THE BRAILLISTS FOUNDATION

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR BRAILLE DISPLAY

Matthew Horspool: Welcome back to Braillecast Extra. Coming up this time, How To Choose Your Braille Display, a session recorded on Tuesday, 20th April 2021 and introduced by Dave Williams.

Dave Williams: Hello and good evening, a very warm welcome to the Braillists Foundation and to our Tuesday evening Braillists Master Class. Tonight we'll be exploring the sticky subject of how to choose a Braille display. With so many options available on the market at a wide range of price points with different features and functions, we're delighted to welcome Jackie Brown, who's literally written the book on how to choose a Braille display. So, we'll be getting into that here very shortly indeed.

If you're new to the Braillists Foundation, a very special welcome to you. These sessions are carefully moderated so we invite you to remain muted unless invited to do otherwise. We have a moderation policy published on our website. We try to keep a very family-friendly and respectful vibe in the room and to assist us with that and to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to ask questions and to be heard, tonight we're joined by Ben Mustill-Rose who's pushing the buttons and doing the moderation. Hi, Ben.

Ben Mustill-Rose: Hey, Dave, how are you today?

Dave Williams: Really good. Looking forward to this one. We know it's a popular topic. It comes up on forums all the time. What Braille display have you got? Which one would you recommend? And of course there won't be a perfect option, will there? It's what's right for you.

Ben Mustill-Rose: Yes, definitely. That's what we're really going to try to do with this session. We don't want to sit here and tell you, buy this display. What we really want to do is try to get you to a point where you can make an informed decision on your own and I gather there'll be plenty of time for questions towards the end of the session so I'll be the person handling the raising of hands and unmuting everybody and we'll go through how to raise hands a little later on, if anyone isn't aware of how to do it. We try to give people a little bit of prior notice before we go to them, so I might say, "We're going to go to Dave then we're going to go to Jackie," and that just gives Jackie a bit of time to finish making a cup of tea or whatever. I think that's all from me for now, Dave.

Dave Williams: The Braillists Foundation, our mission is more Braille and we are dedicated to the promotion of Braille and Braille usage. We're a relative new charity, registered in the UK at the beginning of last year and since then we've delivered hundreds of hours of community calls, training, Braille book clubs and much more besides.

Just to let you know, on a Tuesday evening, we do our Master Class sessions and we also run what we call our Braille Bar, which is a bit like a nail bar or the genius bar where you can get your Braille questions answered. That'll be taking place next week at 7:30 so you're very welcome to join for that.

On a Thursday evening at the slightly earlier time of 6pm, we have our Braillists book club and there are a number of room options available there, so if you join the Braille book club, there are opportunities to read with other Braille readers at different levels, for beginners, intermediate and more advanced readers.

Don't forget our podcast, Braillecast, that's available at any time from wherever you get your podcasts and you can of course join in the conversation on the Braillists forum which you can find at braillists.org/forum.

So without any further ado, it gives me great pleasure to introduce Jackie Brown. Jackie is the former chair of TAVIP, the organisation formerly known as BCAB. Jackie is a passionate user of assistive technology, in particular Braille technology. Jackie's voice will be known to many of you from her various appearances in the media and on social media and, Jackie, I think it was in 2019, tell me if I'm wrong, that you published your book, Braille On Display, which attempted to capture a summary of the Braille products that were available on the market at that time. I understand the book was updated a year later with a few changes in the market and of course the market is changing all the time. We know this. Rarely does a month go by when somebody doesn't announce a new feature or function or even entirely new Braille products. So, it's a really exciting space. Jackie's very much got her finger on the pulse and hopefully tonight, Jackie, you'll be able to help guide us through the maze that is choosing a Braille display.

Ladies and gentlemen, Jackie Brown.

