



Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged

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Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged (XRCVC) Annual Report 2012-2013

2012-2013 has been a year of many happenings and a great deal of consolidation for the XRCVC as it edges closer to completing a decade in September 2013. As an enabling unit, the XRCVC has come a long way from its humble beginning as a one computer department to support blind and low vision students of St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. Our work through the year has taken place within our restructured triad of work - **Direct Support Service, Advocacy and Awareness**. Each of these verticals have been strengthened through the year and we hope to celebrate a decade with a new benchmark of expanded reach and sustained services.

I. Our Members - Our Core Asset: Direct Support Services

Through this year, the XRCVC has undergone a restructuring and setting up of systems to increase efficiency and quality of services to our ever-increasing membership base.

Our membership base has expanded from 211 to 295 this academic year. Our commitment to offer the best and speediest services to our members remains our main motivator driving all our work.

New highlights of this year included ***revamped training services*** with a complete calendar year of training at XRCVC. The XRCVC also **launched its Life Skill Training programme** this year. Through the year, the XRCVC's training services reached out to the following numbers:

<u>Assistive Technology (AT) Training and Workshops</u>	<u>No. of Participants</u>
AT Workshops: To spread awareness on AT amongst special educators, parents, teachers, students and other stakeholders	260
<u>All AT related training including: (For Totally Blind and Low Vision learners)</u> Basic Computer Training & Introduction to Accessible Technologies (BCT-AT) batches-21	101

<u>Course Name: (For Totally Blind and Low Vision learners)</u>	<u>No. of Participants</u>
Elementary English Training (EET)	21
Intermediate English Training (IET)	3
Orientation & Mobility Training (O&M)	16
Life Skills Training	5

Braille	1
Other trainings (Math, Taylor Frame, Cubarithm, etc.)	4



Dr Sam Taraporevala, Director, XRCVC, demonstrating the Talking Calculator at an AT Technology workshop

In order to ensure that XRCVC remains to be a state of the art assistive technology centre, through this year, a host of new technologies were procured. Some of these include Dolphin SuperNova Access Suite, Dolphin SaySo, Dolphin EasyReader, Dolphin Easy Converter, Penfriends, HV Pro Players, Devnagri OCR Scanning software , Samsung (Talking) Microwave, EasyLink 12 refreshable Braille display, *Focus 40 Blue refreshable Braille display (received from NIVH)*, and NXG Android-based mobile phone.

Our volunteer services this year worked with a robust ***volunteer strength of 91 persons***, who assisted our members.

XRCVC continued its scholarship programmes, benefiting low and blind vision students studying across various streams of education. The XRCVC-Tech Mahindra Foundation scholarships were given to nine candidates, two of whom were pursuing their undergraduate studies in Law, and the other seven were enrolled in post-graduation courses in English Literature, Bengali Literature, Hindi Literature, Social Work, Human Resources and other Management Studies. The Lion Club of East Bombay Scholarship was awarded to Ms. Surabhi Sachar for being the most deserving visually impaired student graduating from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai.

Recreation and sports at the XRCVC took a new leap this year. What started last year as football training for XRCVC members expanded to hosting The Xavier's First Invitational Football Tournament for the Visually Challenged in which 4 teams across Delhi, Goa and Mumbai participated. The teams were St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, Wilson College, Mumbai, the Blind Welfare Association, Goa and the Hostel for College Going Blind Boys, New Delhi. The finals were played between St. Xavier's College, Mumbai team and the Hostel for College Going Blind Boys, New Delhi, with the latter winning by 8 goals. It was an enriching experience for the players who were a part of this tournament and also for spectators for whom a new message of awareness was communicated, with most of them witnessing this for the first time.



Xavier's first Invitational Football Tournament for the Visually Challenged, A match in progress

II. Strengthening the Environment towards Inclusion – Advocacy Efforts

XRCVC's advocacy initiatives span across four key areas of Print, Financial, and Education Access and Independent Living. Following is the account of the key highlights under each of these areas.

Print Access:

Copyright (Amendment) Act, 2012: A historic step in Print Access achieved!

This year, XRCVC achieved major success for its work in the area of Print Access. The Copyright (Amendment) Act, 2012 was passed by the Parliament, signed by the President and notified by the Gazette. This occurred following advocacy efforts by the XRCVC through various collectives to ensure that conversion to accessible formats is now a legal right for persons with print disabilities in India. The passing of the Act was followed by the XRCVC working actively with the Copyright Office, Government of India for creation of appropriate rules and regulations for the act which have also been issued.

