

# NIGERWIVES BRAILLE BOOK PRODUCTION CENTRE

(A National Project of Nigerwives Nigeria)

P. O. Box 52335, Ikoyi, Lagos

## Patron of the Braille Centre:

Professor. V. C. Ike



## Nigerwives National President:

Mrs. Caroline Idowu

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## Newsletter - No. 5

March 1999

(A Bi-Annual Newsletter to inform Friends of the Centre of its progress, activities and needs.)

### AIM OF THE CENTRE

The main aim of the Centre is to produce brailled books for the visually handicapped in Nigeria, especially students, thereby assisting them towards fulfilling their best potential.

### CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

This month our Centre is four years old and this is our 6th Newsletter. Over the last year the Centre has continued to grow and we now require a second Portakabin which would be devoted to our training programme.

#### *To Move or Not to Move*

Since our establishment, we have been securely housed in a Portakabin in NNPC parking lot, Falomo, Lagos, and have enjoyed almost total power benefits as well. We now have enough money to pay for the second Portakabin, thanks to a very generous donation from the American Women's Club which will be handed over as soon as it is ascertained where it will be sited. Although we expected that by now we would have had this second Portakabin in place, recent developments have delayed this. Relocation of offices is taking place within NNPC (our hosts) in Lagos to Abuja, and no decision has been made as to where and when we will move. We are of course waiting for this decision to be taken before setting up a second Portakabin at our present location.

#### *Local Support*

As you will see from the list of donations later in the Newsletter, we have again had some wonderful support during the last twelve months. We have received more fairly used computers through the Nordic Women's Group in Lagos and also one through the Port Harcourt branch of Nigerwives. We are working on upgrading these by installing additional memory. We also hope to be able to upgrade the processors of some of them so that they can take our new JAWS software. JAWS stands for *Job Access with Speech* and is used by many visually impaired persons.

#### *Support from Afar*

As noted later in the Newsletter we have received several donations from groups and individuals overseas.

*Friends of Nigeria*, a group of former Peace Corps members who served in Nigeria and are now back in America is one of these donors. We thank them for their interest in what is happening in Nigeria and in particular for giving financial support to our Centre.

*Wazobia* in Hampshire, UK, as the name suggests, is a group of Nigerians in the UK who are interested in helping projects here in Nigeria. Happily they heard of our Centre and wanted to contribute to its progress. Their donation of £200 was used to buy *Scan-lite Fix* which is software that works with Omnipage to further improve the quality of the scanning of the poor print quality books we have to process. We have already seen an improvement in the quality of the scanning and with more experience it will be better still.

#### *A Surprise Package*

In our last Newsletter we reported that the cash donations would be used mainly for the purchase of speech synthesisers and screen reading software to get our computer training programme off the ground.

In June 98 I was fortunate in being able to go to the firm Henter-Joyce in Florida, USA, who are the producers of the JAWS speech systems, used by many visually impaired persons. I intended to buy the software plus hardware synthesisers, but when I got there I found they had upgraded their JAWS software and that the new version included a software synthesiser which works with a regular sound card, thus removing the need to buy separate hardware synthesisers. The only problem was that it needed computers that are much more powerful than our own! I described our equipment to them and they said they would like to help us to set up the training programme. They promised they would get back to me before too long.

Three days later I heard from them. They explained that to use the new JAWS we would need to upgrade our computers. Realising that our funds were very limited they gave us a wonderful offer -- the new software with a 10-user licence at a very reduced price! They then asked me to go back with the balance of the money and use it to upgrade our computers!

We are still working on the upgrading because although we have upgraded the memory of some to the required level, the processor is not fast enough. Although not all of the processors can be upgraded, some can be, and we are working on them. Meanwhile the software is functioning on the more powerful computers at the Centre which are used for book production.

We are very happy to report that last month the American Women's Club of Lagos gave us money to buy a new computer specifically for the training programme. This will have the capability required by the new JAWS.

#### *The JAWS Story*

The company, Henter-Joyce, which produces JAWS has an interesting history. Mr. Henter was a young engineer - and also a top motor-cycle racer - when he lost his sight in an automobile accident. He got into computer work after the accident and was inspired to produce a system that would enable visually impaired persons like himself to operate effectively in sighted work environments. He eventually set up in partnership with Mr. Joyce to establish the company Henter-Joyce which is in the forefront in computer accessibility for the visually impaired.



