# Touching the Book: Embossed Literature for Blind People in the Nineteenth Century

**Object Descriptions**

### Object 1:

John Thomas Smith, *Two Blind Beggars*, etching (1816). Dimensions 174 x 125mm

Wellcome Library no 16451i.

Object description:

This black and white etched print depicts two beggars, both with hats in hands. They appear to be standing on a road in front of a paved street. The beggar on the right hand side is crouched low on his knees, turned towards the second man on the left hand side. His head burrows into his scarf, his eyes are closed, and a cane rests on the floor at his knees. He wears a top hat, the rim of which is frayed. He appears to wear a long cord around his neck. In his right hand he holds out another hat with the rim uppermost like a receptacle. The second man stands upright, clasping a hat in his right hand with the rim facing the viewer like a receptacle, a cane in his other hand. He faces forward. He wears a cap: his hair is curled, he has a moustache and his eyes are white. He is dressed in a long, frayed coat, which reaches to below his mid-calf, above the top of his boots. Around his neck is hung a placard that reaches from his chest to the base of his stomach, the top half of which contains a drawing of a male figure in an oval frame, the bottom half contains writing (not discernible). There is an inscription above the head of the kneeling man which reads ‘London, Published as the Act directs by John Thomas Smith, December 1st 1815. No 4 Chandos Street Covent Garden’ [description end].

### Object 2:

Docteur (Sébastien) Guillié, *Essai sur L’Instruction des Aveugles* (Paris, 1817). Book. Dimensions: 220 x 250mm x 30mm (open).

RNIB Collection A10 RESLIBb10006330

Object Description:

This book is open on the title page. An engraved, black and white image has been reproduced on the left hand page, publication details are reproduced on the right (transcription below). At the top of the image the word ‘Frontispice’ is displayed as engraved letters on a stone tablet, supported by two architectural columns which stretch down the left and the right hand side of the page, decorated with objects including manuscript scrolls, a basket, and fabrics. The columns rest on a rectangular, marble base which fills the bottom section of the image. It is inscribed with the Latin words ‘Filii, vestri antem beati / Oculi quia nunc vident’ which is attributed to S. Math. Resting on this base are an array of objects, including a set of compasses, a globe, books, musical instruments, sheets of music, and a music stand. A platform stands on this base, on top of which rests a large desk. To the left hand side of the desk sits a young woman of approximately 16-20 years, to the right sits a young man of approximately the same age. The top of their heads rest roughly in the middle of the image. Rising above their heads in the middle of the image, stopping just beneath the engraved tablet ‘Frontispice’, is a sculpted bust resting on a plinth, which is inscribed ‘Saunderson’. The young woman is dressed in an empire-line dress which reaches to her feet (which are not visible), with full-length sleeves. Her hair is pinned up, and her eyes are coloured white. She reaches with her left hand to a box divided into approximately 30 compartments, whilst her right hand rests on a large frame, which is propped up at an angle from behind by a wooden support. The frame is divided by eight horizontal lines: the first three lines have been marked with print. The woman’s right hand is positioned at the end of the bottom line of print. The man is smartly dressed in a long-sleeved jacket, buttoned up, with a cravat around his neck. His trousers are not visible behind the desk. He has dark hair and his eyes are coloured white. Both his hands are positioned on a book: his fingers are slightly raised. A small inscription at the bottom left of the image reads ‘Dubois, del et sc.’

[Transcription of frontispiece]: ESSAI SUR L’INSTRUCTION DES AVEUGLES, OU EXPOSÉ ANALYTIQUE DES PROCÉDÉS EMPLOYÉS POUR LES INSTRUIRE, PAR LE DOCTEUR GUILLIÉ, Directeur-Générale et Médecin en chef de l’INSTITUTION ROYALE DES JEUNES AVEUGLES DE PARIS, Chevalier de la Légion-d’Houneur, Docteur en Médecine de la Faculté de Paris, Membre de la Sociéte Royale Académique des Sciences de la meme ville; des Académies des Sciences, Belles-Lettres et Arts de Cambrai, Chálons, Caen, Dijon; de la Société de Médecine pratique de Paris; des Sociétes Médicale d’Émulation et de Médecine de Bordeaux, Marseille, Avignon, Évreux, Clermont-Ferrand, etc. [???Greek letters] CALLIMAQUE. A PARIS, IMPRIMÉ PAR LES AVEUGLES, ET SE VEND A LEUR BÉNÉFICE, A L’INSTITUTION, Rue Saint-Victor, no 68. 1817 (**nb – to confirm frontispiece detail 24 June 2013)**

### Object 3:

*A First Book for Teaching the Art of Reading to the Blind, With a Short Statement of the Principles of the Art of Printing As Here Applied to the Touch* (Edinburgh: James Gall, 1827). Book, Gall type. Dimensions: 120 x 400 x 40mm (open)

Medical Museion, Copenhagen

Object Description:

