

University of Sydney Policy Reform Project

Research Paper for Round Table: *History and Contributions of the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities*

Session: Semester 1 2025

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand, in particular the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty was never ceded. It always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

About the Sydney Policy Reform Project

The Sydney Policy Reform Project ('Project') facilitates University of Sydney students to write research papers for policy organisations, and submissions to government inquiries, under supervision from University of Sydney academics. The Project is a volunteer, extra-curricular activity. The Project is an initiative of the Student Affairs and Engagement Team within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and the Division of Alumni and Development, at the University of Sydney. The Project is funded by a donor to the University of Sydney. Any inquiries about the Project or about this paper should be directed to the Administrator, Ms Maeve Cairns, at the following email address: <fass.studentaffairsandengagement@sydney.edu.au>.

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Policy Brief

Paper	Topic	Academic Supervisor
7RT	History and Contributions of the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities	Dr Agata Mrva-Montoya

About Round Table

Established in 1981, the Round Table is a membership organisation that includes education, government, business, alternate format producers, community, and disability organisations across Australia and New Zealand. Its mission is to facilitate and influence the production and use of quality alternative formats for people with print disabilities by optimising the evolving Round Table body of knowledge.

- This project will contribute to the Round Table's long-term goal to preserve and amplify its institutional knowledge by creating a comprehensive historical record that:
 - Captures the critical narrative of accessibility advocacy in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand
 - Documents the evolution of alternative format production and information access for people with print disability
 - Provides a foundational resource for future researchers, policymakers, and disability advocates
 - Highlights the strategic innovations and persistent challenges in creating inclusive information environments
 - Celebrates the human stories behind four decades of transformative work in disability access.

The oral history project serves as both an archival endeavour and a forward-looking initiative, ensuring that the Round Table's pioneering efforts are not just remembered, but actively used to inform ongoing and future accessibility strategies. By collecting and preserving these firsthand accounts, the project will create a living document that

demonstrates the organisation's profound impact on information access, highlighting the ongoing advocacy and innovative solutions developed by its members since 1981.

Background

The Round Table has been a pivotal organisation in advancing accessibility for people with print disability in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand since its inception in 1981. Over four decades, the organisation has played a crucial role in developing and promoting guidelines to support the production of alternative formats, representing a significant chapter in disability advocacy and information access. Recently, Round Table has been awarded the Accessible Book Consortium International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing.

Research questions

1. What were the key founding motivations and initial challenges of the Round Table in 1981?
2. How has the approach to producing alternative formats evolved from 1981 to the present?
3. What significant milestones and achievements can be identified in the organisation's history?
4. How has the Round Table influenced policy and practice regarding information access for people with print disabilities?
5. What are the most important lessons and insights from the organisation's four-decade journey?

Parameters of the Research Question

Researchers should outline their search strategy, reasons for inclusion/exclusion of sources, and any possible limitations of included sources.

We would like researchers to preserve both institutional memory and personal narratives, capture both successes and challenges in the organisation's history and consider the broader social and technological context of accessibility developments in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

This project offers a unique opportunity to document a critical chapter in accessibility advocacy. Researchers are encouraged to approach the oral history with sensitivity, depth, and a commitment to capturing the nuanced experiences of those who have driven change in information access.

Please take care to ensure all information sources are referenced accurately and completely, according to the Chicago Author-Date style.

Key Deliverables

The research paper should include analysis of key turning points and strategic shifts in the history of the Round Table highlighting organisational history, contextual evolution of accessibility advocacy and future implications and recommendations for the organisation.

We would also like to receive a compilation of interview transcripts, a comprehensive oral history documentation, a chronological narrative of the Round Table's development (see for example, <https://www.nextsense.org.au/about/our-history>)

Executive Summary

The Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as “Round Table” or “RT”) was established in September 1981 and has been credited with bringing dramatic improvements to the accessibility landscape for print disabled persons in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (ANZ). Unfortunately, few formal sources have documented and investigated these contributions, leading to a narrative gap in the historical record. This paper uses semi-structured interviews with past and present members of the Round Table to develop a thorough understanding of how the organisation has improved access to information and resources for print disabled persons, along with the challenges it has faced during this journey.

By providing a forum for coordination between disparate organisations, and hosting conferences to bring diverse stakeholders together, Round Table has enabled resource- and knowledge-sharing across ANZ. This has assisted it in bringing about major policy changes such as Australia’s adoption of Unified English Braille in 2005 and its ratification¹ of the international Marrakesh Treaty in 2014. Moreover, Round Table’s subcommittees – the Australian Braille Authority and the Australia & New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group – have played a pioneering role in setting standards for accessibility and funded cutting-edge research projects. This paper provides context to these achievements by investigating the evolving print disability landscape over the decades, and the challenges faced by Round Table in that time.

This paper also covers salient emerging trends in the sector – such as the development of new technology and AI, or the proliferation of platforms and formats – and provides recommendations for Round Table’s future advocacy. These include measures to preserve institutional memory, realise the benefits of the Marrakesh treaty by developing an open-access database to reduce duplication of work, advocate for anti-discrimination protections for critical services such as ed-tech, med-tech and supermarkets, and actively engage with technology companies to test and introduce accessibility features in ANZ.

¹ Australia’s ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty was the culmination of the joint efforts of many organisations and sector leaders, including Round Table. It must be noted, however, that Maryanne Diamond (former President of the World Blind Union and former Chair of the International Disability Alliance) played an instrumental role in this success (Monash 2019).

Introduction

Access and the availability of information provides the foundation that underpins our ability to realise innumerable human rights such as the right to education, gainful employment and non-discrimination (UN 1948). Yet, this has often been delayed or denied to those who live with print disabilities, including both the estimated 435,000 Australian residents who are blind or have low vision (Vision Australia 2024) and the many others suffering from temporary or permanent conditions that restrict their ability to read print. Indeed, the World Blind Union estimated that in 2012 fewer than 10% of published works were in accessible formats (WBU n.d.) – not to mention websites, pamphlets and display boards. These barriers to information access not only restrict learning, educational and job opportunities but lower quality of life and increase dependency by curtailing hobbies, independent travel and dining, and limiting social interactions.

These personal consequences deeply affected Barbara Sattler, who became a key driving force for the founding of Round Table in 1981 (Gard 2021). Having inherited an eye disease that left her brother and aunt (both avid readers) blind, Barbara aimed to set up a library service for the print disabled in Tasmania – as had been done in the UK (Gard 2021). This began informally, with volunteers reading to the print disabled and experimenting with audio tapes of books. By 1972, with the assistance of the State Library of Tasmania and the Apex Clubs of Tasmania, this developed into the Hear A Book Service (HAB) that provided access to thousands of books over time (Gard 2021). For this unique and much-needed contribution to accessibility in Australia, Barbara was awarded the Member of the British Empire (MBE), Centenary Award and the Rotary International Paul Harris Fellowship (Tasmanian Parliament 2018).

