Call for Steering Group Members for the DAISY Music Braille Project & Nomination Form

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# Contents

Summary 1

Project Staff 2

Steering Group Composition 3

The Role of the Steering Group 3

Participation Requirements 4

Finance Management 4

Background 4

Achievements so far 5

Next stages 6

Nomination Form - DAISY Music Braille Project Steering Group 7

# Summary

**Invitation:** We are inviting nominations for experts to form a small Steering Group for the DAISY Music Braille Project as we move into the fundraising and development phase of the project. You will be able to influence the functionality of music braille conversion tools and standards according to the prioritized requirements agreed across the sector. The project plan is currently being prepared and the Steering Group will help to finalise this.

**Goals:** This DAISY project is working collaboratively across the blindness and publishing sectors to secure the future of music braille production. We wish to ensure that more accurate music braille scores are available more efficiently to blind end users worldwide, by delivering prioritized improvements to:

1. at least one music braille production transcription tool - enabling blindness agencies to convert files into music braille which can be embossed and the digital files shared internationally (a Business to Business B2B solution);
2. at least one interactive end-user music braille tool - for blind musicians to read, write, convert and explore music scores in accessible ways including braille, sound, voice and print (a Business to Consumer B2C solution).

In addition, the project will also deliver ‘softer’ objectives which will improve music braille conversion through the tools, and permit more effective international file-sharing, knowledge exchange and capacity building:

1. Influencing the digital music standard file formats (e.g. MusicXML, MNX, BMML) with W3C and other agencies.
2. Improving music engraving practice with mainstream music notation tools to improve the digital scores available for conversion to music braille.
3. Incorporating appropriate metadata into converted files to enable effective file-sharing and retrieval by agencies and end-users in global repositories
4. Supporting other agencies in our network as a community of transcribers, developers, teachers and end-users in our combined efforts to develop and share expertise, capacity, training and support.

**Main Aims of the Steering Group:**

1. to support the Project Chair with strategic direction and fundraising; and
2. to support the Project Manager by agreeing and monitoring workplans, implementing major changes and managing risks.

**Communication**: We anticipate a light-touch relationship mainly via email and online meetings - enough to help make major decisions and resolve differences, but without the need for onerous reports, meetings and extensive travel.

**How to apply:** Completed nomination forms (at the end of this document) should be received by midnight on **Friday 13 September** at musicbraille@daisy.org with no more than 200 words outlining your interest in and expertise relevant to this project.

**Project webpage:** All existing project documents, meeting notes and presentations are available on the project web page at: <http://www.daisy.org/project/daisy-music-braille>

# Project Staff

The two current project staff are both part-time contracted consultants to DAISY, on zero-hours contracts, working up to 2 days per week:

* **Project Manager**: Dr. Sarah Morley Wilkins will continue in this role. The Project Manager will report to the Steering Group.
* **Technical Consultant**: Haipeng Hu will continue in this role, and will continue to report to the Project Manager.

# Steering Group Composition

**Project Chair**: Arne Kyrkjebø will continue as Project Chair as the initiator and driver of the project and as a DAISY Board Member. He has final decision-making authority.

We are looking for around 5 senior people representing the sector to join us in a voluntary (unpaid) capacity, with expertise in one or more of the following areas (but they cannot be from the agencies/companies making the conversion tools in question):

* Music braille production in an agency setting
* Music braille production in/for education
* Use of interactive user tools for reading, writing, exploring and outputting music scores
* Fundraising and project proposals
* Music braille standards and formats
* Technical development of music braille or braille production software
* Oversight of technical development projects, especially Agile projects
* Resource prioritization and allocation
* Business planning, contracting, service level agreements
* A member of the DAISY Consortium will be preferred.

# The Role of the Steering Group

We expect nominees will be relatively senior/expert, with confidence to take a wide view and make strategic decisions for the benefit of the whole sector.

They will have a vested interest in making necessary developments as effectively and efficiently as possible and be able to resolve differences professionally.

They will mainly:

* Be accountable for the project’s expenditure and the overall work of the project
* Encourage and strengthen links between the project and other relevant communities
* Monitor the progress of the project against its goals, and keep these project goals and the overall project plan under review.

The Steering Group will be able to help identify sources of, and help apply for, funding for the project, within their own organisation or in their own country, and support other agencies in doing so.

They may be from agencies who have committed resources (or who can secure commitment) towards the project, whether in-kind and/or in cash.

They will support open communication with the wider sector, respecting commercial confidentiality where appropriate.

They will agree the project plan, phased workpackage deliverables and milestones proposed by the contractors and Project Manager, according to secured funding.

They will monitor high-level progress and risks, helping the Project Manager to implement changes and manage risks when necessary.