Jackie Brown: Hi, everybody. Thank you very much to Dave and everybody at the Braillists Foundation for inviting me to speak to you this evening. I'm really pleased to be here and I am, as Dave said, very passionate about Braille. The first copy of the book Braille On Display came out in 2016, believe it or not, and then the second, the update was last year, beginning of last year, end of 2019. So, thanks to Jonathan Mosen for that as well.

I'm really, really excited by all the developments in Braille and Braille display technology. A lot of people have said to me, "Oh, but isn't Braille going out of date now?" How dare you? No, it isn't. It's fantastic. It's very much with us and it's great that we've got the Braillists Foundation and so many people using Braille and so many people coming along here this evening to share my excitement.

I've always been very passionate about Braille. I was passionate as a four year old about learning it. I use it every day and I'm lucky to have quite a few Braille devices lying around and I use them day in, day out, really, a Braille display at my computer, Braille devices for reading.

To me it's just part of my life and there are loads of reasons why you would want a Braille display, so perhaps we should first of all, ask that question. Why would you want a Braille display? I can think of quite a few reasons and you'll all have your own reasons as well. Obviously in education and employment, they're two real biggies, because if you're in employment and you're using a screen reader on your computer, to actually have Braille as well will help you with your job, whether it's proofreading, taking down numbers and reading back information to customers over the phone, all kinds of scenarios that you would use a Braille display.

In education, of course, there are various note takers out there and we're going to be looking at some of the features of the various note takers and Braille displays, but if you're in education, especially for young people growing up in mainstream education or even if they're at a blind school, it's really important for them to get their literacy and numeracy and Braille does really help in those areas as well.

Then, of course, these days we have access to things like Kindle, to Apple's Books and all kinds of stuff for leisure. So, you can connect a Braille display with your phone and you can have it in leisure as well. There are so many reasons for why you would want to buy a Braille display.

If you're in work, most people will know by now, I'm sure, that Access to Work will provide you with some funding for a Braille display, if you ask them nicely. You can apply for one. It's the same with education and the DSA (Disabled Students Allowance) system. You can sometimes be given a Braille display, depending on what your needs are.

If it's coming out of your own pocket, it is a really considered purchase and this is why I do really feel quite strongly about knowing what to choose and finding out as much information before you go ahead and buy one, because, in particular if it is coming out of your own funds, it's a lot of money. You're not going to get that much under £1,000, depending on how many cells and the type of Braille display that you want. You're just going to have to really consider very carefully, with your own funds particularly, what kind of display you can afford.

You need to ask yourself some questions for a start. What will it do for you, is obviously the most important thing, but apart from that, what is my budget. Now, if you have a considered amount of money from your own savings, there are a host of Braille displays or note takers that you can buy.

If your funds are limited, you could probably start from something like the Orbit Reader or the Orbit Reader 20 Plus, which has been slightly updated, and of course there are some very small Braille displays such as the HIMS Beetle, which have 14 to 16 characters, Braille cells and upwards.

So, it really depends. The more Braille cells that you're looking for on your Braille display, the more likely it is it's going to cost you more money. So, consider your budget and then once you know how much roughly you've got to spend, then you can start looking for a Braille display or note taker in that budget.

How many cells would I prefer? Well, as I say, they start from 14 cells upwards and they go up to 80 cells. So, if you are in a static environment such as a workplace or you're at home and you have a PC workstation, if you like, and you're not going to be moving around the house with a Braille display and of course you have the funds to buy one, the more Braille cells at your disposal, the better.

I'm using an 80 cell Braille display on my Windows PC but then I'm in my little cubby-hole most of the day and I'm not moving around the house, I don't need to carry it. I've got a portable display for that purpose. So, I'm using a Focus 80 5th Generation and these are very considered purchases. They're over £7,000. It's something you need to think about quite carefully.

I chose an 80 cell because I do a lot of proofreading in Word. I use Microsoft Word a lot and I do a lot of proofreading for my course that I'm doing at the moment. I'm doing a Master's in Creative Writing. So, therefore I do really need access to Braille all the time and I find it really helpful. So that's why I decided on this one and I had to pay for it as well. DSA wouldn't fund the Braille display for me.

