Start Up and Run a Successful Braille Program

Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Mountain View Braille Program

Mr. Toby Powell, Offender Work & Training Division Manager,
Texas Correctional Industries

Mrs. Delores Billman, Plant Manager,
Mountain View Braille Facility

Mr. Guy Toles, Braille Media Specialist,
The Alternative Access Media Center
What is Braille?

- Braille is a system in which reading and writing are done through touch rather than vision.

- Braille is not a language, but a reading and writing medium.

- Braille is made up of dots set in 6 dot groups called cells. Each cell is two dots wide and 3 dots high. The spacing, size and height of the dots are very exact. The braille cell fits perfectly under the human fingertip.
Why Braille?

- Braille production is labor intensive
  - Keep labor costs down using offender workers
- Offenders learn marketable skills
  - Give back to society
- Prison braille is different at each facility, no set standards to follow
- Not your typical prison job such as the kitchen or laundry
  - Offenders are in an office type setting, sitting behind a desk
Image of Organization

Training verses Production

- **Training Program?**
  - Time frame - 2 to 5 years
  - Teacher / student - 800 hours in classroom
  - Good skill set for offenders that can be utilized after release

- **Production Facility?**
  - Time and effort into building long standing business
  - Training verses Production
Mission of Organization

- What is the goal of your organization?
- What will you be doing?
  - Training/ Braille Transcriber
  - Production/ Producing Braille
    - Transcribing text
    - Producing tactile graphics
      - Collage
      - Computer generated
- How are you going to accomplish this?
Objectives of Organization

- To become a successful transcription agency
- To produce high quality braille
- To produce high quality tactile graphics
- To train qualified transcribers and tactile graphic designers
- To become part of the blind community and give back
- To become more than another prison industry
Government Codes

- Facilities should check their State and Federal Government Codes to verify approved agencies
  - Texas Govt. Code
    - Title 4 Executive Branch
      - Subtitle G Corrections
        - Chapter 497 Industry and Agriculture; Labor of Inmates
        - Subchapter A- Texas Correctional Industries
  - The department may contract with:
    - Another state, the federal government, a foreign government
    - A private or independent institution of higher education to manufacture for or sell to that school
    - A private school or a visually handicapped person in this state to manufacture Braille textbooks or other instructional aids
Benefits of Braille

• Better Facility, Better Attitude
  ◦ Offenders are given the freedom to make decisions on their own – “FreeWorld” environment

• Giving back
  ◦ Offender utilizes their time in a way that contributes to the blind community

• Skill Set/Work Ethic Carried On upon release
  ◦ Job opportunities available after release
  ◦ Work from home with limited resources
  ◦ Work history – all transcribed and tactile pages are recorded and given to offender upon release (type of referral)
Obstacles of Braille

- Labor intensive
  - Lots of studying and hard work, proofreading in the dorms during offenders personal time
  - Depending on offender to meet deadlines

- Lots of books and manuals (paper goods)
  - Searchable for contraband
  - Storage of materials inside dorms and facility
  - Bringing items to and from housing areas daily

- Lockdowns and rack ups
  - Deadlines are not met
  - Production stopped
Support

Where will you get answers?

Who will help?
American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. (APH)

• “Guidelines for Starting and Operating Prison Braille Programs”

  Nanci Lacewell
  1839 Frankfort Avenue
  Louisville, KY 40206
  502-895-2405
  800-223-1839 (Toll Free)
  www.aph.org

• APH Prison Braille Forum held every fall.
PRO FITT

- Providing Real Opportunities for Income Through Technology
  - Federal Grant through the Second Chance Act
  - Partnership between the University of Georgia and Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)
  - Braille Curriculum developed - available free at www.amac/profitt.edu
  - Contact:
    - Patrick Fraser
    - The Alternative Media Access Center (AMAC)
    - 512 Means Street
    - Suite 250
    - Atlanta, GA 30318
    - 404-894-7594
Agencies that Support Braille

- National Federation for the Blind
- Library of Congress
- National Braille Association
- The California Transcribers and Educators for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Inc.
- American Printing House for the Blind
- National Braille Press
- Many others
Start Up