Supporting International Efforts: WIPO Treaty for Visually Impaired Persons/Persons with Print Disabilities

The XRCVC has also been a key member in working towards a suitable legislative framework to exist at the International level. The XRCVC worked closely with the Indian delegation at WIPO who played a very positive and effective role in the diplomatic negotiations.

Empowering the End Users- Awareness and Training on Print Access

Law can only create effective change if the ground level is ready to reap the benefits of the changed law. For Print Access to truly benefit blind and low vision users, access technology knowledge and use is the key. Realizing this lacuna, the XRCVC launched an extremely effective National level awareness programme under the banner "Reading without Seeing". The programme is a one to one and half day workshop module that equips its participants with the basic know-how of a host of assistive technologies. This ignites in its audiences, the curiosity and basic knowledge to begin their journey of accessing the printed word independently. Through this year, the XRCVC conducted 21 such programmes across various cities and towns of India – Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and Rajasthan. A total number of 1147 participants have been reached out through these. Additionally, to ensure that the users have a resource they can go back to, the XRCVC also created a publication titled "Accessible Technologies to Facilitate Reading – A Synoptic View", a compilation of the complete list of AT with detailed description and user relevant data. A total of 405 CD versions of this title, 14 Braille Books, 11 Large Font Books, and 5 sighted versions of this book have been distributed.

Bridging the Content Gap: Production, Library and Publisher Liaisoning Efforts

XRCVC produced a total of 116 new DAISY titles (in full text full audio) during this period. These titles have been added to the XRCVC DAISY library, bringing its total count to 264 books. The total number of pages converted into the DAISY format during this period were **25162**. The total audio running time of these books is 1020 hours, 04 minutes and 43 seconds. This work has earned the XRCVC a star rated quality certification from the Daisy Forum of India (DFI)

In addition, the XRCVC through the DAISY Forum of India (DFI) has been actively working on the Online Braille Library Project of the NIVH which aims to be built up as a national catalogue of accessible books in India. Moreover, the XRCVC has been selected as a suitable location for the Online Braille Library

Project. This will host Refreshable Braille displays for users to access the National level Online Braille Library (OBL). It has received these two high-end display units from the NIVH.

Further, Dr. Sam Taraporevala, Director, XRCVC is Member, Expert Committee for the Resource Centre for persons with Different Disabilities at the National Library, Kolkata. As part of the committee, he has worked through the year in facilitating creation of access services at the National Library.

Keeping in mind the change in law as the biggest lacuna of access in educational material, the XRCVC, through the DFI has spearheaded an advocacy initiative with educational boards and publishing houses across the country to make their material available in accessible formats. This year, these efforts have resulted in significant progress with the Maharashtra and Goa school boards as forward movements with the NOS and NCERT.

Financial Access:

Any Time Money: Now a Reality for Blind and Low Vision Customers

Until this year, what the sighted have now come to take for granted for financial access was still out of reach for blind and low vision customers- ATM machines! Their lack of accessibility meant that if a blind or low vision person wanted to withdraw money, they would always need to depend on sighted assistance.

This changed for good in India this year. The XRCVC, through its many years of R & D and advocacy work with the banking community was able to see the launch of the first fully accessible ATM machine in India at Ahemadabad through Union Bank of India. That was only the beginning which has been followed by the deployment of over 2000 Accessible ATMs in the year.



The XRCVC, as a member of the Indian Bank's Association's Sub-Committee on ATM systems for Visually Challenged Persons has facilitated for the issuance of a circular related to Universal Standards to be adhered to by all Banks in deployment of Accessible ATMs.

This has been a major breakthrough for inclusive Banking in India and will go a long way for the ease and convenience for blind and low vision customers.

Accessible ATM under Use

Education Access:

University of Mumbai gets its first Blind student at T.Y.B.A Psychology Majors

Until a few years ago, the University of Mumbai did not have the required rules to test blind and low vision students for practical examination in Psychology. Hence, by default, they were not permitted to do a complete major in Psychology. The XRCVC had worked with the University and Psychology Board of Studies to create the required rules in 2009. Following the same, the first totally blind student was

enrolled for a complete major for T.Y.B.A Psychology this Academic year. The XRCVC worked closely as a resource centre for Ms. Kriti Banga and her college – Vivekananda College to ensure that an inclusive studying environment was created for her. The XRCVC was instrumental in creating accessible practical conducting material as also guide the students and the college through the appropriate teaching learning methodology and practical conducting systems.