It is a considered purchase and you do need to think about that when you're choosing how many cells you want.

I would also suggest getting as many demonstrations of a Braille display as you possibly can. There are a lot out there now on the market and the best thing to do is really to get demonstrations of them all, if you possibly can, and get some hands-on time so that you can feel the display, the shape of it, what the Braille feels like when you're reading. If you're going to be reading a lot of books or you're going to be using your Braille display a lot, you want to be comfortable. You don't want the Braille to be too sharp if your fingers are very sensitive to that, or you don't want something where the dots are not going to be quite as protruding as you'd want them to be. So, it is important to make sure that you can get as much information about the Braille display that you want to buy as possible. My advice is always to get hold of companies. I know it's particularly difficult at the moment with the pandemic. A lot of companies are being very helpful in doing online demonstrations, but that in my view isn't the same as having some hands-on experience. So it will be nice in the coming months if we can get back to a point where people can start venturing out and getting to exhibitions and such like.

Ask as many questions as you can about the Braille display that you want to buy and get the company to give you the low-down on what their training and support is, because that's another issue, training and support. You want to make sure that if you buy a Braille display, you're going to be supported if anything happens to it.

The more Braille cells that you've got, the more it's going to cost you to get it put right if there's a problem with it. They're normally, generally very reliable, if you look after them. Always make sure your hands are clean when you're using them and try to keep them away from spillages and things like that. Keep liquids away and food and stuff like that if you can, but most people know that and it is common sense. I have seen one or two Braille displays that came into repair when I was working and they were a bit of a mess, so it is always better to look after them, because if they're going to last you a long time, you want to make sure that you're kind to it.

Get a demonstration and ask the company all about their support, their after-sales and any training that you might need. You might also have to factor in the fact that you want training with the Braille display. Some people won't. Some people feel very comfortable, as I do, to just pair them with their phone or pair them with their screen reader on the computer and they maybe know how to use a Braille display. Seasoned Braille display users will probably not require training but there a lot of people out there who will require training. So, make sure that you factor in the cost of training and the cost of any support you're going to need and ask lots and lots of questions. If a company is worth its salt at all, they will answer the questions for you and if they don't, well, don't buy from them. I'm being perfectly blunt about that because it's like going to a garage, if you can see, and buying a car. It's a considered purchase and you want to make sure that you test drive, that you get the car that you're looking for and it's the same with a Braille display.

My son, who has known me, obviously has been around Braille for all his life, he says to me, "Mother, it's like buying a car, it costs a fortune," and that is true. So, just make sure that you do ask all the questions and you get as much information as you can about training and support and stuff.

For instance, some Braille displays can be repaired in the UK because some companies can do that but other displays maybe have to go back to far-flung places. So, you do need to consider that as well, how long is the display going to be away if it needs to be repaired and can the company loan you one if you're really desperate and you need it but you need to have your own sent away. Make sure that if possible you get a loan of a Braille display. Most companies, they can't always do that because they don't have that many demos in stock and it's not always that simple to get you a loan of one while yours is away, but it is something worth asking.

Other things to consider, do you want a note taker or do you just want a Braille display and by that I mean that a note taker has lots of bells and whistles. We've got some from Humanware, the BrailleNote Touch Plus, for example. That has lots of added features as well as the Braille display. It's a dedicated note taker with lots of other bells and whistles on it. It's got an Internet browser, it's got an email client. So, there's lots of things about buying a note taker that have their advantages but also they tend to be more expensive. So, if you're just looking for a Braille display that you can use with your screen reader, you might want something like for example an Esys from Eurobraille or you might want just a Focus Blue Braille display to work with your screen reader. The new Focuses have what's called a scratchpad on them now which is just a very basic note taker and they also have Braille keys on so you can input Braille as well.

