

Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged: Report for May 2005-Apr 2006

This academic year was marked by the official inauguration of expanded facilities at the Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC). In his inaugural address, our principal Fr F Mascarenhas lauded the centre's efforts in the area of empowering the visually challenged. This year also saw a significant increase in the number of visually challenged students at the centre and a considerable improvement in the individual to facility ratio.

The New facility:

The XRCVC is now located in a 425 sq ft room on the ground floor of the college. This place has been divided into three units. The first unit houses six computers, a reading machine, and low vision equipment. The middle section serves as a reading cum writing room where students can read their own study material, type Braille notes and listen to audio material. The third section serves as an office room and houses the 4x4 PRO Braille embosser. A lot of this equipment has been funded through a CSR initiative and donations from individuals and trusts.

The current objectives of the XRCVC:

1. Every visually challenged person at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai should have access to state of the art facilities that would provide them full functionality.
2. Providing a healthy individual-facility ratio. This would reduce waiting time and help in guaranteeing optimum efficiency.
3. Conducting specialized (formal) training in computer skills for those in the target group who are not computer literate.
4. Building up an e-books database and library.
5. Providing an in-house Braille embossing facility so that the resource room can serve as a single stop destination for meeting the special needs of those concerned.
6. Providing vocational guidance so as to enable the students to identify the appropriate courses and careers.
7. Providing special computer training to non-Xavier's visually challenged persons as and when there are vacancies for the programme.
8. Providing Braille embossing facility to all visually challenged persons who may need Braille material embossed.
9. Providing books and other reference material in e-format to those visually challenged in Mumbai who may need it.

Projects at XRCVC:

Project x-sight: NOV 2005:

This project is conceptualized as a holistic plan to help the visually challenged students at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai and other visually challenged persons to be educationally, psychologically and socially enriched so that they are better equipped to face the challenges of life. With these objectives in mind an intensive summer programme was designed, the focus area being computer and soft skills. The programme also included a series of personality development workshops.

Project Access Mar 06:

This project will highlight and work towards addressing the problems of accessibility encountered by the visually challenged in India with the main focus on the printed word and the barriers of writing and the denial of basic social security. Core operational areas: copyright issues, financial services, employability.

Events: 2005-06

Apart from regular activities at the centre, the following programmes were undertaken through the year:

- Workshop on time management and goal setting (JUL2005)
- Medical check up of all students (July 2005)

- Inauguration of expanded facilities of the XRCVC (NOV 2005)
- Launch of Project x-sight Nov 2005

- Full fledged in-house brailing facilities (NOV 2005)
- Inter college Cricket match (Jan 2006)

- Work of the XRCVC highlighted through a paper presented at national seminar (DISHA) A Step toward inclusive education: (FEB 2006)
- Intra college Chess tournament (Jan 2006)

- Launch of Project Access (MAR 2006)
- A summer program with focus on computer and soft skills: (MAR 2006)

- Demonstration of facilities at the centre to prospective students: (Apr 2006)
- XRCVC in collaboration with Lion's club of East Bombay and the Social Involvement Programme organised an eye check up camp for children from the Keval Bunder slums at Dockyard Road.
- Launch of website, www.xrcvc.org

List of facilities at the centre:

1	Computers	Multimedia computers loaded with special software and internet access to meet the various needs of the visually challenged.
2	JAWS Screen Reading Software	It speaks out aloud everything that is on the computer monitor thus ensuring effective navigation on the computer.
3	Kurzweil 1000	Optical character recognition software which can convert printed scanned material into voice.
4	Magic Screen Magnification Software	Magnifies fonts on the monitor. Helps low vision students.
5	Talking typing teacher software	Specialised software to teach typing skills
6	TGD PRO	Helps in drawing computerized Braille diagrams
7	Sara Reading Machine	A stand by itself reading machine. Connected to a TV it can magnify printed material.
8	PRISMA	A CC camera that can magnify print for low vision users.
9	4x4 PRO	A heavy duty Braille embosser that can print Braille books from electronic sources
10	Brailleurs	Both electronic and mechanical to help students type notes in Braille.
11	Audio players	Both cassette and CD players for listening to audio notes and books
12	E-books	Over a thousand classics and text books in e-format and spoken word

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