Continued Initiatives towards Inclusive Education

Through the year, the XRCVC continued its work with the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS), Nasik, for getting the required circulars issued for the blind and low vision students studying the B.P.Th (Bachelors in Physiotherapy) course at the University.

XRCVC also worked with various schools in Mumbai to facilitate inclusive environment for blind and low vision students at the school. Some of the key schools with whom we worked include – Gopi Birla High School, Ashok High School, Beacon High School.

In addition to the above, the XRCVC in partnership with the Andrews Vision Centre (AVC) at Wilson College, Mumbai have initiated a dialogue at the University of Mumbai to work towards making various services and courses at the University accessible. This dialogue in the coming year will hopefully lead to significant positive steps towards Inclusion at the University of Mumbai.

Another key achievement in Inclusive education this year came with the Ministry of Social Justice & empowerment, GOI following the representation of the XRCVC and Score Foundation last year issuing national level guidelines for use of scribe and lab assistants by blind and low vision students. The same are to be applicable to all Educational, Professional and Examination Taking authorities in India. The XRCVC will actively work towards the implementation of the same in the coming years.

Opening up the World of Math and Science

One of the major new initiatives started at the XRCVC this year was a Research project on making Math and Science accessible for blind and low vision students with the support of the Tech Mahindra Foundation's Vision For India (VFI) project. The effort of the research project is to establish effective teaching learning aids and resources and a robust support system that will enable effective learning of mathematics and science courses by blind and low vision students. Traditionally, because of myths and mind barriers, these arenas have been denied to the visually challenged. With increase in awareness and technology, this is changing rapidly.

XRCVC, with its vision of creating access has ventured into a completely new area and made significant headways through the year in understanding and starting to build an effective guidance system. This initiative will take an active shape in the coming years.

Independent Living

Towards a more accessible Transport System in Mumbai

The XRCVC has started investigating the key concerns related to access along the suburban local train system in Mumbai. An extensive research has been conducted for the Central Railways and the XRCVC will now aim to work closely with the Railway authorities to incorporate some of the key concerns. The XRCVC has also made efforts to work with the BEST Corporation to make the bus services more inclusive.

Accessible Consumer Products and Services

The initiative to recognize that accessibility needs to expand across all aspects of life is what drives the consumer products and services initiatives of XRCVC. The XRCVC worked with several big names in Hospitality such as the Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai, Taj Vivanta, Mumbai, Le Royal Meridien, Chennai, Fariyas Hotel, Lonavala to increase accessibility of these properties. XRCVC has supplied Braille room labels for these properties to ensure greater access to their visually challenged guests.

The XRCVC has also initiated dialogue with some of the leading consumer product manufacturers to look at accessibility of their electronic products.

III. Expanding Human Mindsets – Awareness Initiative

Spreading ideas and facilitating larger groups of individuals to start thinking about inclusion is one of the strongest and the most critical aspects of XRCVC's work. This forms the backbone of many of our advocacy initiatives and goes a long way in ensuring effective services for our members.

This year, the XRCVC's Awareness efforts took a giant leap. XRCVC was invited by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MSJE), Government of India along with the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped (NIVH) to hold Antarchakshu- The Eye Within TM at New Delhi. It also partnered with the Equal Opportunity Office (EOO) of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, Saksham Trust, New Delhi and Sightsavers to ensure success of the programme. This was the first time that the event went out of Mumbai and was a huge success. Shri Mukul Wasnik, Hon'ble Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India inaugurated the event on 4th October, 2012 and went on to be the event's first participant. His participation was then followed by a Press Conference where he answered questions put forth on accessibility, inclusion and measures the government is carrying out to achieve the same. Prof S.K. Sopory, Vice Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi was the final participant of the event on 6th October, 2012. His participation was followed by a valedictory function where he congratulated all the partner organizations and volunteers who helped to make the event a huge success.

Held over 3 days, the event reached out to 1540 persons across various government, corporate, student and general public participants. Being the first time that such an event was organized at the JNU campus and in New Delhi, it left a huge impact in starting the dialogue of effective inclusion at JNU as also within various groups in New Delhi.

In addition to New Delhi, like each year, Antarchakshu was also held at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai and reached out to 1580 participants over two days.