It really depends on what you're looking for. If you want added bells and whistles, there are some very nice devices out there. Alternatively if you just want a Braille display just to work with your PC or your laptop and you're not fussy about having email clients or word processors or what platform they run on or things like that, then obviously just a straightforward Braille display would be sufficient.

Another thing to consider is multiple connectivity. Most Braille displays that you buy now do come with multiple connections, in other words it will connect to more than one device. For example, if you've got an iPhone or an Android device or both, you can use the same Braille display to connect to more than one device, using Bluetooth. Most of them have four or five devices now to which you can connect, which is really great in this day and age because you might have your laptop where you want it connected to, say, NVDA or JAWS , and you might also have an iPhone or an Android device to which you'd also like to connect.

I've covered the basics in what the various displays are and what they do but there are a lot of new ones out on the market. So, I'll talk a bit about some of the new ones that have come out recently, certainly since the last update of my book.

You might have heard of ElBraillie which is a laptop really but it's built with a Focus Blue Braille display incorporated into the docking station. It's in every sense a Windows PC. It runs JAWS but you can also run NVDA on it as well. Primarily it is a JAWS machine and it works with the Focus Blue 40 5th Generation. There was a slightly older version of ElBraille when it first came out that worked with a Focus Blue 14 but it's now been upgraded to the 5th generation of the Focus Blue. It's really nice actually. I do have an ElBraille and I like it because it's on the Windows platform and you treat it in every respect as a laptop, because that's really what it is. I cheat sometimes and I'm a QWERTY person so I do like a QWERTY keyboard. So, I do have a QWERTY keyboard attached to my ElBraille, if I'm stationary and not moving around but if I want to take it somewhere, then I can just not use the QWERTY keyboard and just go back to the Focus Blue on it. It's great for reading Kindle books which is one of the things I use mine for and it's got Windows so I've got Microsoft Office on it. It's great, it's very portable. That's a fairly new machine that's been out in the last year to 18 months or so.

If it's a Windows machine that you want to consider, you could kill two birds with one stone and get an ElBraille which would be the laptop side of it with a Focus Blue display built into it which you can take out of the ElBraille docking station itself. That's sold by Sight and Sound Technology in the UK and their collaboration with the Elita Group.

Humanware have also got some really nice devices on the go. First of all, there's the Mantis Q40. Now, it's a QWERTY keyboard with a 40 cell Braille display at the front of it. I've seen this one and it's absolutely great. It has some really nice features. All these have Bluetooth, by the way. The Mantis has sort of an editor, what it calls an editor, similar to a word processor, so you can open your documents and you can save them in txt format. It's got a calculator on it and a few other bits and pieces as well. So, this is Humanware's latest. It's a QWERTY keyboard and you can actually use the Home keys on the QWERTY. I think it's SDFJKL you can use if you want to switch to Braille. I can't imagine writing Braille on a QWERTY keyboard but some people do it and they do it really well and the Mantis does allow you to do that as well if you want to switch to write in Braille.

Humanware also has a couple of new Brailliants BI X devices, one is a 20 cell and one is a 40 cell and they are really nice as well. I haven't seen them but I've read the user documentation and they do sound like really nice devices. These are Braille inputs and they have obviously Bluetooth and they have a couple of other features on them as well, an editor and stuff like that. So, you can write your documents, you can read your documents. I believe in a future upgrade, they're also going to be able to have the Victor Reader application which will allow you to listen to audio as well as read Braille documents. I think that's a little bit further down the line but I believe that the BI 20 and BI 40, the new ones in the BI X series from Humanware, they are equipped with the hardware and it's a question of when the software is released that you'll be able to have the Victor Reader part of it as well for DAISY books and stuff which is really quite exciting.