*Jean Obi receiving the JAWS software from Mr. Henter*

The day before I visited his office he had been to Washington to receive an award for his work and enterprise from the Vice-President of the United States. I was delighted to get to meet him. My daughter Chinyelu handily snapped a picture of him handing me the software.

#### *Here's What We Need!*

Our Centre is fairly well equipped now to carry out its aims. We shall soon finish the upgrading of the computers and shall have acquired our new computer.

Our major need now is for financial assistance with the running costs of the Centre. This is basically the salaries of the four staff. There is no way the Centre can be self-financing because the cost of producing books is much higher than the price charged and we do not intend to charge for the computer training. We are therefore appealing to present and potential *Friends of the Centre* to help with the payment of salaries. A table of the salary

requirements has been prepared and we would welcome contributions to the salaries, -- anything from 1 month to a 1 year period for any of the staff.

The British Women's Group has provided us with a good start by presenting to us a cheque which covers the salary of our Braille Executor for the year. We would very much appreciate any further offers.

The number of our staff remains four, the same as it was last year. They are acquiring more experience daily and are doing well. Our visually impaired Braille Executor will take charge of the computer training programme once it starts, so we expect we shall need to employ a second visually impaired person for proof-reading. To do this will depend on whether or not we can afford the salary.

#### *Appreciation*

We continue to be indebted to our faithful supporters, NNPC, our hosts, and Resourcery, a computer networking company. As mentioned earlier, NNPC offices are being relocated and this will obviously affect us, but we very much hope that NNPC will still be able to find a corner for us so that we can still remain under their umbrella. We are most grateful for their considerate hospitality and goodwill towards us and hope it will continue.

Resourcery continue to give us technical support and to take a lively interest in our activities. One of their technicians has been coming to give us extra help in his own time at weekends. We very much appreciate this. Our sincere thanks go to both NNPC and Resourcery.

We are grateful to all our *Friends of the Centre* for their continued interest and support. We will surely do our best to merit the continued support of our old *Friends* and to acquire new *Friends*. Thank you

Jean Obi (Co-ordinator)

#### Donations:

Apart from the donations already mentioned we have received others in cash and kind from a wide range of sources. We received two donations of £100 from friends in the UK. A former member of Nigerwives who is currently in the UK, Dr. Eddys Amaku, bought us some *Talk* software plus a special microphone for speaking information into the computer rather than typing it in. This will be put to use by our visually impaired trainees.

Following is a list of donations we have received during the year:

?? British Women's Group	₦150,000
?? Wazobia of Hampshire, UK	£200
?? Friends of Nigeria (USA)	\$200
?? Mr. & Mrs. C. A. Osborne	£100
?? Mr. Dennis Osborne	£100
?? Dr. Eddys Amaku	<i>Talk</i> +microphone
?? Statoil	2 used computers

?? Nordic Women	used computer +printer
?? <i>It's a Small World</i>	₦ 170,000
?? 7-UP	₦ 50,000

### **VISITORS TO THE CENTRE**

The Centre is open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday to Friday. We also have *Open Day* on the second Saturday of every month from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The staff are always happy to receive visitors.

### **COMPUTER TRAINING:**

Although we expected to have started the computer training programme by now, we still lack the space to do so!

We have the computers and the JAWS screen reading and synthesiser software but must still have a place to set them up. It is not possible to accommodate the training programme alongside our book production in the one Portakabin since the book production alone more than fills the Portakabin. We are optimistic that this problem is in the process of being solved. Happily the money to buy a second Portakabin is available and a suitable Portakabin has been identified. The only hitch now is the relocation of the NNPC offices where we now reside, and we are hopeful of being satisfactorily relocated very soon. When that happens we will certainly *set up shop* and begin. We are eagerly looking forward to starting this programme, as are several prospective trainees.

#### *Our Suggestions for Companies*

If you are connected with a company that could consider employing a visually impaired graduate please contact us for further details of what is involved. With suitable computer training visually impaired graduates can operate very effectively alongside sighted counterparts in administrative positions.