Further, the XRCVC through the year conducted 18 workshops with diverse corporates, students and teachers reaching out to 735 participants. It is worth mentioning here that the XRCVC was specially invited by NASSCOM to conduct two modules of the awareness and sensitization workshop for corporate representatives from various national and multinational organizations as part of the NASSCOM summit on Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace held in Bengaluru in January 2013.



Antarchakshu at JNU, New Delhi and St .Xavier's College Mumbai 2012

IV. Presentations and Collaborations: Networking Initiatives

In addition to the above, the XRCVC networked with a range of stakeholders through the year in varied capacities.

Presentations at various Seminars

- Dr. Sam Taraporevala presented a Paper titled "Print Access – The Indian Story" at the seminar "Copyright Law Amendment of 2012" organized by ILS Law College, Pune.
- Dr. Sam Taraporevala was part of the keynote address along with Peter Gartenberg (MD, SAP India Subcontinent) at the SAP Conference for Public Sector Undertakings held at New Delhi. He spoke about how the XRCVC along with SAP is working on building accessibility solutions for the visually challenged for their employment and independence. This meet was attended by senior decision makers from government organizations to discuss and deliberate how Public Services Organizations, Defense and Utilities Service Providers can adopt the latest technologies to run their operations in a more efficient and effective manner. This forum helped to update the audience on importance of accessibility.
- § Dr. Sam Taraporevala also contributed a chapter to a book. 'The Copyright Challenge: Legal and Social Imperatives' was printed in the book, Library Services for Blind and Visually Impaired People which was

edited by Dr. Priya R. Pillai and Dr. Neela J. Deshpande and published by APH Publishing Corporation.

- Dr. Sam Taraporevala presented a Paper titled "*The Disability Exception and the Triumph of Collaborative Advocacy*" at the seminar "copyright amendments, 2012 A fair Balance" organized by National University of Juridical Sciences (NUJS), at their NUJS-CUSAT Conference in association with the NJUS Law Review and IPTLS in Kolkata.

Awards and Recognitions

- Dr. Sam Taraporevala was invited by the Union Bank of India to be the Guest of Honor at the launch of its totally accessible bilingual ATM at Thane. This was in recognition of the role played in helping, conceptualizing, testing, developing and rolling out of such systems across the country.
- Dr. Sam Taraporevala was also a special invitee and participant at the SBI ATM launch, as the XRCVC had played a key role in the launch of the fully accessible ATM of the State Bank of India at the JNU campus New Delhi. This launched the mega roll out of the bank's accessible ATMs across the country. This was in recognition of the key role played in the conceptualization, testing and development of this powerful financial inclusion tool.
- Dr. Sam Taraporevala was presented the Role Model Award that was conferred by the Retina India Foundation.
- Dr. Sam Taraporevala was also presented with the Vocational Excellence Award, conferred by Rotary Club of Bombay, Hanging Garden.
- Dr. Sam Taraporevala was appointed as a resource person by the Department of Disability, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India on the subject of the Inclusion of visually impaired children in various government programmes. This was on the request of the Ministry of Woman and Child Development, Child Welfare Section to provide a resource person to give inputs to the Parliamentary Forum on Children.
- Dr. Sam Taraporevala was an invitee at stakeholder meetings to plan for India's stand at the SCCR meets organized by WIPO to draft a special treaty by way of copyright exceptions for the blind. The meetings were called by the copyright office Ministry of HRD, Government of India to plan India's stand on the draft clauses as developed by the standing committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) of the World Intellectual Property Rights Organization (WIPO) meetings that were held at New Delhi.

Looking Ahead: Concluding Remarks

With a year full of giant leaps forward, the XRCVC is geared up for another year of activities that will help its work on inclusion cross yet another barrier.

The XRCVC would like to extend its gratitude to all its supporters, namely our funders without whom we would not be able to achieve what we have. We would like to specially thank Sightsavers, Tech Mahindra Foundation, SAP India, Dhun Pestonji Parakh Discretionary Trust, Samruddha Resources Limited,

Johnson & Johnson, Godrej Industries, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Central Bank of India, Tata Sons Limited, Shah Steel & Tubes and the Lions Club of East Bombay.

Our volunteers who make our humble work team of 9 be boosted by a power of 100. They are what make a small organization like ours capable to achieve national impact.

And like always our heartfelt gratitude goes to St. Xavier's College – The Principal, Management and all the staff members who nurture the XRCVC's work to ensure that a national example is set of an education institute leading its way in creating access for the blind and low vision persons. Their support and contribution is unmatched in XRCVC's success story.