These awards and opportunities allowed her to meet like-minded individuals across Australia and New Zealand (Gard 2021). Notably, this included Cliff Law, who was the Chief Librarian for the Handicapped Section of the National Library of Australia, who later played a key role in the founding of Round Table (Jolley 1998). The need for a forum for coordination between all the organisations that dealt with print disability emerged strongly in these conversations and motivated the founding of the Round Table on Materials for Print Handicapped Readers in 1981 (Murray & Wallis 1996), during the International Year of Disabled Persons. Round Table then underwent

incorporation and a name change in 1992 to the Round Table on Reading Materials for People with Print Disabilities, before adopting its current name as the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities (Murray & Wallis 1996). The 1990s also brought with them the biggest challenge that Round Table has faced so far: when it became virtually defunct from the mid-to-late 1990s. During this period, various challenges including organisational bloat,² juniorisation of representatives, poor engagement with stakeholders and leadership challenges meant that the organisation gradually lost relevance, leading to it entering Convenorship under William Jolley from 1998–99, before a turnaround was effected and it could rise like a “phoenix from the ashes” (William Jolley 2025a).

Barring this troubled period, over its 40-year history, Round Table has been a strong voice and contributor to inclusion and accessibility, keeping pace with the rapidly evolving accessibility landscape. Early on, by the setting up of the Australian Braille Authority (a subcommittee of Round Table) in 1981 the Round Table took the lead on creating guidelines for braille use in ANZ and coordinated work on producing braille versions of books, especially textbooks, to allow print disabled children to continue studying in schools. This was very challenging at the time because all the text had to be painstakingly and manually transcribed into braille using a Perkins Brailier—and there were no easy ways to transcribe images, graphs and mathematical equations.

As technological advances allowed for increasingly automated transcription of plaintext to Braille, and digital documents began to emerge, Round Table evolved its work and guidelines in tandem. For instance, the ABA’s advocacy was essential in Australia adopting Unified English Braille (UEB) as early as 2005 (ABA 2024). This was a major milestone given the patchwork of national versions of braille that had previously existed among in English-speaking countries. Having a unified version of English braille allowed print disabled people across the entire English-speaking world to use alternative resources no matter where they had been produced, shrinking national barriers. This extended to advocating for ratification of the pivotal Marrakesh Treaty (Neil Jarvis 2025; RT Strategic Plan 2017–2020) and supporting the rollout of accessible digital formats/standards such as EPUB for ebook content (RT 2018 Conference Book of Abstracts; RT Accessible eText Guidelines 2024) and the Web

² Issues included a large number of inactive subcommittees, working parties and unnecessary meetings.

Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 which the Australian Government mandated in the 2010s (Finance 2010). Similarly, the formation of the ANZ Accessible Graphics Group (ANZAGG) subcommittee in October 2015 and the ongoing collaboration with Monash University enabled exploration of how 3D printing tools, haptics, and graphics could be used in a manner that allowed print disabled people to access more complex non-text information that they had long been deprived of (RT Accessible 3D Prints Guidelines 2024; Kate 2024).

More recently, Round Table has engaged with the accessibility challenges that come with online learning and allowed members to voice concerns over the ubiquitous glass touchscreens that have become major barriers for the print disabled and forced them to rely on others for assistance (Neil Jarvis 2025; Brian Conway 2025). Despite contributing over decades to meaningful progress on print disability and accessibility, few formal sources detail the history of the organisation, its achievements, or strategic path forward. Thus, this paper aims to fill the narrative gap by providing a succinct history of Round Table's contributions and provides recommendations for future directions to ensure Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand keep progressing towards improving information access to all.

Background

Access to information is universally recognised as a cornerstone of participation in education, employment, and social life. For the millions of people in Australia living with a print disability, full participation has historically been limited by both social and structural barriers regarding the availability of information in accessible formats (Mrva-Montoya 2020; WBU 2015). Under the Australian Copyright Act, a person with a print disability is defined broadly—not just as someone who is blind or has severe vision impairment, but also as someone with a perceptual disability affecting their ability to read, or a physical impairment making it impossible to hold, manipulate or focus on printed text (Australian Copyright Act 1968, s.113E). This includes, for instance, people who require large print (a minimum size of 18 pt), those whose eye conditions prevent stable reading, or those who experience neurocognitive barriers to reading print.

The landscape of information access for people with print disabilities in Australia (and globally) has shifted significantly over the past few decades. Early library and reading services for people with visual impairments were initially provided by state-based, charitable agencies and later by public libraries (Murray & Wallis 1996). These services initially centred on the production and circulation of braille and talking books, but remained fragmented, highly reliant on volunteers, and often employed “closed” formats—such as special four-track cassettes—designed to ease copyright negotiations while also protecting content from unauthorised use (Murray & Wallis 1996). Notably, there was little national coordination or standardisation, with duplication of effort, gaps in coverage, and limited public library involvement until the 1970s.

From the late 20th century onwards, policy frameworks and social attitudes began to change, driven by the disability rights movement’s emphasis on equality and participation. The introduction of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* entrenched the right to equal access to information and services as a legal obligation for public and private sector providers (RT 2023). In parallel, the federal Print Disability Levy was established on 1 July 2013 where the Commonwealth Government subsidised alternative format producers to varying degrees, helping to expand the availability of accessible works beyond what volunteer agencies could achieve alone. The levy

proved a valuable source of funding for Round Table as member institutions were asked to pay a small proportion of their levy funds as member fees.

The definition of alternative or accessible works has also broadened during this period. An accessible work is now understood as a copy of an original publication produced in an alternative format that enables a person with a print disability to use and benefit from it as readily as a person without such a disability (Australian Copyright Act 1968; Mrva-Montoya 2020). Accessible formats may include but are not limited to braille, large print, audio, digital (including structured digital formats such as EPUB or DAISY), and tactile graphics. These formats are intentionally designed to be readable and navigable using assistive technologies, such as screen readers or refreshable braille displays.

Central to the modern approach to accessibility is the concept of born accessibility. This means that information sources—such as books, websites, documents, and multimedia—are produced from the outset in ways that allow everyone, including those with print disabilities, to access them equally (Mrva-Montoya 2020; RT 2023). Rather than retrofitting or transcribing mainstream content—a process that is slow, expensive, and often incomplete—born-accessible publishing treats accessibility features, such as structured text, navigable headings, alt text for images, and appropriate contrast, as fundamental, not optional.

Global developments have reinforced this paradigm. The adoption of the Marrakesh Treaty in 2013 (ratified by Australia in 2015) marked the first time international copyright law explicitly centred on human rights and access for persons with print disabilities (WIPO 2013). A key driving force was Australian Maryanne Diamond, who led the World Blind Union delegation to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) during Treaty negotiations and was a powerful advocate for Australia's ratification of the Treaty (Monash 2019). These efforts were assisted through the Round Table's advocacy and submissions on domestic Copyright Law reform to align with the Treaty.