We can put into braille any tests or materials that may be required for the interview process and will offer free computer training to any applicants found suitable. The company will be expected to install the appropriate software on one of its systems for the successful applicant to use. We would be glad to discuss this project and what is involved with any company that would like to consider it.

### **NEEDS:**

#### **Volunteers**

During the past year we have had some very talented volunteer editors through the British Women's Group. Their contribution has certainly had a positive impact on the number of masters produced during the year.

The Port Harcourt branch of Nigerwives has **edited some books, and some other individuals have**

also given a hand in this way. You don't have to be an expert to try. You just need computer facilities and the willingness to devote some time to it. Some volunteers are learning to edit and at the same time are improving their computer skills. As always the editing of the scanned masters is the bottle-neck in the process and we can never have too many volunteers for this part of the work. Do you think you can find some time and try your hand at it?

### **Company Reports & Other Paper**

We continue to collect quality paper which we recycle for our book production (old company reports, good quality magazines, brochures and similar quality printed materials). The printing on the paper does not disturb the blind reader because he/she just feels the raised dots and does not see the print. Please help us to collect such paper. We need a lot, for our production is increasing as the Centre becomes better known and as our range of titles increases. If you know an organisation, company or Registrar's department that is likely to have back copies they do not require, please do investigate for us. We would be happy to give you a brailled sample so that they can see how we use the paper.

We also continue to collect old newspapers, magazines and waste sheet paper which we sell to generate money for routine office needs and to buy print books for processing. Could you arrange for the collection of such materials at your place of work, church, school or association?: You could place a carton for people to put them in on a regular basis. We would be most grateful. We do receive such paper regularly from the American International School in Lagos

### **Identification of Blind Students**

If you know of any blind secondary school students or of any secondary schools where blind students are enrolled, please do let us know so that we may liaise with the schools and ensure that the students' reading requirements are met. There may even be one or more blind students in the school attended by your own child. If so, please contact us.



*Some blind students from Abia State reading our books*

### **BOOK PRODUCTION**

We now have 40 titles for which we have completed the masters and a further 22 that are at various stages of completion, as against 28 and 15 respectively a year ago. We must thank our volunteer editors who have done much to help us achieve this. We hope that our group of volunteer editors will grow so that we can achieve much more in this direction. There are many other titles waiting to be done. A complete list of books available and those being currently worked on can be obtained from the Centre or by post through our P. O. Box.

### **WORKING WITH OTHER GROUPS**

We continue to co-operate with the following Centres which we have encouraged to obtain the same equipment as ourselves:

Anglo-Nigeria Welfare Assoc. for the Blind  
Gindiri Resource Centre, Plateau State  
Dept. of Special Education, Unijos.

Copies of the new masters have been supplied to the ANWAB Centre so that they can also produce copies. The co-ordinator will take the new masters to the Gindiri Centre when she goes for a workshop in Jos next month. She will also collect copies of any new titles that Gindiri has produced. As explained in earlier issues, our Centre is working very closely with ANWAB, Gindiri and the University of Jos Special Education Unit, all of whom have similar equipment and the same software as our own Centre

#### *Workshop for All Centres*

In conjunction with the University of Jos, our co-ordinator is organising a workshop for staff from the above Centres, towards improving skills in using the equipment and software and to co-ordinate their efforts, to maximise output. This will take place after the National Braille Council workshop and AGM which will be held at Gindiri. Our co-ordinator is the current President of the National Braille Council.

### **CONTACT NUMBERS**

Although there is no phone at the Centre, the following Steering Committee Members will be glad to take messages or give any information you may require.

Doris Dada	613-332
Doris Fafunwa	261-5028
Jean Obi (evenings only)	680-684, 683-135
Pearl Ajayi	615-462

### **STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Co-ordinator/Technical	Jean Obi MBE
Public Relations	Maria Bayero & Jean Abili
Finance	Joyce Fatona

Newsletter	Doris Dada & Doris Fafunwa
Other Members	Perla Amu
NW President (Lagos Branch)	Norma Adebisi
Administrator/Secretary	Pearl Ajayi