Then we have the BrailleSense 6 which I believe is landing in June. This is the latest from HIMS. It is a combined note taker, running on the Android platform and it'll be Android 10 and it's got quite a powerful processor, a lot of RAM, 128 storage, I think, obviously Bluetooth and you can download apps from the Play Store and it has its own suite of programs as well on it. So, that's a fully fledged note taker. It's Braille input and I believe it's going to be 32 cells to start with and I think there is going to be a 20 cell version coming out in the autumn. People that like smaller devices will be pleased about that, because the Polaris, which is the one that it's going to supersede, it was a 32 and a 20 as well and the 20 cell version was really compact and small. So, I believe that the new BrailleSense 6 has been revamped completely. It's a huge upgrade in terms of its hardware so that'll be something to look forward to.

We have the Orbit 20 Plus which is, I think, just a couple of features added to the Orbit Reader 20. I think the 20 Plus had a calendar as one of the features added to it. It doesn't have any cursor routing buttons, the little buttons that go above each Braille cell on your Braille display. All the others do but the Orbit 20 and the 20 Plus don't. You still can edit documents, I believe, you just have a different way of doing it.

The exciting thing is that the Orbit Reader 40 is imminent apparently. RNIB are about to take delivery and start selling those. There are two exciting things about that, for me. The first thing is the price. I think it's going to be £1,350, according to the product guide. When you consider a 40 cell Braille display, that is probably as good as it gets. The other point is that it has cursor routing buttons and it's going to have an SD card slot with lots of books on it as well. So, I know RNIB provide a card, if you just ask them for one, and it's got loads of books on it already. I think there's going to be more books on it possibly and the Orbit Reader 40 is obviously going to allow you to read and write your documents and edit them. For the price, I think that's quite important.

Finally, there are the VarioUltras. They've been revamped. I can't remember the name of the company but it is the VarioUltra 20 and 40 cell displays. They were made by Baum and I think they went out of business a couple of years ago but they've now been resurrected, I'm happy to say, and in the UK, I think one of the dealers is Steve Nutt. I don't know if he's excusive or not and I'm sure somebody will put me right on that. The VarioUltra are very nice machines and they are back with us again.

With some of the features, you might say that you wish a Braille display had this or that on it, but then you've got to weigh up what's going to benefit you. There isn't a perfect Braille display out there, because even if I sat down and I wrote down all the things that I ever wanted on a Braille display, it probably doesn't exist. So, you have to work out what you want that's going to be closest to your needs and, let's be honest about it, we've all got different needs. There's millions of cars out there, they're all different in their own way and a driver will say that they don't like a certain car because it doesn't have X, Y, Z and they like this car because it suits their needs. It's the same with a Braille display.

Ask all the questions you can possibly think of before you decide to hand over your credit card details because once you've done it, you might not be able to do it again for some considerable time and you don't want to be stuck with something that you're not going to be able to sell because you've bought something in error. Even if you can sell it, you're going to lose some of your own money, especially if you've had to pay for it in full.

Take your time, don't be pressured by somebody who's quite enthusiastic in the sales team. Just make sure that it's going to work for you and think about it hard and long. Don't feel obliged just because someone's given you a demonstration.

There are enough displays out there to make an informed choice and just think about it carefully.

I'm sure you've had enough of me for a little while so shall we hand back to Dave and see whether people want to ask any questions?

Dave Williams: The car analogy is a really good one, Jackie. Taking it for a test drive if you can, and also asking about a courtesy Braille display if yours need to go in for repair.

We've got about 25 minutes remaining. We've got a bunch of hands coming up. For anybody who's relatively new to this, then Ben can just run us through the raise hand info.

Ben Mustill-Rose: Yes. I'd echo all of your comments there, Dave.

So, we're going to go to Jess first. If anyone needs a quick reminder on how to raise your hand, you can do so in a few different ways. You can press Alt+Y on Windows, Option+Y on Mac, if you're dialling in on a telephone you can press star nine or if you're on an iDevice such as an iPhone, iPod or iPad, you can press the More button which you'll find in the bottom right of your screen and from there you'll find a Raise Hand button.