- Infrastructure
  - Physical Layout
    - Adequate space - books shelves, lighting, temperature control for computer equipment
    - Dedicated space (areas sectioned into tactile, shipping, production)
    - Work Areas - searchable by security (lots of paper work and books)
    - Each transcriber needs, equipment, supplies and resources at their workstation (materials are kept by transcriber upon release)
    - Classroom settings
Equipment

- **Computer, Printers, Embossers, Scanners**
  - Computers with Braille Compatible keyboards
  - Braille Embossers
  - Scanner for tactile and file conversion

- **Software**
  - Braille 2000 or Duxbury
  - Operating System – Windows XP or Windows 7
  - Drawing Software – Corel Draw X4 or higher or Abode Illustrator
  - Back-up Software

- **Perkins Braillers**
Tactile Supplies

- APH Tactile Graphics Kit
  - $253.00
- Create your own kits
  - Small elementary school type scissors and wooden sculpt tools, and tweezers
- Make your own supplies
  - Hard String (glued)
  - Die cut shapes
- Misc. Supplies
  - Copy and Embosser Paper
  - Pens, pencils, highlighters
Staff Instruction

- Earning of Literary Certification to start
- Heart for Braille
  - Not basic prison environment
  - Responsibilities included being teacher and manager
  - Keeping up to date on all braille updates and revisions
- Workshops and Conferences
  - Keeping up to date with the latest braille updates and news
  - Traveling out of state to attend conferences
  - Great networking and marketing for facility
  - Newest techniques
Offender Selection Process

- **Time (sentence)**
  - Can offender achieve certifications in time period?

- **Disciplinary, Custody Level**

- **Education**
  - (IQ, reading level)

- **Library Of Congress Requirements**
  - Must be US citizens and have high school diploma
  - Must have GED or high school diploma

  - Education, Classification and Administration all work together
Critical Job Tasks for Transcriber

- Proficiency in transcribing, proofreading and in correcting Braille errors
- Appropriately utilize quality control to ensure dot quality, accurate braille and format
- Have awareness of appropriate use of specialized codes: Nemeth, Music, Computer, etc.
- Ability to produce 6-key computer direct entry
- Basic knowledge of how braille students learn
- Demonstrate basic troubleshooting and problem solving in formatting
- Ability to use current Braille transcription and translation software
The Skills of a Transcriber

- Knowledge of Literary code
- Above average English grammar and spelling skills
- Understanding of division of words syllabically
- Ability to pay attention to detail
- High level of technical skills
- Dedication, not only to code but to audience being served
- Recognition that braille is not easy to learn requires investment of time and energy
- The ability to understand what the author is trying to say
Training

- **TIME**
  - Varies for literary certification- if offender is working and studying - up to 18 months
  - It can take transcribers one to two years of producing braille to become proficient

- **Library of Congress/ National Federation for the Blind**
  - Correspondence Course
    - Twenty lessons and 35 page manuscript
    - Self-paced, manual issued
    - Course study no cost
    - Lessons graded in-house by certified instructor/ staff member or mailed to National Federation for the Blind

- **Develop curriculum**
  - Each code / conduct structured classes

- **Work History**
  - Offenders are given a complete work history of production totals
Outside Training

- Various contractors from various agencies visit and teach the offenders the latest techniques from the “free world”.

![Image of a class room setting]
Motivation is Key

- How?
  - Success stories
    - Actual visits from former offenders who are working in the braille world
    - Videos such as “From Bars to Stars” showcasing former offenders’ success
  - Creating work history
    - Actual transcription production totals allotted to offender upon release are recorded
    - Communication with agencies while incarcerated such as training seminars—they recognize your work

- Giving back to society!
Where to start after set-up infrastructure and hiring complete?
The Classroom

- **Books from Library of Congress - No cost**
  - Literary
  - Nemeth Math

- **Books from National Braille Association - Cost**
  - Textbook Formatting
  - Textbook Formatting Exam

- **Class Room Setting**
  - Allows offenders to have a structured class setting
  - Set goals
Curriculum

- Literary- Foundational
- Nemeth Math
- Textbook Formatting

- Literary Curriculum from PROFITT or National Braille Press available
- No set Textbook Formatting or Nemeth Math Curriculum available
- Best to create and develop your own curriculum to better gauge how the offenders learn
- Need structure of classroom setting, tests, homework
- Created sense of accomplishment in organization
**Curriculum Template Example**