The Treaty compels signatory countries to enact copyright exceptions that allow “authorised entities” (typically, non-profit agencies, libraries, or specialist providers) to make and distribute accessible format copies of works for beneficiary persons—defined as anyone who is blind, has a visual, perceptual, or reading disability, or is

otherwise physically unable to use printed material in the standard way (WIPO 2013, Article 3). The Treaty also mandates the cross-border exchange of accessible copies to minimise duplication and maximise access (WIPO 2013). Additionally, the European Accessibility Act, adopted in 2019, further supports this global shift by setting accessibility requirements for a wide range of products and services within the European Union, ensuring that digital content and technologies are accessible to persons with disabilities. This has not only transformed legal norms but also created practical opportunities for collaboration, resource sharing, and technology development within the sector.

These advances, however, have not eliminated all barriers. The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in 2013 brought a new person-centred funding model to disability support in Australia (NDIA 2022). The abolishment of the levy was a result of the adoption of new legislation following Australia's ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty in 2016, which redefined the copyright exception for people with print disabilities. The Treaty and subsequent legislation made it a legal obligation for copyright holders to provide access to their works for individuals with print disabilities. While this change has empowered many individuals, it has created new challenges for organisations like Round Table that previously relied on funding contingent on the levy and collective funding. The effect was to prompt new models of cooperation, and resource-sharing in the sector and led to Round Table remodelling its membership fee structure to create a common fee model (RT 2023).

Despite increasing policy support and rights-based frameworks, persistent “book famine” remains a reality for many Australians with print disability. Key obstacles to “born-accessible” publishing include technical complexity, a lack of skills and training among publishers, inconsistent management support, the high cost of technology, and inadequate awareness or implementation of guidelines (Mrva-Montoya 2020). These factors reinforce the need for ongoing advocacy and capacity building by organisations such as the Round Table, as well as the development of clear standards, publisher training, and collaborative resource-sharing initiatives.

In summary, the journey towards information equity for people with print disabilities has been shaped by changing legal frameworks, evolving definitions (such as “persons with print disabilities”, “accessible formats,” and “born accessibility”), and

bold international instruments, including the Marrakesh Treaty. Progress has demanded not only technical innovation and funding reform, but also a shift in mindset—from charity-based or reactive models to a culture of inclusion, rights, and universal access.

Clarifying Key Concepts

Throughout this report, several key concepts are used repeatedly and form the foundation for understanding the Round Table's role and the broader accessibility landscape:

Persons with print disabilities: Refers not only to those who are blind or have severe vision impairment, but also to individuals with perceptual, cognitive, or physical impairments that prevent them from reading printed materials in conventional ways.

Accessible formats and works: These refer to any publication format—braille, large print, audio, structured digital formats (e.g. eText, EPUB, DAISY), or tactile graphics—that enables a person with print disability to access content on equal terms with non-disabled users.

Born accessibility: A proactive design philosophy in which content is created to be accessible from the outset, rather than retrofitted later. This includes practices such as using structured headings, alt text, and screen reader compatibility.

Marrakesh Treaty: A landmark international agreement adopted by World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in 2013 that facilitates the creation and cross-border exchange of accessible format materials for persons with print disabilities, transforming copyright law to support human rights and inclusion.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, combining semi-structured oral history interviews with supplementary documentary sources such as annual conference summaries, Round Table guidelines, and relevant legislative documents. Using this mixed-source approach, we trace the institutional development of the Round Table from 1981 to 2025.

Specifically, we explore three interwoven dimensions of this development. We follow the trajectory of technological innovation, from manual braille and audio production to digital formats and cutting-edge tools like accessible 3D printing. We examine the organisation's policy advocacy efforts, which expanded from local coalition-building to international engagement, most notably through its contributions to the adoption of the Marrakesh Treaty. Finally, we reflect on the social impact of the Round Table's work, considering how its advocacy, standards development, and collaborative initiatives have supported greater inclusion in education, employment, and community life for people with print disabilities.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 key Round Table stakeholders (Appendix B), purposefully selected to represent a diversity of roles, time periods, and organisational affiliations across the initiative's four-decade history (Table 1). This purposive sampling approach aimed to capture a broad range of perspectives relevant to the study's objectives, aligning with the principle that qualitative inquiry should prioritise depth and diversity over numerical representation (Babbie 2016, chap. 7).

Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and was conducted using semi-structured interview protocol. All interviews were conducted with informed consent and audio-recorded. The semi-structured format was chosen because it balances comparability across cases with flexibility to explore individual narratives, making it especially suitable for historical and institutional studies. As Babbie notes, such interviews offer "a general plan of inquiry" while allowing space for "in-depth responses to open-ended questions," facilitating both factual detail and interpretive insight

(Babbie 2016, 318–19). This approach is particularly effective when researching evolving institutions and individuals' roles within them.

Interview questions explored four core thematic areas: participants' personal involvement, the institutional and societal impact of Round Table, operational challenges and adaptations, and reflections on legacy and future directions. The interview transcripts have been lightly edited for clarity and to support analysis.

In addition to the interviews, supplementary documentary sources—including conference proceedings, Round Table-published guidelines, and relevant legislation and treaties—were consulted to cross-check timelines, corroborate key claims, and provide broader historical context.

Data Analysis

The interview materials were analysed using a hybrid approach that combined reflexive thematic analysis and the constant comparative method.

Thematic analysis followed the six-phase procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke: familiarisation with the transcripts, identifying meaningful expressions, organising them under thematic labels, reviewing thematic consistency, refining theme definitions, and writing up interpretive findings (Braun and Clarke 2022, 43–48). The themes were initially grouped under three central categories—technology, policy, and impact—and later developed into broader clusters such as “standardisation”, “access reform”, and “intersectoral advocacy”. In addition, themes such as “resource duplication”, “braille standardisation”, and “legal reform advocacy” emerged consistently across interviews with past and present Round Table presidents and committee members.

To strengthen analytical validity, the constant comparative method was also applied (Babbie 2016, 396–97). This involved repeatedly comparing interview content across participants and timeframes to explore changes in Round Table's institutional priorities and practices. Although the research did not formally define discrete historical periods, the analysis captured thematic transitions over time—such as a shift from braille-focused advocacy to digital inclusion, and from local coordination to international policy alignment—reflecting Round Table's evolving strategic focus. This layered

interpretive process enabled a comprehensive understanding of the logics, dilemmas, and continuity–disruption dynamics that have shaped Round Table’s development.

Limitations

A key limitation of this study is its reliance on retrospective accounts, which are inherently subject to recall bias. Additionally, gaps in the archival record—particularly for the early decades of Round Table—presented challenges for full historical verification. Although triangulation with official records mitigated this issue to an extent, some historical narratives remain partial or interpretive.

Challenges and Barriers

Throughout its 40-year history, Round Table has confronted a complex and ever-changing landscape of challenges. These barriers—structural, technological, cultural, and policy-driven—have shaped every aspect of Round Table’s mission, from the logistics of alternative format production and national advocacy to capacity-building and public awareness. Drawing on extensive oral history interviews with sector leaders and practitioners, it is possible to gain a nuanced appreciation of both the progress achieved and the obstacles that endure.