There are quite a few hands raised already actually, so very popular topic clearly. We're going to Jess first and then Theo.

Jess: Firstly, it was really interesting, but I'm wondering, is there somewhere where there's a handy list of all the different ones?

Jackie Brown: Yes, there is. I wrote about this and I have a table in my book, so I feel a bit awkward.

Jess: No problem. If you'd done it, then that's great. I didn't catch the details of your book though.

Jackie Brown: It's called Braille On Display and it's available through Jonathan Mosen. Go to mosen.org/brailleondisplay, you'll find all the details. The book does have a comparison table of all the Braille displays, bearing in mind that there have been some new displays since it was published so I've obviously got some work to do at some point in updating that. The book gives you a chapter on each of the Braille displays and it tells you all the features.

The ones that I mentioned tonight are the ones that probably won't be in that version of the book because they've come out in the last year or so.

If anybody wants any information, I'm happy to share my email and people are more than welcome to contact me or the Braillists can put something together.

Jess: Can I also ask about the one you were talking about which is like a laptop and a display because I need to get a new laptop? Was it ElBraille?

Jackie Brown: ElBraille, yes.

Jess: Is it an actual laptop, in that does it have a screen? So that if I was working with someone who's sighted, they could work with me as well.

Jackie Brown: It's quite a long device. It's the length of a 40 cell Braille display and it fits into a docking station. If you already have the Focus Blue 40 that goes with it, you don't need to buy that part of it obviously and if you already have a JAWS license, you don't need to buy that either.

If it's just the docking station you require, the Focus Blue fits inside it and it looks like one unit once it's inside it. It's got an SD card slot, it's got a couple of USB slots on it, it runs Windows 10 Home edition. I've got my JAWS license on it and I can read Kindle and use Microsoft Office. It allows me as well, if I want to, to connect a wireless QWERTY keyboard which I often do if I'm using it at home for something.

I like it because it gives me Braille and it gives me Windows because I am a Windows fan.

Jess: Would it be better to just get a new laptop and connect an existing Braille display, if this isn't an actual laptop with a screen as such?

Jackie Brown: It doesn't have a screen but what it does have is an HDMI port so if you want to connect a screen, you can do. It's obviously got stereo speakers and a headphone socket and things like that.

It is like a laptop but it has been designed to work with a Braille display. If you would prefer something where you just want to use a Braille display with an ordinary laptop, then that of course is feasible to do as well. There are umpteen Braille displays that will do that.

Jess: Gosh, it's really complicated, isn't it?

Jackie Brown: It is, if you're new to it. That's really why this has been quite a popular session this evening.

Once you find out a bit more about what's out there, then it makes it slightly easier for you to make an informed choice.

Jess: If you do buy one and you've made a mistake, is there somewhere you can swap them , second-hand ones?

Jackie Brown: It depends what people are looking for. You can go on a second-hand email list or on Facebook or whatever and try to sell it but you're not normally going to get the amount back on it that you paid . You do stand to lose a fair bit of money.

That's why I can't emphasise enough to anybody that is looking at Braille displays, especially if they're paying for it out of their own purse, it's really important to make sure you know what's out there.

Ben Mustill-Rose: Thank you for that. We're going to Theo next and then Lielle Ben Simon.

Theo: I'm choosing a Braille display for school at the moment and I'm choosing between the new Focus that you mentioned and the Brailliant BI 40X and I've recently had a demo of the Brailliant and I have a couple of questions about it.

Firstly, I've had quite a lot of Bluetooth freezing problems with the Brailliant. It just disconnects and the Braille output freezes so that the computer or the phone will keep moving but the Brailliant won't and then you have to go out of the app and reconnect. I wonder if anyone else who has the Brailliant has had those issues.

Jackie Brown: I don't have one so I can't comment. Have you contacted Humanware?