This book is opened on the frontispiece. The left hand page consists of title and publication details, which reads: *A First Book for Teaching the Art of Reading to the Blind, With a Short Statement of the Principles of the Art of Printing As Here Applied to the Touch*. Edinburgh: Published by James Gall, Scottish Sabbath School and Tract Depository, 24 Niddry Street. The right hand page consists of a mixture of printed type and embossed type, comprising examples of Gall’s embossed alphabet and numbering system. Gall’s embossed letters adapt the printed letters by turning rounded, circular shapes into triangles. The centred line at the top of the page is in printed type and reads ‘ALPHABET FOR THE BLIND’. Letters of the printed alphabet are printed over two lines, a to n and o to z ending with &. Underneath each printed letter is the equivalent letter of Gall’s embossed alphabet. The third line contains printed grammatical figures with embossed grammatical figures arranged beneath like a comma, semi-colon, and colon. The fourth line contains the numbers 1 to 9 with 0 at the end, with Gall’s equivalent embossed numerical symbol below. Underneath this, at the bottom of the page, are printed publication details: Printed and Published by James Gall, Scottish Sabbath School and Tract Depository, 24 Niddry Street. [End description].

A relief image of this work is available in the exhibition.

### Object 4:

Unknown, *A Peep into the Menagerie of Birds, Embossed for the Use of the Blind* (Glasgow: Printed in the Asylum at the Institution Press by John Alston, 1842). Book, Alston type. Dimensions: 152 x 457 x 20mm (open).

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/3

Object Description:

This book has singled-sided right hand numbered reading pages. The left hand pages are the reverse of the embossed writing and illustrations of the preceding right hand page and are not numbered. This book is open on page 4, the right hand page. The unnumbered left hand page is not numbered). The left hand side is stamped with reversed embossed writing and an illustration of a robin redbreast from page 3. The right page includes an embossed illustration of a swallow, and embossed text. The illustration is set in a box on the left hand side of the page, vertically (top to bottom) stretching from near the top of the page to a third of the way to the bottom, and horizontally (left to right) about a third of the width of the page. The text is a version of the Roman alphabet: all the letters are upper case. The text reads: THE SWALLOW. [New paragraph] OF THE SWALLOW THERE ARE NUMEROUS SPECIES, BUT THE GENERAL APPEARANCE OF ALL ARE NEARLY THE SAME. THEIR BILLS ARE SMALL, BROAD AT THE BENT, AND SLIGHTLY CURVED; THE WINGS ARE LONG, & THE TAIL FORKED. THEY ARE BIRDS OF PASSAGE, AND MIGRATE, ON THE APPROACH OF WINTER TO WARMER CLIMATES, REVISITING US WITH THE RETURN OF SPRING. [New heading] THE BLACKBIRD. [New paragraph] THE PLUMAGE OF THIS BIRD IS ALTOGETHER BLACK, AND FROM THIS CIRCUMSTANCE IT DERIVES ITS NAME. ITS TUNES ARE LOUD, CLEAR, AND MELODIUS, & WHEN TAMED YOUNG, IT MAY BE TAUGHT TO WHISTLE A VARIETY OF TUNES. [End page]. [End description].

A relief image of this work is available in the exhibition.

### Object 5:

Unknown, *The Sinner’s Help* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1842), 2nd edn. Book, Gall type. Dimensions: 118 x 372 x 14mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/10.

Object description:

This book is open on the first page of text. The left hand page has been torn at the top left hand corner and a portion, approximately 2cm by 2cm is missing. The page displays three versions of the alphabet (with all 26 letters plus an additional ampersand) in raised type, as well as a line of numbers 1 to 0 in raised type. The embossed letters are formed of fretted, rather than continuous, lines. The alphabet displayed across the top three lines of the page is approximately 1.5 times the size of the second and third versions: the letters are an adaptation of the Roman alphabet in lower case. This alphabet is repeated on the fourth and fifth lines at a reduced scale. A similar but not identical alphabet is displayed across the sixth and seven lines, containing letters from the Roman alphabet in upper case. At the bottom of the page the embossed numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0 are displayed. The right hand page contains embossed text produced in the same size as the second version of the alphabet on the left hand page (an adaptation of the Roman alphabet in lower case). It is set out over 10 lines: an underlined title, an indented first line and 8 lines justified to the left. The text is also justified to the right. The text reads: ‘The Sinner’s Help. [new line] O Man, Thou Art Undone. [new line] Thou art guilty. Thou state is [new line] wretched: thy situation is [new line] dangerous. Standing on the [new line] verge of eternity, thou liest [new line] open to the stroke of death [new line] & destruction. The thread of [new line] life is slender: the threat of death is cer- [new line] tain. The time none can tell [end line] [end description].