A defining challenge in Round Table’s early decades was the pervasive fragmentation and duplication endemic to the print disability sector. Before Round Table’s establishment, accessible materials such as braille books and audio were produced in isolation by state-based specialist organisations, with limited channels for resource sharing or cooperation. As Bruce Maguire and Bill Jolley highlight, this siloed approach resulted in considerable inefficiency, with different groups painstakingly recreating the same content, often unaware of each other’s efforts. Within educational settings, these inefficiencies had particularly profound effects. Brian Conway, reflecting on his years as a teacher, recalls the laborious process of preparing alternative format learning materials. This process could result in a single maths book turning into 30 or 40 braille volumes. These resources were often delivered late or incomplete, and the lack of a national catalogue or coordinated system for accessible materials exacerbated the problem. Tom McMahon’s testimony further illustrates how the absence of systematic interchange, for example, in braille music resources, meant students and teachers relied heavily on the availability and goodwill of a small pool of volunteers.

While systemic inefficiency was perhaps the earliest and most visible barrier, it was compounded by significant legal constraints. Legal and policy barriers complicated efforts to expand access. Sondra Wibberley and Brian Conway recall an era when copyright law effectively mandated the destruction of master copies after short retention periods, sharply limiting the sector’s capacity to build sustainable collections. It took years of determined advocacy from organisations like Round Table to achieve reforms to Australia’s Copyright Act and to secure the sectoral victories embodied in the Marrakesh Treaty. Despite this progress, as McMahon notes, the international sharing of highly specialised resources, such as braille music or other braille files such

as books transcribed overseas, remains fraught with bureaucratic or technical obstacles, underscoring the continued need for vigilance and advocacy.

The emergence of computer-based braille, digital audio, and later, AI-driven solutions brought hope for greater access and efficiency. However, these technological advances were often limited by high cost, patchy infrastructure, resistance to change, and gaps in training. Tom McMahon addresses the ongoing gap between aspiration and reality, recalling the persistent dream of “a refreshable braille display for every student” in a sector where the promise of technology too often remains out of reach for those who could benefit most. Moreover, for highly specialised formats such as braille music transcription or tactile maps, the sector continues to rely on rare expertise, and automation is not a panacea. McMahon cautions that the nuanced demands of content production, particularly in artistic or technical domains, still require skilled practitioners rather than generic solutions.

Financial constraints and the persistent reliance on volunteer labour have defined much of Round Table’s operational reality. Sector leaders, including Neil Jarvis, Sonali Marathe, and Tom McMahon, demonstrate how the combination of unstable funding and a dependence on individual goodwill has at times slowed innovation and strategic development. While policy reforms, such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme, have altered the financial landscape in some ways, the costs associated with technology, professional development, and core operational activities often exceed available resources. The dedicated commitment of contributors—embodied by figures such as the late administrator Tammy Axelson—has been crucial to Round Table’s resilience and effectiveness. Yet, there is a persistent risk in institutional over-reliance on the generous contributions of a small cadre of individuals.

These issues became particularly salient during the mid-to-late 1990s, when Round Table became virtually defunct and almost shut down due to internal issues a period that has never formally been discussed before. At that time, organisational bloat (a large number of subcommittees—Large Print, Libraries, Education, Audio Standards, Electronic Information Access—were not producing reports nor engaging with government/stakeholders), lack of leadership, poor engagement with stakeholders and juniorisation of member organisation representatives had led to a widely-acknowledged sense that Round Table had lost relevance (Jolley 1998). In response,

Bill Jolley as the Chief Executive Officer of Blind Citizens Australia wrote a paper in April 1998 recommending that the organisation not elect an Executive Committee for the next year but instead appoint a Convenor to manage and reform the organisation, and disband all the subcommittees other than the ABA (Jolley 1998). These amendments were largely accepted, and Bill Jolley was made the Convenor of Round Table from 1998 to 1999 (William Jolley 2025a). At the end of this period, he proposed the liquidation of Round Table at the 1999 Annual Meeting but this proposal was ultimately rejected (William Jolley 2025a). The membership opted for an overhaul alongside reinstating elections for the Executive Committee and subsequently, as Bill describes it, the Round Table rose like a phoenix from the ashes to regain its relevance (William Jolley 2025a).

Another field of persistent challenges has been training, awareness, and attitudes. Tom McMahon's reflections on music literacy and teacher preparedness shed light on a pervasive risk within the sector: that every new generation of teachers, parents, and policymakers must "reinvent the wheel", relearning the values of braille, accessible learning, and creative pedagogy anew. Siloed learning and a lack of formal, sustained training routes can undermine the hard-won progress of previous years, particularly in establishing cultures of high expectation for students relying on alternative formats. At a broader social level, both Conway and McMahon lament how advocacy for accessibility is sometimes misconstrued as a plea for special treatment, rather than recognition of a fundamental human right. Changing entrenched attitudes requires persistent engagement not only within educational and policy domains but also on the broader community.

The challenge of maintaining organisational memory and adapting to continued change has recently come to the fore. When expert staff and volunteers retire or transition, the sector risks losing key skills and the hard-earned institutional knowledge they have acquired. Both Brian Conway and Tom McMahon express concern that without structured mentoring and documentation, the sector may fall victim to cyclical inefficiencies or repeated missteps. As Round Table's mandate has broadened, encompassing not only blindness-specific agencies but also organisations dedicated to large print, accessible graphics, publishing, and new technologies, the need for inclusive and adaptive governance has grown. Rising membership costs and continued reliance on voluntary work threaten to exclude smaller or newer

organisations, potentially stalling the momentum of sector-wide innovation and inclusion.

In summary, the persistent and evolving challenges faced by Round Table have not been limited to external structural obstacles; instead, they often emerge from the very complexity of progress itself. The cumulative testimony of Round Table's community demonstrates a field in continuous motion, where gains in one area frequently reveal new complexities in another, and the need for coordination, innovation, training, and advocacy remains perennial. The history and legacy of the Round Table is thus not only a record of collective resilience and adaptation, but an ongoing imperative: every achievement must be safeguarded and built upon as the sector moves forward. As the Round Table community continues its work, the lessons of the past serve both as the foundation and as a challenge to future generations to sustain and extend the vision of equitable information access for all.

Key Achievements and Impact of the Round Table

Round Table – Achievement & Impacts				
Date/ Period	Achievement	Specific Action	Impact	Notes
1981	Establishment of Round Table	Brought together Australia’s major braille, audio, and library services into a collaborative platform.	Filled the gap of poor communication and duplicated resources between services; became a unified voice for accessible information advocacy	Catalysed by funding crisis and leadership from early visionaries.
1981- present	Hosted and managed the Australian Braille Authority	Hosted and managed the Australian Braille Authority (ABA), establishing it as the national body responsible for setting braille standards in Australia.	Promotes braille as the primary literacy medium for people who are blind, deafblind, or have severe vision impairment.	
1990s- ongoing	Development of national guidelines	The Round Table published national standards for accessible formats—including audio, braille, and large print—and co-developed technical guidelines across agencies and subcommittees.	Improved consistency and quality across producers; influenced exam accessibility standards. Guidelines have been constantly Updated and are available on a Creative Commons license allowing for global use.	Led to greater cross-state collaboration. The Creative Commons License allows anyone to use these guidelines globally.