They will help to define the benefits of the project to funders and other agencies, promoting the outcomes as widely as possible.

They will help to recruit a network of testers for bug reporting and testing for each development stage.

They will agree and monitor the success measures for the project.

# Participation Requirements

The Project Manager will manage day-to-day relationships with the contracted developers, providing regular short high-level status updates to the Steering Group against milestones, escalating only those issues which require wider attention.

Most communications will be by email or online meetings. Occasional face-to-face meetings may be required, probably scheduled around the DAISY Board meetings.

Your organization must support your participation in the Steering Group, including your time on the project and travel expenses.

We estimate a commitment of an average of 4-8 hours per month from each Steering Group member (approx 0.05 FTE), which may vary depending on the stage of the project.

# Finance Management

DAISY will continue to own the project, to receive funding and manage finances, issue contracts and pay invoices. DAISY has extensive experience of this, with systems and auditing already in place for projects of this kind.

# Background

The project originated in early 2018 from the needs of blindness agencies wanting to future-proof their music braille production services in the face of declining expertise, tools which need further development, and a lack of standards for effective file-sharing.

Through sector-wide surveys and two round-table meetings a wide-range of contributing factors were identified in the use and production of music braille including: conversion tools; file formats; file-sharing; and the teaching, learning and promotion of music braille. We decided to concentrate on the first two of these issues in the first instance to lay the foundations for the other areas.

The project has been funded so far entirely by NLB, and kindly supported by contributions of effort from various agencies/companies in the sector.

# Achievements so far

With wide sector involvement and effort the Project has been successful in the following areas:

1. **Requirements:**
We have gathered and prioritised Requirements for improvements and future features in music braille conversion tools for use in production agencies. Developers of the conversion tools were asked to respond to these Requirements with: how much was already in their tool, what could be in/out of scope, and what resources they would need to implement them. At our Geneva meeting in May 2019 we received responses and presentations about the conversion tools Hodder (from DZB), and GOODFEEL (from Dancing Dots), and about the proposed BMML format (from The Italian Library for the Blind).
2. **Improvements to the source file:**
We have made proposals to the W3C Music Notation Community Group to influence the next version of MusicXML (3.2) and its successor code being scoped now (MNX), which should result in better conversions.
3. **Immediate fixes in conversion tools:**
We have identified necessary immediate fixes/bugs in existing tools for developers, many of which have already been implemented, resulting in immediate improvements to conversions.
4. **Score engraving guidelines:**
We have established guidelines for music score engravers (using Sibelius) which should result in better MusicXML output and therefore better conversions (to be tested in a trial in India).
5. **A community of interest:**
We have successfully connected many key experts world-wide, including transcribers, music teachers, end-users and developers, raising awareness and already taking action together, and we have an active circulation list of around 130 people.

# Next stages

The project is now ready to take the next steps to make further concrete improvements:

1. Fundraise to secure technical development
2. Agree which tool(s) to finance first and issue contracts
3. Set development work phases according to secured funding
4. Recruit a pool of testers
5. Begin requirements gathering for an interactive user tool.

It has been agreed that it is not in the sector’s best interest to design a brand new tool from scratch at the present time as there is so much expertise and potential in existing tools to build on.

We need to collate additional requirements necessary for an interactive user tool, which enables blind musicians to read, write, explore and output music for study, personal or professional use. These specific features are not required in a production tool but will share many of the Requirements already documented.

It is likely that funding will be a collaborative effort across the sector, with in-kind support and financial support from agencies, funding bodies and the developers themselves, and perhaps also from private individuals.

We expect developers to be using Agile development, which will generate rapid and frequent releases of new features, so the sector will be able to regularly test and give feedback on new features.

As a DAISY project we will continue to be open about our decision-making and planning, sharing our progress with our wider community, and making resources available on our project web page.

# Nomination Form - DAISY Music Braille Project Steering Group

Thank you for your interest in helping to direct this project. Please answer all questions and email your nomination to musicbraille@daisy.org by midnight on **Friday 13 September 2019**.

**1. Name**:

**2. Organisation**:

**3. Job title**:

**4. Country**:

**5. Email address**:

**6. Phone number** (including country code):

**7. If you are selected as a Steering Group member, have you confirmed that your organization would support your involvement and expenses?** Yes / No

**8. Are you/your organisation a member of the DAISY Consortium?** Yes / No

**9. Please outline your relevant expertise and interest in contributing to the Steering Group (in no more than 200 words):**

**10. Date**:

You will receive an acknowledgement that we have safely received your nomination. We aim to notify all nominees with the outcome of their nomination within 21 days of the closing date. Thank you for your support.