DAISY Music Braille Project:

Q2 update 2020

Reporting on project activity April, May and June 2020

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<https://www.daisy.org/project/daisy-music-braille>

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# 1. With thanks to our funders in 2020

We are very thankful to have received further financial contributions towards the project this quarter from: Vision Australia, and a second contribution from the Norwegian Association for the Blind.

So, we’re very grateful to the following agencies who are making our activities possible:

* CNIB
* DAISY Strategic Development Fund
* MTM
* NLB
* Norwegian Association of the Blind
* Nota
* ONCE
* RNIB
* SBS
* Vision Australia

# 2. Requirements for interactive end user tools

**Aim:** At least one improved interactive music braille user tool is available for blind musicians to independently read, write, convert and explore music in accessible ways, in education, for work and leisure.

**Update**: We published the prioritized requirements for an interactive user tool for music braille based on responses to our sector survey. We then invited developers to respond with proposals for meeting our requirements. Five developers have confirmed they will submit a formal response by the deadline of 31 August - in alphabetical order:

* Braille Music Editor (Italy)
* GoodFEEL (USA)
* iBOS MusicXML Reader (Denmark)
* MuseScore (international)
* Sao Mai Braille (Vietnam).

The Steering Group will review submitted responses and agree which proposal is most suited to the project’s aims. They will agree plans for fundraising and developing a contract and workplan with the selected developer. If all goes smoothly we hope that funded development for this tool will begin in January 2021.

# 3. Improved music file format standards

**Aim**: Music file format standards (e.g. MusicXML and MNX) have been improved via W3C to include our requirements, generating better conversions through our tools.

**Update**:  MusicxXML 3.2 has been renamed as MusicXML 4 at the W3C Music Notation Community Group meeting at the end of April. They are still working on MNX, and there are no significant updates to report.

# 4. Improved music engraving practices

**Aim**: Music engraving practices are more standardized, generating better conversions through our tools.

**Update:** We continue to update our engraving guidelines (for Sibelius users) to ensure that Sibelius scores contain the right MusicXML content we need for effective conversion into braille. If your agency is looking to outsource score engraving and wish to send our guidelines to your engravers, we’re happy to share them – just contact us: musicbraille@daisy.org

# 5. Professional music braille conversion tool

## 5.1 MakeBraille-Hodder development at dzb lesen

**Aim**: At least one improved tool is available for rapid professional, accurate and automated music braille transcription which produces global formats and is linked to a production workflow. Note that this does not remove the need for skilled music braille staff.

**Update**: Work continued to progress well April to June, despite lockdown. We have delivered on our plans for the first 6 months of funded development:

1. Numerous improvements to musical notation conversions/bugs.
2. Significantly improved MusicXML import.
3. Interface and basic support documentation and tutorials available in English and German.
4. First implementation of Bar-Over-Bar formatting.
5. Proposed implementation into production workflow.

## 5.2 Main developments in Q2

* Accessibility checks and further accessibility improvements for different browser-screenreader combinations.
* MakeBraille-Hodder interface further improved, with better layout and groupings of options, with national default settings applied where possible, tooltips to explain options, and interface customization options.
* MusicXML import further improved and tested.
* Improvements to the import checker and reporting tool, making it a valuable aid to identifying, marking-up or fixing import errors.
* Basic Bar-over-Bar formatting has been implemented and is being tested. This will be continually improved during Q3 and Q4.
* Various language coding/formatting requirements have been checked/updated: Finland, Spain, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Canada, Brazil.
* A Wiki has been created containing tutorials, support and documentation in English, to help new users to learn and use the tool, whether starting from a MusicXML file or a printed score.
* Numerous conversions improved and bugs fixed, e.g:
	+ handling instrument names and their abbreviations
	+ MEI format figured bass support
	+ split up multi movement capx file
	+ better import of figured basses
	+ support MusicXML files having different encoding from xml head
	+ support capx zip containers
	+ splitting capx files into pieces
	+ extended zip report for different kind of files and zip in zip
	+ support zip files in hodder
	+ fixed creation of books
	+ create zip files for server
	+ support creation of books on server
	+ support mix of capx, musicxml etc. within zip files
* Designed a trial for a restricted group of testers, starting in September.
* Work on integrating Hodder into agency workflows is on hold, awaiting agencies to be ready, but proposals exist.

## 5.3 Plans for Q3 and Q4

Our focus for the next 6-months (Q3-Q4) will be:

1. Running a restricted **trial of MakeBraille-Hodder** with agencies from the project’s Steering Group and Funders, September-November, and providing support to trial participants. Feedback from this trial will influence our plans for 2021 development and options for making the tool more widely available.
2. Implementing a **‘Setter Tool’** to allow easy customization of the final music braille file ready for embossing.
3. Testing **Percussion MusicXML** import and conversions.
4. Implementing a **conversion progress notification system**, so the user gets feedback on the status of their conversion.
5. Adding **further tutorial/help resources** as required.
6. Making any **immediate fixes** needed e.g. for accessibility, to the MusicXML import or Import Tool, Bar-Over-Bar formatting, country codes.
7. Defining options for an **HTML5 viewer** for the music braille generated by MakeBraille-Hodder, giving users’ flexibility to view/explore different parts of the converted score, and providing customization options not possible through the automated tool.
8. Researching further **country requirements** e,g, for tablature, indentations, contracted braille, groupings, and so on.
9. Working with at least one agency to explore **workflow integration** options (if they’re ready to do so).

# 6. Related news

## 6.1 BrailleOrch – 300th music braille transcription completed

More than 300 scores are now available on BrailleOrch – as Haipeng Hu completed his 300th transcription in mid-June. All music braille scores are available from <http://www.brailleorch.org/en/> - including a wide range of complex and large scores.

## 6.2 News from Dancing Dots about GOODFEEL

Dancing Dots is testing an update to GOODFEEL which contains a number of handy bug fixes and improvements many of which were requested by participants of the DAISY Braille Music project. The companion Lime notation software has also been improved. This update will be free for licensed users of GOODFEEL 4.

*Improvements:*

* Support for Lime’s new fingering annotations
* Transcription of multi-line text annotations
* Support for transcription of dashed bar lines
* Relaxed syntax checking for numbered endings
* Removed unnecessary repetition of certain run-time error messages.
* Transcription of various notehead types including cues and percussion noteheads
* Scrolling through a Lime score using a braille display quicker and more stable.
* JAWS configuration script file added to force computer braille output and six-dot braille setting in BrailleView application.
* Significant stability and performance improvements

*Fixes to GOODFEEL:*

* Bowing marks
* Doubling signs for tremolo and fractioning
* Hidden annotations from Lime no longer transcribed.
* Corrected function of certain command line arguments controlling program options
* BrailleView application no longer erroneously converts formfeed characters to a text string when user saves changes.

*Improvements to Lime*

* Numerous bugs corrected in MusicXML import
* Better integration with SMuFL support in MusicXML import, subject to a SMuFL font, such as Bravura, being installed.

## 6.3 Do you have music braille news to share?

I’ll happily collate other news from around the sector and send it out – just drop me an email and I’ll include it in the next update.