	Organisational reform (1990s) & Convenorship (1998-99)	Strengthened internal governance by reducing frequent executive meetings, prioritising annual conferences. Under the leadership of Convenor Bill Jolley, the organisation was streamlined.	Changes removed unnecessary subcommittees, reinstated relationships with key stakeholders and planned the future objectives & structure for Round Table.	Reforms and Convenorship revitalised Round Table, making it integral to the print disability landscape.
2005	Formal adoption of Unified English Braille (UEB)	Led coordination among industry, education departments, and the braille community	Unified braille code for English-speaking countries; simplified education, production, and international exchanges	
2012–2018	Organisational modernisation	Updated policies, funding model, and job descriptions; stabilised finances	Secured long-term sustainability and broadened member representation	Led by executive committee reforms
2014–2017	Marrakesh Treaty Advocacy	Contributed to national consultations on reforming Australia’s Copyright Law and supported Treaty ratification	The Treaty enabled international sharing of accessible materials; reduced duplication globally	Aligned domestic law with global treaty standards
2015-present	Mainstreaming accessibility advocacy	Was invited to join the Australian Inclusive Publishing Initiative (API) and engaged with publishers, libraries, and universities on accessible publishing initiatives.	Expanded accessibility beyond blindness sector; promoted “born accessible” publishing	Prominent use of EPUB, PDFs, AI tools, and web access
Oct 2015-present	Australia and New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group	Encompass various formats such as clear print enlargement, tactile graphics, descriptions, 3D printing, image recognition software, haptics, audio labels, sonification, and refreshable graphic displays. Collaborations with Monash University on using 3D Printing for education and general accessibility + generating empirical guidelines.	Significantly enhanced access to visual information for individuals who are blind or have low vision, fostering greater inclusion in educational and community settings	ANZAGG has played a pivotal role in advancing the production and use of accessible graphics in Australia and New Zealand since its founding in October 2015

Ongoing	Annual conferences and knowledge sharing	Hosts conferences to disseminate best practices, discuss new technologies and foster professional networks	Sustained learning community and field-wide collaboration	Central activity of Round Table
Ongoing	Recognition and commendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tammy Axelsen Lifetime Achievement Awards 2. Accessible Books Consortium International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing in the 'Initiative' category awarded to Round Table in 2024 	<p>Lifetime Achievement Awards provide much needed recognition to leaders in the print disability space in ANZ.</p> <p>RT's immense contributions as an organisation were also recognised at the International Publishers Congress 2024 with President Sonali Marathe travelling to Mexico for the International Excellence Award.</p>	In 2009, the Lifetime Achievement Awards were instituted on the 200th Birth Anniversary of Louis Braille. Renamed in 2015 in memory of Tammy Axelsen.

Since its establishment in 1981, Round Table has made a series of significant contributions to advancing accessible information environments in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Its major achievements are outlined below:

1. Founding a National Coalition for Print Accessibility (1981)

The Round Table was established as a collaborative response to a lack of coordination and national policy regarding the production of accessible formats. It brought together producers, libraries, and education providers to form a unified structure that could advocate effectively for funding, share resources, and reduce duplication of effort (William Jolley 2025b; John Gard 2025). This foundational work helped create the earliest framework for cross-sector cooperation in alternative format production. Its impacts today are far-reaching and unique globally—every student in ANZ who uses a mathematics textbook that is concise or every person who benefits from governmental or electronic documents that are accessible has been touched in some way by Round Table.

2. Pioneering Computerised Braille Production (1980s)

One of the Round Table's early milestones was facilitating the adoption of computer-assisted braille production in Australia. Member organisations such as the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (now NextSense) were among the first to introduce such technology in the Southern Hemisphere, drastically improving efficiency and enabling blind students' access to education in mainstream schools (William Jolley 2025b; Bruce Maguire 2025).

3. Establishment of the Australian Braille Authority (1981–present)

Since 1981, the Australian Braille Authority (ABA) has operated as a subcommittee under the auspices of the Round Table. As the national body responsible for setting braille standards in Australia, the ABA oversees the development and maintenance of braille codes and specifications used in Australia, acts as a braille accreditation body, and promotes braille as the primary literacy medium for people who are blind, deafblind, or have severe vision impairment.

4. Development of national guidelines and standards (1990s–ongoing)

During the 1990s, under the leadership of Convenor Bill Jolley, the Round Table undertook important organisational reforms that strengthened its capacity to lead national coordination efforts. Jolley helped transition the organisation from a resource-intensive executive structure to a more sustainable model centred on an annual conference, widening participation and reinforcing its role as a professional forum for practitioners in the sector. He also streamlined the organisation by reducing the number of subcommittees and improving engagement with stakeholders.

Building on this foundation, the Round Table spearheaded the creation of national guidelines for producing accessible materials in braille, large print, and audio formats. While some more recent guidelines have been released under Creative Commons licences to facilitate global reuse, many earlier documents—especially those developed prior to 2002—were not. Nonetheless, the Round Table’s open dissemination approach has supported wide adoption of best practices across the print disability sector. These included the influential *Guidelines for the Production of Audiobooks* and accessible assessment standards for blind and vision-impaired students. These documents were co-developed across agencies and subcommittees and helped unify production quality and expectations nationwide. (William Jolley 2025; Bruce Maguire 2025; Sondra Wibberley 2025; Debra Murphy 2025).

5. Transition to digital formats and technological innovation (2000s onwards)

As digital technology evolved, the Round Table played a central role in shifting the sector toward electronic formats, including DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System), EPUB, and accessible PDFs. This significantly enhanced the flexibility, timeliness, and availability of materials for people with print disabilities (Debra Murphy 2025; Sonali Marathe 2025; Sondra Wibberley 2025; Neil Jarvis 2025).

6. Formal adoption of Unified English Braille (UEB) in Australia (2005)

In May 2005, with Bill Jolley as the Chair, the ABA resolved to adopt Unified English Braille (UEB) as Australia's official braille code, following its recognition as an international standard by the International Council on English Braille (ICEB) in April 2004. This adoption aimed to harmonise braille usage across English-speaking countries, enhancing the consistency and efficiency of braille production. The ABA played a pivotal role in this transition, contributing to the development of the UEB Rulebook in collaboration with the Round Table and ICEB.

The implementation of UEB significantly improved the consistency and efficiency of braille production, enabling Australian producers to align with global standards and ensuring greater portability and accessibility of materials for braille users domestically and abroad. Additionally, the ABA administers the Trans-Tasman Certificate of Proficiency in Unified English Braille in conjunction with the Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust (BANZAT), providing accreditation for braille specialists in Australia.

7. Policy modernisation and organisational sustainability (2012–2018)

Under the leadership of President Neil Jarvis, the Round Table restructured its funding model in 2016 to adapt to the post-Print Disability Levy landscape and the rise of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) by creating a standard fee system, with subsidised rates for smaller organisations (Appendix E). Originally, funded member organisations contributed a set percentage of their funding to Round Table. However, as funding tightened and some smaller organisations merged, members collectively agreed to replace this model with a membership fee structure based on staff size—regardless of whether an organisation continued to receive government funding. This new structure aimed to preserve equity and sustainability across all members. In parallel, Round Table also updated governance documents, job descriptions, and operational processes to ensure long-term viability and member inclusivity (Neil Jarvis 2025).