Theo: I have, yes, and they're looking into it.

Jackie Brown: Humanware's technical support in the UK is fabulous. I'm sure they will do their best to help.

Theo: Thank you.

Jackie Brown: Some are better at connecting than others. I've had experience with one or two where they have been very sluggish but others have connected seamlessly. It doesn't help that iOS, Apple, haven't made it very easy for people with some Braille displays so that might be something to consider because I know Apple have had a problem in iOS 14 where there have been some Braille bugs. I'm informed that 14.5, when it comes out, is going to address some of those bugs with Bluetooth.

Theo: Yes, that's exciting. It does have the latest Bluetooth technology so it probably is something to do with the device I'm connecting it to.

My second question is about the commands. I did look on the Humanware app where I was recommended to look but I could only see IRS commands and I was wondering if anybody's had experience with any Brailliant commands really, even on the older Brailliants and how many of the commands are different and how many are the same.

Jackie Brown: Again, as I don't have a Brailliant display, I can't answer your question. This session is being recorded and hopefully somebody will be able to answer.

Ben Mustill-Rose: We're going to come to Lielle Ben Simon next and then Steph.

Lielle: My name is Lielle. I want to ask about my Smart Beetle display. Firstly, can I get a back up display and secondly, if I were to choose one, what is the best that I can use with my phone?

Jackie Brown: There are some small Braille displays like the Smart Beetle. The Eurobraille from Esys is 12 cells and it works with iOS and Android on an iPhone. People recommend something with 20 cells or less to use with their phone because it's compact to move around with.

Does that answer your question?

Lielle: Yes. If I need to fix my Braille display, can I get a back-up?

Ben Mustill-Rose: I think we're talking about what options are there around donor displays while one is being fixed but also, is it good enough as a secondary Braille display if it's maybe not your primary device?

Jackie Brown: Yes. It definitely would be. I think if you have a Braille display that's there, any is better than not having one.

In terms of sending it away for repair and being loaned one, that's very much down to what is available at the company. They don't have very many and I think I can speak for nearly all the companies, certainly in the UK, that most of them don't have very many displays that they can loan out to people while their display is being repaired.

If you ask very nicely and depending on your needs, if there is one available, then I think most people are willing to help if they can but it's not guaranteed and can be very difficult.

In today's climate, when you go and buy a display, it's always worth asking the company for a discount.

Dave Williams: We've got seven minutes left and six hands. So I'm going to ask if you can keep your questions brief and we'll try to get through as many as possible.

Ben Mustill-Rose: Thank you. We're going to Steph next and then George Bell.

Steph: Which display are you using to do your presentation, please?

Jackie Brown: I am using a Windows PC at home with a Focus 80 5th Generation. This is a good one when I'm sitting at my desk and I'm stationary, so I like to have a long Braille display because I do a lot of proofreading.

I also have a smaller Braille display, a smaller Focus on my ElBraille.

Ben Mustill-Rose: We're going to George next and then Claire.

George: I know it's not what you would term a regular Braille display but you haven't mentioned the Canute.

Jackie Brown: That was in my book and the reason why I didn't mention it is because it was already in there. Let me just say, guys, very briefly, the Canute 360, I've got one on beside me and I've got my bullet points written on it and my notes for tonight, so I'm using it and it's a Braille ereader, if you like. It has nine lines of Braille and it has 40 cells per line. That's why it's called the Canute 360. It's manufactured in the UK by Bristol Braille Technologies and it's distributed by our good friend George Bell at Techno-Visions Systems and it's just brilliant. You put your Braille documents in brf format onto an SD card or a pen and put that into the Canute and you've got a library at your disposal. It's not what I would call the most portable device, bearing in mind it's got nine lines of 40 cells of Braille but it's brilliant.

Ben Mustill-Rose: We're going to Claire next and then Tina.

