

## **Moon Forum's response to RNIB's position on Moon**

The members of the Moon Forum greatly regret RNIB's significant withdrawal of support for children and adults who depend on Moon. Given the large and increasing number of children and young people with visual impairment and additional difficulties, and given the ageing population in the UK, we consider RNIB's position surprising and inappropriate.

The decision to discontinue services and resources (including Moon teaching courses for children and adults) discriminates against those visually-impaired people least able to fight for what they need: older people who are new to sight loss, and children and adults with visual impairment and learning and/or physical disabilities. We understand that RNIB's policy is to promote uncontracted braille for less able readers and we agree that braille is superior in every way to Moon. But for some people, for a variety of reasons, it is just too difficult. We appreciate that RNIB does not have unlimited funds, but we are appalled that there is no contingency plan for supporting this group of readers and potential readers now and in future.

We know children who have benefited enormously from learning Moon both in terms of developing literacy and in terms of increased independence and confidence. A fifteen-year-old at West of England School learned to read her own name and was proud to describe herself as a 'Moonist.' Thirteen secondary age students at Linden Lodge School are learning Moon, and it is also being taught at RNIB Sunshine House School – and in many other schools around the UK. A special school in Derby is planning to introduce thirty pupils to Moon, starting in September 2012. Of course the numbers are small, because we are talking about low incidence conditions, but the number of children with MDVI is growing and these young people have their whole lives ahead of them. Where does RNIB's decision leave these students, now and in the future?

We know of adults (including those who are deaf and blind) for whom Moon has been a lifeline. But they have had no new books in Moon to read this century – despite the fact that modern software and embossers mean it has never been cheaper or easier to produce Moon. RNIB's embossers could start Moon production tomorrow.

The Moon Forum has four active members and a number of well-wishers who, in their spare time and with a budget of less than £600 p.a. attempt to maintain a Moon website and a mailing list, and to promote Moon at one or two exhibitions a year. Until now a key part of our role has been to promote the Moon resources and services available from RNIB and these feature heavily on the Moon Forum website. Without these resources we will have little to promote.

The Moon Forum is clearly not in a position to take on responsibility for the provision of Moon services and resources to those who need it in the UK. But we feel a great sense of responsibility towards Moon readers, their families and their teachers.

The Moon Forum would be appalled to witness the demise of Moon – a format which has proved its worth since 1845. We call upon RNIB to think again and to devote some of its budget for accessible formats to producing essential teaching courses, resources and reading materials for people of all ages who are learning and using Moon. Despite their various disabilities, they too have the right to read.