8. Advocacy for the Marrakesh Treaty and Copyright Reform (2014–2017)

The Round Table was a key advocate during national consultations on reforming Australia’s Copyright Law and supported Australia and New Zealand’s accession to the Marrakesh Treaty, which enables cross-border exchange of accessible format materials without requiring copyright holder permission. These sustained efforts culminated in Australia’s ratification in June 2014 and New Zealand’s accession in October 2019 (MBIE 2020). This international framework has reduced global duplication and expanded the accessible content ecosystem significantly (Neil Jarvis 2025; WIPO 2023).

9. Advocacy for mainstreaming accessibility (2015–present)

Building on its founding commitment to information access for people with print disabilities, the Round Table has further expanded its engagement beyond traditional blindness-specific service providers to include a broader ecosystem of stakeholder such as publishers and universities. It has championed “born-accessible” publishing and continues to support capacity building among mainstream content producers, including through the Australian Inclusive Publishing Initiative (AIPI) established in 2016. Ongoing projects involve close cooperation with the National Library of Australia to improve discoverability of accessible books in library databases removing information barriers for print-disabled people and helping them identify available resources (Sonali Marathe 2025).

10. Australia and New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group (Oct 2015–present)

The establishment of the Australia and New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group (ANZAGG) in October 2015 marked a major step forward in the coordinated development of accessible graphics across both countries. As a standing subcommittee of the Round Table, ANZAGG provides a platform for producers, educators, consumers, and accessibility specialists to share knowledge and best practices in the production and use of accessible graphics. These include tactile graphics, clear print, audio labels, 3D printing, image recognition, sonification, and emerging haptic technologies. Through its inclusive membership model and

collaborative approach, ANZAGG has fostered innovation and standardisation in an area that had previously lacked consistent attention. Moreover, the collaboration with Monash University on graphics, including a 3-year project on 3D Printing for Tactile Education that received Australian government funding, has contributed to sectoral knowledge and culminated in valuable guidelines for using 3D printing in education in 2024. These efforts have significantly enhanced access to visual information for individuals who are blind or have low vision, fostering greater inclusion in educational and community settings.

11. Annual conferences and knowledge dissemination (ongoing)

Since its early years, Round Table's annual conferences have served as the premier forum for professionals, researchers, organisations, and end users to exchange expertise, collaborate on projects, and share resources and innovations. This sustained commitment to sector-wide knowledge-sharing has cemented its role as a thought leader in print accessibility (Neil Jarvis 2025; Debra Murphy 2025; John Gard 2025).

12. Recognition and commendations: Lifetime Achievement Award and 2024 International Prize

The Round Table formally recognises outstanding service to the print disability sector in ANZ through its most prestigious commendation, the Tammy Axelsen Lifetime Achievement Award. First awarded at the 2009 Annual Conference in Sydney as the Lifetime Achievement Award—coinciding with the 200th anniversary of the birth of Louis Braille—the award was established to address the need for a formal, enduring form of public recognition for individuals whose contributions have transcended institutional boundaries and profoundly shaped the accessibility landscape across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

In 2016, the award was renamed in memory of Tammy Axelsen, the long-serving and indispensable administrator whose commitment to the Round Table was foundational to its growth and cohesion. The award's design is symbolic and inclusive: a twin rosewood plaque connected by a hinge, with the citation engraved in both print and braille—reflecting the ethos of dual-format accessibility.

In turn, Round Table has also been globally recognised for its advocacy and transformational impact. In 2024, the Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) awarded Round Table the International Excellence Award for Accessible Publishing in the “Initiative” category—validating its role as a trailblazer in enhancing accessibility for all (RT 2024).

Future Directions

As the landscape of information access continues to evolve, insights from stakeholders and leaders within the Round Table signal both optimism and caution regarding the path forward. The prevailing vision for the future of accessible information is one in which technological progress, strategic advocacy, and inclusive practice are mutually reinforcing, collectively shaping a more equitable society. Drawing on detailed oral histories, several interlocking trends can be seen as shaping the years to come.

Foremost among these is the rapid acceleration of technology, particularly in the domains of artificial intelligence (AI), digital publishing, and adaptive devices. The exponential development and adoption of AI-driven solutions hold transformative potential for print disability accessibility. Where once costly, bespoke hardware and software dominated the assistive technology landscape, today mainstream technology providers are integrating robust accessibility features directly into everyday products. Sonali Marathe, Neil Jarvis, and Brian Conway point to the proliferation of tools like Apple's VoiceOver, Google's TalkBack, and other integrated screen reader applications as evidence of a decisive market shift—one that reduces the so-called assistive technology tax and erodes previous barriers of availability, cost, and social stigma. AI-driven innovation further extends to advanced text-to-speech synthesis, context-aware PDF remediation, and increasingly, fully automated transcription ecosystems that can convert and describe multifaceted documents, images, and diagrams for users with diverse sensory profiles.

Yet, technological acceleration is not an end in itself. Instead, its ultimate value lies in how it is channelled toward achieving a paradigm of “born-accessible” content creation. The new frontier is not simply retrofitting accessibility onto existing information products but embedding it from the outset as an integral element of the publishing, education, and communication supply chains. This is supported by a wave of influential policy interventions, including the European Accessibility Act, amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act, and evolving accessibility mandates within Australian legal frameworks. These legislative developments normatively entrench accessibility as a shared societal obligation, shifting the burden of adaptation from consumers to content creators and platform providers. The Round

Table has played an active role in these reforms, both through direct engagement with legislative processes and through partnerships with publishers, universities, technology developers, and disability advocacy groups. Their efforts strive to ensure that people with print disabilities are not relegated to an afterthought in digital citizenship, but instead experience simultaneous, equal access to the full range of information and opportunities that a modern society provides.

Against this backdrop, the importance of responsive and collaborative standards becomes ever more salient. As technology and user expectations evolve at an increasingly rapid pace, there is a heightened need for openly available, regularly updated technical and pedagogical guidelines. Sonali Marathe and Brian Conway stress that Round Table's commitment to Creative Commons publishing of its standards has enabled not only national but also international uptake and peer influence. By providing clear, user-tested, and up-to-date recommendations spanning everything from Unified English Braille to accessible graphics and online forms, Round Table fortifies both practice and policy against the risks of fragmentation and obsolescence. Neil Jarvis's depiction of the Round Table website as a "one-stop shop" for standards and resources underscores the organisation's role as a hub for contemporary expertise. This function will only become more critical as digital platforms and information formats continue to diversify.