**Basic Computer Skills Module 5**

**Introduction to Microsoft Excel 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Instructor:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Delivery Method(s):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify spreadsheet terms. Create and manipulate worksheets and workbooks. Enter formulas and functions into a worksheet. Format cells within worksheets. Apply page setup features to enhance a worksheet.</td>
<td>- Lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART Objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-sensitive</td>
<td>- Hands On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of this module, students should be able to:</td>
<td>- Lab Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCSS.1 Identify components of the spreadsheet window using industry terminology and efficiently navigate throughout the worksheets and workbook.</td>
<td>- Group Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCSS.2. Apply editing and enhancement features to cell contents, e.g., edit, fill, rotate, move, merge, size, number formats, styles, borders, and colors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCSS.3 Differentiate among and enter text, numbers, formulas, and functions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCSS.4 Create, insert, modify, and position appropriate graphics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Corresponding NLS Lesson #?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total Length of 4 hours</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Topics</td>
<td><strong>Any Applicable Business and/or Soft Skills?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Take Away Message(s):**

Microsoft Excel 2010 will allow you to manage data effectively. Information such as contact information, inventory, and other data relevant to a small business can be analyzed quickly and easily.
Certifications

- Literary Certification - Library of Congress
  - Foundational
- Textbook
- Nemeth
- Music
- Foreign Language
- Proofreading
  - Literary
  - Math
- Computer Braille Code
On-the-Job Training and Short Courses

- On-the-Job Training offered and recognized by T.D.C.J.
  - Braille Typist
  - Graphic Designer
  - Micro-Computer Specialist

- Short Courses
  - Instructor Based
    - Literary - 108 hours
    - Textbook Formatting - 138 hours
    - Nemeth Math - 140 hours
    - Tactile Graphic - 30 hours
    - Foreign Language
Education/Vocational

- Basic Computer Information Systems (BCIS)
  - Basic computer skills taught
  - Possible Microsoft Certifications in Office Suite
  - Good for braille transcribers to learn basic computer skills before beginning to transcribe
    - Most offenders are out of touch with the new technology or any kind of computer terminology
Technology Based Work Environment

- Latest Computer Devices
- Newest Software
  - CorelDraw
  - Adobe Illustrator
- Current Braille Technology
  - Braille 2000
  - Duxbury
  - Tiger Embosser
  - Laser engraver
- Scanning Software
  - Abby Fine Reader
  - OmniPage Pro
Best Practices

- Training: Remember the result you want when setting your training criteria.

  **Suggested 7 month program**
  - 350 hours- Literary Braille
  - 130 hours- Small Business Skills
  - 90 hours -Tactile Graphics
  - 85 hours- Computer Skills
  - 145 hours- Production/ Lesson Time
Begin Training

- All new offenders begin in collage tactile - 3 weeks
  - Learning basis of tactile creation by hand
    - Observe if detail oriented
    - Grasping concept - attention span
    - Hands on training with all tactile tools
- After initial training
  - Placed in tactile production with mentor
    - Working one on one with an experienced graphic designer for actual production book
    - Literary lessons are started one day a week
      - First 10 lessons completed on the Perkins Brailler
      - Lessons graded in-house
      - The remaining lessons can be completed using braille software
Prepare for Production

- How will textbook be assigned?
  - Experienced transcriber - Lead
  - Not so experienced transcriber to assist
  - Tactile Graphic Designer assigned
  - Supervisor responsible
  - Deadlines set

- Textbook loaded into database for tracking purposes
  - Total number of pages in textbook counted
  - Assigned transcribers / due dates logged
Team Building and Teamwork

Complimentary Skills
- Certifications
- Experience On the Job Training
- Seminars outside training
- Bulletins / Publications

Well Defined Working Approach
- Professional Working Environment
- Prison Rules
- Braille Rules

Shared Values
- Contract signed by each team member
- Learning individual responsibility

Goals & Experience
- Assisting Blind Students
- Job skills upon release
- Work ethics
- Working together

Mutual Accountability
- Contracts
- Work assigned according to level of Experience and certifications

Small Numbers
- Better communications

Clear Performance Goals
- Clear Performance Goals
Production Process

- Measure of Control
  - Measuring and controlling performance should occur throughout the organization.
  - Measurements may occur on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annual basis.
    - Depending on the dimensions of performance being evaluated, more rigorous analyses usually occur on annual or less frequent basis.
  - Controls should be established to monitor all current program.
    - Such a control system assumes that the current plan perhaps needs some fine tuning.
• For control system to be effective, measurable objectives must be developed for all key units of the organization.

