive is the location of this conference. London ranks amongst the most vibrant cities in Europe, with a medley of cultures and tastes. Where else will you find Regency houses nestling with modern skyscrapers? Or curiosities such as Speakers Corner in Hyde Park, and poetry competing with the adverts on the Underground trains? Many of our museums are free, and you can often snap up last minute cheap tickets for musicals and the theatre in Leicester Square (another London institution). Flights to the UK are incredible value right now and with four airports grouped around London, availability is limited only by your choice.

For more information, and details of early booking discounted rates, please log onto the website [www.rnib.org.uk/vision2005](http://www.rnib.org.uk/vision2005), email [vision2005@rnib.org](mailto:vision2005@rnib.org) or telephone Deborah Beale on +44 20 7391 2329.

## Visual Impairment Research Articles Welcome!

By Aart Kooijman

Issue 5.2 of *Visual Impairment Research* just appeared. The following are highlights of articles included in the latest issue.

Goodrich and Ludt (Palo Alto, CA, USA) evaluate the effect of appropriate training on the visual detection ability of hazards in the travel path. Interesting is the approach to assess the potential visual detection distance at the start of the rehabilitation training. Final results of the rehabilitation show high correlations with these potential distances. A method to set a goal of the rehabilitation at the start can be very helpful to plan the rehabilitation process.

Khan, Aasuri and Nutheti (Hyderabad, India) describe the benefits of low vision care for amblyopic patients following surgery of childhood cataract. Childhood cataract is a significant cause of blindness and severe visual impairment in India. Low vision rehabilitation of these people is of high importance for the development of these children and their future independence.

Trauzettel, Dieling and Pietsch (Tuebingen, Germany) analyzed the reading performance of 223 low vision patients in relation to their visual field defects. Slightly more than 40% of their population suffered from different types of maculopathies. In the categories of maculopathies, degenerative retinal dystrophy's, optic neuropathy's and visual pathway the results show that a high percentage (73-82%) of patients were able to read fluently. Fluent reading is not a privilege of people with small or no central scotoma's, even with central scotoma's larger than 10 degrees some subjects were able to read fluently. The 'no reading ability' group comprised only people with central scotoma's larger than 5 degrees radius.

Object recognition by touch in blind people (Graven; Oslo, Norway) shows the complex interaction between visual experience, memory and tactile information in newly and adventitiously blinded people, and the tactile recognition performance of congenitally blinded people. These results might have implications for the educational approach of newly blind people, e.g. learning Braille by sighted conceptualization. However, the author indicates that more research is needed on this topic.

These and more articles are published in *Visual Impairment Research*, the scientific journal of the ISLRR. Manuscripts can be submitted by email to Editors-in-Chief:

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## **An Invitation to Montreal!!! a.k.a. The Festival City**

*By Jacques Gresset*

On behalf of the local organizing committee, we request the pleasure of your company in Montreal for the *9th International Conference on Low Vision*.

The sponsoring institutions are the School of Optometry (École d'optometrie) at the University of Montreal and the Institute Nazareth & Louis Braille (INLB), in partnership with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). Along with the local organizing committee and the international scientific committee, we are planning a conference which will be informative, stimulating, and enjoyable.

The theme of the conference will be *Research-Rehabilitation Partnerships*. The program topics will revolve around the visually impaired person's encounters with rehabilitation services, including the period before the contact, the actual delivery and receiving of services, and the post-contact phase. Additionally, these themes will be explored across three age groups: children, working-age adults, and the elderly. Finally, in order not to restrict excessively the topics presented at the conference, a number of sessions will be devoted to "free papers" on other topics in Low Vision.

You will have the opportunity, while in Montreal, to visit some of the agencies and clinics that provide services as well as some of the university departments that are involved in research on various issues related to visual impairment. You will be able to judge for yourselves how well we live up to the conference theme of research-rehabilitation partnerships in Montreal.