A recurring caution, however, emerges in the interviews: rapid automation must not eclipse human judgment and expertise. While AI can generate basic descriptions or transcriptions with increasing efficiency, the nuanced needs of complex materials, such as tactile diagrams, STEM textbooks, music notation, and personalised learning supports, demand the touch of skilled practitioners and subject-matter experts. The risk, as Neil Jarvis and Sonali Marathe point out, is that the field comes to conflate speed or coverage with true accessibility, thereby underserving those whose requirements lie beyond the reach of generic automation. The challenge moving forward is to ensure that technical innovation is coupled with robust training, sector investment, and respect for lived experience, preserving the "human touch" in educational and service environments.

The broadening of Round Table's stakeholder base is another trend set to shape the future. While the organisation was historically "blindness-centric"—and a collaboration

between the print disability sector and libraries—it has in recent years expanded to include representatives from the wider disability community, publishers, universities, technology firms, and government departments. This diversification is both a practical necessity and a reflection of evolving social understanding. As Brian Conway and others argue, a truly sustainable, innovative future depends not only on membership inclusivity but also on mechanisms to retain and harness institutional knowledge. Harnessing the continuing contributions of former members, retirees, and subject-matter experts remains an unfinished but pressing agenda, with implications for the sector’s capacity to adapt, train, and innovate in a way that is both intergenerational and intersectoral.

Nevertheless, technological progress brings its contradictions and new forms of disadvantage. Brian Conway and others caution that while accessible innovation can dismantle familiar barriers, it may simultaneously erect new ones. For example, the proliferation of touchscreen-only interfaces, which have become ubiquitous in airline menus, kiosk machines, and ticketing systems, threatens to marginalise users with vision impairment even as mobile usability elsewhere improves. Moreover, new content formats and digital distribution models can introduce unforeseen compatibility issues or access gaps for individuals who rely on alternative reading technologies or adaptive software. Such challenges require Round Table and its member organisations not only to be reactive but to develop anticipatory approaches through ongoing research, participatory design, and feedback-driven policy refinement.

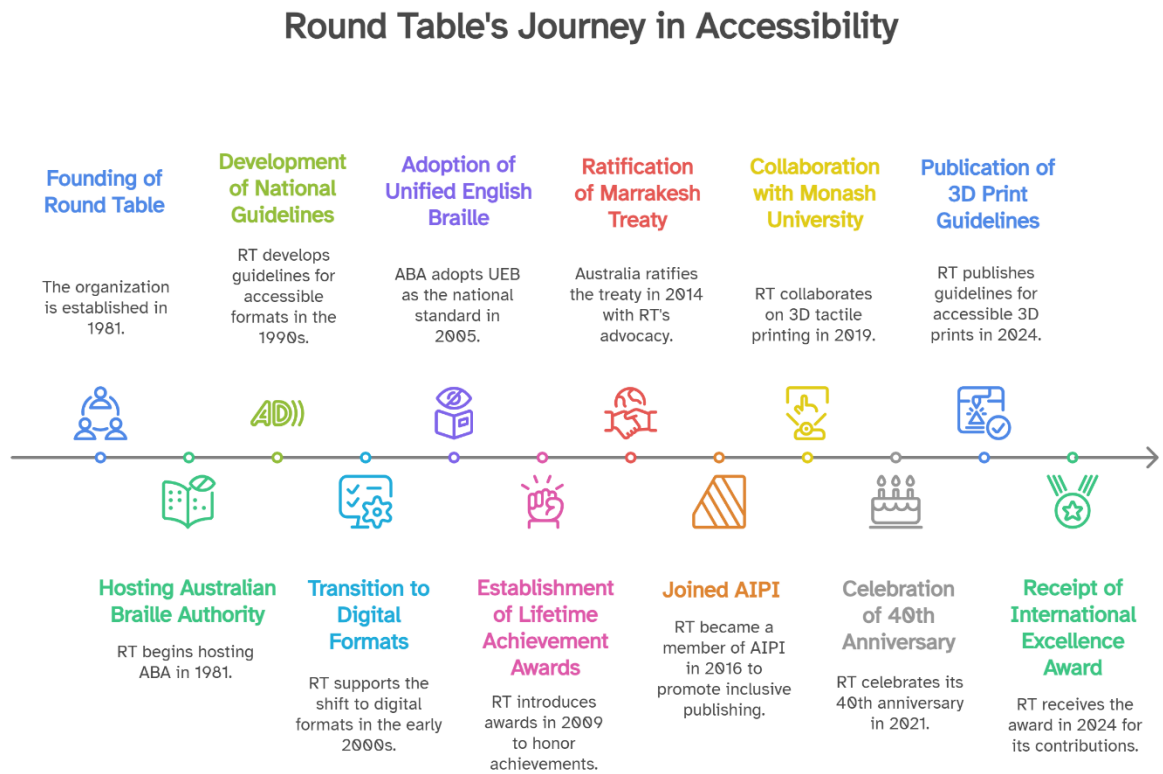
As the technological, legal, and social environments mature, the conceptual basis for accessibility advocacy is also transforming. Interviewees consistently argue for a pivot away from paradigms based on “special consideration” or charitable provision, and toward a robust, rights-based framework in which accessibility is a matter of justice. The future trajectory of Round Table will thus require ongoing advocacy for accessibility as both a legal imperative, anchored in anti-discrimination law, and as a standard of cultural expectation across all spheres of society. This reframing has the potential to engender more systematic accountability, broader public buy-in, and greater translatability of lessons between domains such as education, employment, and civic participation.

Finally, the continued centrality of community, knowledge-sharing, and networking is affirmed by all interviewees. Round Table's annual conferences, professional development events, and its tradition of recognising excellence through awards such as the Tammy Axelson Lifetime Achievement Award are described as critical engines in sustaining momentum, nurturing leadership, sharing global best practice, and empowering next-generation advocates and experts. These gatherings embody Round Table's role as more than just a standards-setter or lobby group—they reinforce the organisation's identity as the convener and heartbeat of Australia's accessible information sector, ensuring that its collective wisdom and aspirations remain greater than the sum of their parts.

In summary, the immediate and long-term prospects for information access for people with print disabilities are shaped by a dynamic interplay of innovation, policy evolution, and commitment to deepening inclusivity. The journey of the Round Table is illustrative of the broader trajectory of the sector—a story of persistent adaptation, coalition-building, and ever-renewing advocacy for universal access. As the potential of “born accessible” information draws nearer to reality, the continuing need for vigilance, flexibility, and community-driven leadership remains paramount. The future will demand not only technological breakthroughs, but also the resilience and unity that have long defined the Round Table's mission.

Chronological Timeline of Round Table's Development and Contributions

Figure 1: Visual Chronological Timeline



Chronological Timeline

1981–1989: Founding years and early structure

- **Sep 1981** – Round Table (RT) is founded. First Executive Committee elected: William Byrne as President, William Jolley as Honorary Secretary, Doreen Hill as Honorary Treasurer.
- **1981** – RT begins hosting the Australian Braille Authority (ABA), establishing it as the national standards body for braille.
- **1982** – RT hosts the first conference, providing a national forum for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and advocacy across print disability stakeholders.