Claire: I wanted to ask what would be the essential features needed for a beginner.

Jackie Brown: All Braille displays allow you to use Grade 1 Braille or if you're just learning, Grade 2 or UEB.

Ben Mustill-Rose: We're going to Tina next and then Andrew.

Tina: I've got an Orbit 20. Can you actually get it upgraded to the 20 Plus or do you have to get a whole new unit?

Jackie Brown: I'm not wishing to speak on behalf of RNIB, but I think it's the same with all of them, if you want an upgrade, the more expensive ones will sometimes offer you an upgrade path where you can trade in but I would imagine that your best bet would be to sell your Orbit 20 and then if you're lucky enough to sell it for a reasonable price, put that towards an upgrade and buy the 20 Plus.

Ben Mustill-Rose: Any comments on that, Dave?

Dave Williams: No, there isn't an upgrade path at the moment in the UK. You can talk to Orbit Research directly though and see what they say.

Ben Mustill-Rose: Thank you for that, Dave. So we're going to Andrew Flatres next and then Dave Shearer.

Andrew: I just wanted to respond to Theo's question relating to the new Brailliants from Humanware and just wanted to mention that these new Braille displays, along with the Mantis Q40, they are actually using a new type of connection with the Apple devices and that's why you might see some minor connection issues with some phones. Apple are well aware of these and are working towards addressing those issues.

My last point is about the Braille commands with other screen readers. These are identical to its predecessor, the Brailliant BI 40 or the 32. We do need to update the website and it will contain the new commands in the next week or so.

Ben Mustill-Rose: Thank you for that. I hope Theo got that information. We're going to go to Dave Shearer next and then Daniel.

Dave Shearer: My question has already been asked. It was to do with the Canute and whether it was worth the money or not.

Jackie Brown: Oh, yes. Yes, it is.

Dave Shearer: Being a good Scottish person, I ask it properly.

Jackie Brown: It is worth the money but, again, as I say, I don't like to make assumptions about people's budgets or requirements, but I got one as a very special present for my birthday from my husband and I have to say, I've got it on beside me here and I love it.

Ben Mustill-Rose: Last but not least, now we have Daniel Gillen.

Daniel: Thanks so much for mentioning the Canute display, just because, yes, it definitely would be a revolutionary product for people. I work as a Braille music specialist, proof reader, transcriber, in the US and it's so useful to be able to view several lines at a time on one display.

I did want to say however that the Canute does not support screen readers, as of yet. but that might come soon.

Ben Mustill-Rose: Sorry, Daniel, I think we lost you. I think there are some experimental drivers in BRLTTY at the moment for the Canute actually.

No more hands, so I think it's time to hand over to Dave to wrap up.

Dave Williams: Thanks very much, everybody, lots and lots of great questions and plenty of opportunities to carry on the discussion. So, as I mentioned early, the Braillists Foundation has a forum, braillists.org/forum, where you can connect with other Braillists. On Facebook there is of course the Braille support group and Humanware also operate a Braille displays group on Facebook. So a number of forums where you can connect with other Braille users and compare notes on Braille displays.

If you didn't catch all the session, it has been recorded and will be made available as part of the Braillecast feed and also at braillists.org/media.

Next week we'll be opening up our Braille Bar for questions, so if people would like to talk about Braille displays or anything related to purchasing a Braille display, then you'd be very welcome at the Braille Bar next Tuesday.

For all the information about Braillists events, look out for our newsletter that should be with you later in the week and you can sign up for that on the website.

Jackie Brown, thank you so much for sharing your time and expertise. We very much appreciate it. We hope we will see you back at the Braillists Foundation again very soon. The very best of luck with your creative writing course that you're doing. That sounds like lots of fun.

Thank you to Ben as well for your help with the moderation and pushing the buttons this evening.

From all of us here at the Braillists Foundation, thanks very much, have a great week and stay in touch and we'll speak with you soon. Bye for now.