We certainly do not plan to offer you only work and no play! The conference has been strategically scheduled between two of our great summer festivals. Arrive before the conference and take part in our International Jazz Festival when the whole city swings to the beat. There are more free concerts on the streets than you can possibly attend and famous musicians come from far and wide to entertain the lively and friendly crowds. Stay beyond the conference and enjoy the Just For Laughs Festival when the whole city giggles, laughs, roars, or groans in unison - depending on the quality of the jokes.

Please mark Montreal in July, 2008, on your agenda! We look forward to your visit and to your conference participation. Please rest assured of our commitment to making your stay as intellectually stimulating, professionally motivating, and socially enjoyable as possible.

## **Toward a Reduction in the Global Impact of Low Vision**

*By Anne Corn*

Following the 2002 international conference on low vision, held in Gothenburg, a small group of professionals discussed whether efforts were needed to address issues related to the provision of low vision services on a world-wide basis. Although the World Health Organization, and several consumer groups have been active on several fronts to promote low vision services in various regions of the world, there was a sense that a multidisciplinary group from both technologically advanced countries and economically disadvantaged countries needed to come together to create a plan for

the provision of rehabilitation and research on behalf of the world's low vision populations. In addition this group would address the impact of low vision for individuals and for countries. As Dr. Barbie Ejukomenu of the Christoffel Blinden-Mission's ECWA Eye Hospital in Nigeria recently stated, "If low vision received a quarter as much attention given to other health conditions, the global impact of low vision would be much less" (Personal communication, April 16, 2003).

During the week of October 17, 2004 a group of 30 professionals from many countries and various disciplines will address such issues at a meeting, "Toward a Reduction of the Global Impact of Low Vision," co-sponsored by Lighthouse International and ISLRR. This meeting will take place in Oslo, Norway. The 30 participants, who have already been invited, were chosen to reflect diversity in geography as well as disciplines in the eye care and low vision research fields. A proportion of the participants will also bring personal experiences with having low vision.

The objectives for this meeting were developed to create an information platform from which the global impact of low vision could be reduced. When achieved, the objectives could provide guidance for developing, researching, and promoting low vision rehabilitation services in both developing and developed countries. Through this effort countries that are in the initial stages of providing low vision rehabilitation services may learn from the accomplishments and mistakes of those who have already provided services. At the same time, the objectives are delineated in such a way that they promote further development of services and research in countries with a level of expertise.

There are three main goals for this meeting:

- To refine and describe models of service delivery that reflect geographical, economic, and medical needs of low vision populations in economically advantaged and economically disadvantaged countries.
- To develop a campaign and a "call to action" for more countries to establish low

vision rehabilitation programs and to monitor their outcomes.

- To create a research agenda for low vision rehabilitation that will provide directions and link universities and organizations with research capacity.

While Lighthouse International and ISLRR are sponsors, many other organizations and universities are providing partnership knowledge and input, including, but not limited to the World Health Organization, the World Blind Union, and the International Council for Education of Persons with Visual Impairments.

Following the meeting, it is the organizers' expectation that they will bring the results of this meeting to those attending Vision 2005, the next international low vision conference sponsored by ISLRR and the Royal National Institute for the Blind. In addition, through publications and communications with the professional communities, and governmental and non-governmental agencies, a document resulting from this meeting will be disseminated.

For more information, contact the organizing committee: Aries Ardit, Lighthouse International, Anne Corn, Vanderbilt University, and Krister Inde, Lund University.

## Upcoming Events

**June 18-20, 2004,**

(new date was announced 11/4/03)

The **International BiOptic Driving Conference**, in association with BiOptic Driving

Network, held at Charles Kingsley Conference Centre, Chelsea Village Hotels, Fulham Road, London SW6. For additional details, visit [www.biopicdriving.org/conference.htm](http://www.biopicdriving.org/conference.htm). Special note: *ISLRR members receive a 10% reduction on registration fees.*



**April 4-8, 2005, Vision 2005**, ISLRR's conference, presented with the Royal National Institute of the Blind, in Westminster, London (primarily at the QEII Centre and the Westminster Campus). For additional details, visit [www.rnib.org.uk/vision2005](http://www.rnib.org.uk/vision2005)



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Please send short (500 word or less), informal reports of research results, queries on research methodology or equipment, innovative solutions to problems encountered.

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