1990s: Growth and national guidelines

- **1990s** – RT develops national guidelines for accessible formats (braille, audio, large print); supports exam accessibility standards.
- **1996** – Murray & Wallis study confirms RT's significant impact on library services for Australians with disabilities within 15 years of its founding.

2000s: Technological shift and standardisation

- **Early 2000s** – Transition from hardcopy to digital formats (e.g., DAISY, EPUB); RT supports emerging standards.
- **2005** – ABA formally adopts Unified English Braille (UEB) as Australia's standard, promoting international harmonization.

2009–2012: Awards and symbolic milestones

- **2009** – RT institutes the Lifetime Achievement Awards on Louis Braille's 200th birth anniversary.
- **2012** – New strategic plan adopted under President Neil Jarvis, aimed at organisational sustainability.

2014–2017: Policy advocacy and inclusion

- **Jun 2014** – Australia signs the Marrakesh Treaty, with RT playing a key advocacy role. The treaty was ratified in December 2015 and came into effect in September 2016.
- **Oct 2015** – Establishment of ANZAGG (Australia and New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group), a standing RT subcommittee focused on tactile and visual accessibility.
- **2015** – Lifetime Achievement Awards renamed in honour of Tammy Axelsen after her passing.
- **2016** – RT introduces a new membership fee structure to replace the Print Disability Levy.
- **2016** – RT becomes a member of AIPI (Australian Inclusive Publishing Initiative), encouraging "born-accessible" publishing.

2018–2021: Inclusive technology and celebration

- **2019** – RT initiates 3D tactile printing collaborations with Monash University through ANZAGG.
- **2021** – RT celebrates its 40th anniversary.

2024–2025: International recognition and future-facing standards

- **May 2024** – RT publishes first-ever *Guidelines for Accessible 3D Prints*.
- **Dec 2024** – RT receives the Accessible Books Consortium International Excellence Award.
- **2025** – Ongoing initiatives to develop searchable metadata systems for accessible books, with growing attention to how emerging AI technologies may shape future accessibility standards.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite early challenges, including the period when Round Table had become virtually defunct, and rapid changes in policies and society since, Round Table has grown from strength-to-strength and been at the cutting-edge of advocacy for the print disabled in ANZ. Over time, it has successfully expanded from a focus on braille work and guidelines, to helping bring “born accessibility” in publishing through the AIPI and leading projects on using tools like 3D printing and graphical technologies to expand accessibility.

Today, print-disabled people are able to study mathematics up to Year 12, access library books more easily, travel independently, and pursue higher education and professional opportunities in an ever-expanding number of fields. These transformative changes in lives and livelihoods owe much to the Round Table and the dedicated work of its members.

Round Table’s pioneering initiatives have earned global recognition from the Accessible Books Consortium, demonstrating the power of this unique collaborative model. The organisation has also recognised the tireless efforts of leaders in the print disability sector across Australia and New Zealand, through the Tammy Axelsen Lifetime Achievement Award.

Nevertheless, an ever-evolving society requires Round Table to focus on newer areas to ensure it remain relevant. The following recommendations span institutional changes, research focusses and advocacy targets.

1. **Preserve institutional memory more effectively by creating mechanisms for willing ex-members to contribute even after they have changed roles or left a Round Table member organisation.** This could include providing them with a formal ‘Observer’ status on the Committee or involving them in relevant projects, as appropriate.
2. **Ensure that the benefits of the Marrakesh Treaty in ANZ are better realised by working with libraries and publishers to create an open-access searchable database that allows all publishers, libraries and users to know where and what accessible formats are available.** This will reduce duplication of work and will greatly complement the ongoing project to

capture metadata for accessible versions in library databases. Over time, this may inspire global changes.

3. **Engage in advocacy with educational institutions, publishers and the government to ensure “born accessibility” for new technology.** Given the experience of new ed-tech (Maguire 2019) and touchscreen point-of-use devices, which retrograded accessibility, Round Table must also advocate for the government to enforce and publicise the relevance of anti-discrimination legislation for those with print disabilities. Key sectors and essential services such as ed-tech, med-tech, transportation, food outlets and supermarkets must be required to have accessibility in-built into any new technology, whether it be new software or hardware. A good model for such rules/legislation to curb access barriers is the Commonwealth Treasury’s upcoming mandate on cash acceptance by businesses providing essential goods and services (Commonwealth Treasury 2024).
4. **Develop ways to engage with technology companies that are interested in accessibility, whether those developing AI software or creating AR/VR glasses such as Meta’s AI glasses, as they hold the potential to completely transform the experience of being print disabled.** Directly, this can include partnering with them to present their accessibility-promoting products at conferences with media attention—and continuing to independently discuss and test out these technologies as done currently. More ambitiously, with government assistance and a platform for cooperation, Round Table can help advocate for new accessible features being rolled out early (and tested) in ANZ and encourage companies to include born accessible features in these new technologies.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

The following interview protocol was used to conduct a semi-structured interview with all the interviewees. Interviews averaged around 90 minutes and a separate document containing the interview transcripts has been compiled to be provided to RT.

Personal Background and Involvement

1. When were you involved with the Round Table? Can you describe what personal or professional experiences drove you to become part of the organisation?
2. What was the disability access landscape like in Australia and New Zealand at the time? What critical gaps were you seeking to address?
3. How has the approach to producing alternative formats changed from the times you were involved to the present day?

Impact and Advocacy

1. What were the most significant challenges the organisation faced during your times, and how did you work to overcome them?
2. What do you consider to be the organisation's most significant achievements?
3. How has the Round Table adapted to the rapid changes in technology to remain relevant?
4. In your view, what makes the Round Table's approach to accessibility unique?

Reflections and Personal Stories

1. What personal story or experience most powerfully illustrates the importance of the Round Table's work?
2. Can you share an example of how alternative format production has tangibly improved someone's life or educational opportunities?

Legacy and future

1. How do you see current policies around print disabilities? What can be improved?
2. What are future trends in alternative formats that you think have the most potential? E.g. AI text-to-speech for non-accessible formats like PDFs etc.

3. What are the most important lessons learned from the Round Table's four-decade journey?
4. How do you hope the organisation will be remembered and understood by future generations?
5. Is there anything important about the Round Table's history that we haven't discussed?

Appendix B: List of Interviewees

Table 1: List of Interviewees

First Name	Surname	Role in Round Table or related organizations
Brian	Conway	Former RT President
Bruce	Maguire	Former RT President (1994-1996), Lead policy advisor of Vision AU
Debra	Murphy	Vision Australia Transcriber
John	Gard	Treasurer of RT for around 20 years; Worked at Hero Book Tasmania
John	Simpson	Long-term representative of Blind Citizens Australia (1986–present)
Neil	Jarvis	Former RT President (2012-2018), Strategy & Policy Lead at Intopia
Sonali	Marathe	RT Current President (2018-present), Manager (Accessibility& Inclusion) at NextSense
Sondra	Wibberley	Round Table committee member
Tom	McMahon	Active contributor to Round Table; specialist in Braille education and accessible graphics
William (Bill)	Jolley	First Secretary of RT in Sep 1981, Convenor of RT (1998-99), Former ABA Chair