• The importance of periodically evaluating key units is to identify problems and opportunities.
Manager and employees must possess factual knowledge about process details in order to manage them properly.

- **Logistics**: management of physical flaw of product from point of origin to finished products
- **Quality**: Improvement teams, self managed teams
- **Cross functional teams**: is composed of employees who work at similar levels in different departments
- **Facility Layout Planning**: deciding the spatial arrangement of production process within production facilities.
- **Chains of Command**: lines of authority that run from top management to individual employees and specify internal reporting relationships.
Production Phases

- Developed a thorough 14 stage process that ensures product liability and volume placement within the stages

  - **1st Stage**: The Transcriber started the volume
  - **2nd Stage**: Transcriber finishes Transcribing the volume & passes onto First Proofreader
  - **3rd Stage**: First Proofreader checks for errors and returns to Transcriber to make corrections.
  - **4th Stage**: Transcriber then gives volume to Final Proofreader.
  - **5th Stage**: Final Proofreader checks for errors and returns to Transcriber for corrections.
  - **6th Stage**: Transcriber gives the volume to a NBA Textbook Certified Proofreader, which is the final proofreading stage on the volume.
  - **7th Stage**: NBA Textbook Certified Proofreader checks for errors and returns it to the transcriber for corrections.
Production Phases (cont.)

- **8th Stage**: After ALL Proofreadings, the 1st Tactilists begins the volume's Tactile.
- **9th Stage**: After the 1st Tactilists completes the volume's Tactiles, it goes back to the Transcriber to check for tactile discrepancies.
- **10th Stage**: If discrepancies are found the Tactiles are sent back to the 1st Tactilists to make corrections.
- **11th Stage**: An experienced Final Tactile Graphic Designer now checks the volume's Tactiles.
- **12th Stage**: An experienced Supervisor now Checks the volume's Tactiles.
- **13th Stage**: All Proofreaders and Tactiles are complete and now the Transcriber does a FINAL overall Review.
- **14th Stage**: The Volume is in the process of, or has been mailed out.
Transcriber’s Producing
Tactile

• Collage
  ◦ By hand - time consuming
  ◦ Detailed oriented

• Computer Generated Tactile Graphics
  ◦ Drawing programs
  ◦ Tiger Embosser

• Difficulty in tactile
  ◦ Tactile creation takes time to produce
  ◦ Must ensure that all aspects that need to be reproduced are; however, must ensure that you are not giving the student too much information
Tactile
Quality Assurance

- Certified transcribers are selected to review every volume that is produced
  - Look for errors in transcribing
  - Errors in tactile graphics
  - Make sure all paper work is completed correctly for different agencies
  - Verify page counts are correct
  - Verify all changes are made
Shipping and Receiving

- All books are entered into a database designed by the customer for ease of retrieval. Print pages are counted and publisher information is logged.
- All phases of the production process are easily accessible at any time.
- Total transcribed and tactile pages are counted and totaled to be used in the monthly accounting invoices.
- All files are reviewed before final shipment to ensure correct file names and extensions are used.
- Daily shipments are sent via e-mail or Fed Ex.
Bids and Contracts

- **Market for braille - Search Internet**
- **Partnership with outside agency**
  - Check your Government Codes for Prison Produced Services
- **Time lines/ Deadlines**
  - Can you meet the deadlines - reasonable time frame?
- **Cost estimates for Braille/ Tactile**
  - Be practical
  - Varies in subject matter and certifications
- **Agency specifications**
  - Anything different that needs to be followed
Post Release

- Re-entry Program
  - Social Security Card
  - Birth Certificate
  - Drivers License

- Networking
  - Post release offenders that could mentor
  - Contacts and communication

- Equipment
  - Possible lending library of software and materials

- Self-Esteem/ Self-Accomplishment
Post Release Employment

- Working as transcriber for a company from home
  - American Printing House (APH)
  - National Braille Press (NBP)

- Home Based
  - A usually small-scale self-employed business carried on at home using their own equipment.

- Networking
  - Peer recommendation
  - You have experience with agencies inside the facility
    - Are familiar with all procedures