### Object 6:

Unknown, *The First Class Book for the Blind* (Sunday School Union: London, 1840; Edinburgh, J. Gall). Book, Gall type. Dimension: 140 x 413 x 40mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/9

Object Description:

This book is open on the second page. The left hand page is contains reversed embossed writing from the first page. The right hand page contains embossed writing, an adapted version of the Roman alphabet in which curves and circle shapes have been changed to angular shapes. Each letter is fretted, rather than a continuous raised line. There are 9 lines, all justified to the right and left, apart from a short third line and an indented fourth line. The text reads: ‘in the way of sin. The [new line] way of sin is the way [new line] of wo. [new line]. Do not sit by the [new line] bad. The bad go in an [new line] ill way Wo be to the [new line] bad Go not in the way [new line] of the bad. The end [new line] of the bad is wo [new line] [Description end]

A relief image of the first page of this work is available in the exhibition.

### Object 7:

James H. Frere, *Directions for Teaching the Blind to Read, by the Combination of Elementary Sounds*. Pamphlet (1851). Pamphlet. Dimensions: 215 x 270mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/13

Object description:

This page is open on pages 2-3 and contains printed text. The transcription starts from two thirds down the length of page 2, at the start of a section heading titled ‘MEMORIA TECHNICA’. [Transcription]: ‘The pupil will now be taught to feel the short-hand characters of the Embossed Grammar, using one finger of his right-hand to feel with, and of his left-hand to keep his place, and will repeat this following Memoria Technica, describing them and connecting their forms with the sounds they uniformly represent’. [End first portion of transcription] Below this line is the start of a table, divided into three columns of unequal sizes: the column on the left hand side is narrowest, containing a single Roman alphabet letter character; the middle column is slightly wider, and contains the symbols of Frere’s alphabet; the third column is widest, and contains printed sentences. The following description lists the content of each row, with columns separated by semi-colons. [transcription resumes] Row 1: t; vertical line positioned centre of column; A line going straight upwards is teh—[Teh] Tries To be Tall and to Touch the Top. Row 2: n; horizontal line positioned centre of row; A line going straight forwards is a—[N] n n n is Neat, Narrow, and Nicely balanced. Row 3: d; diagonal line, sloping downwards top left to bottom right; A line descending forwards is deh—[Deh] Descends by a Deep and Dangerous Declivity. Row 4: r; diagonal line, sloping upwards from bottom left to top right; A line rising forward is ur—[uR] rrr Rises Regularly, and Rapidly, like a Royal Road. [Page 3] Row 5: l; semi-circle, curved edge facing towards bottom of page; A half circle looking upwards is l—[L] l l l Lies Level and Looks Like a Lake. Row 6: p; semi-circle, curved edge facing up towards top of page; A half circle looking downwards is peh—[Peh] has its Points Placed upon the Plain, like the Patriarchal Promise of Pardon and Peace. Row 7: m; a semi-circle, curved edge facing towards right hand side of page; A half circle looking backwards is m—[M] m m m is the Moon Moving backwards as it Makes its Monthly March. Row 8: k; a semi-circle, curved edge facing towards left hand side of page; A half circle looking forwards is keh—[Keh] is a Crescent in the Canopy of the Sky, looking forward in its Course. Row 9: f; A straight vertical line, with a top edge hooked on the left hand side; A hooked line, the hook upward looking backwards is uf—[uF] f f f is a Fine Figure and Fop of a Fellow looking behind him, Fearing that he is Followed. Row 10: g; a straight vertical line, with a top edge hooked on the right hand side; A hooked line, the hook downwards looking backwards is geh—[Geh] Goes on with Great Gravity like one Grown Grey with Grumbling. Row 11: j; a straight vertical line, the bottom edge hooked on the left hand side; A hooked line, the hook downwards looking backwards is jeh—[Jeh] is John or Joseph skating backwards on St. James’ canal. Row 12: b; a straight vertical line, the bottom edge hooked on the right hand side; A hooked line, the hook downwards looking forwards is beh—[Beh] is Best known By Being Bent Before at the Bottom. Row 13: th; An open triangle shape, two straight lines meeting at a point facing towards the bottom of the page, with a swirled horizontal line directly below; An angle looking upwards, the straight line backwards—the same as an half circle looking upwards, the dot backwards, is uth, or uTH—[uTH] th th th or [uTH] TH TH TH is like nothing THat I can THink of, but a THing for the THirsty, That has had its farTHest handle broken off by a Thump. Row 14: z; An open triangle shape, two straight lines meeting at a point facing downwards, a swirled horizontal line directly below (this is the reverse of ‘th’, Row 13); An angle looking upwards, the straight line forwards—the same as a half circle looking upwards, the dot forwards is z—[Z] z z z is a buZZing fly sitting at the farthest edge of a milk bowl. Row 15: oo; An open triangle shape, two straight lines meeting at a point facing upwards, directly below is a swirled horizontal line; An angle looking downwards, the straight line backwards—the same as an half circle looking downwards, the dot backwards is oo—[OO] turns and stOOps to buckle his shOe. Row 16: v; An open triangle shape, two straight lines meeting at a point facing upwards, directly below is a swirled horizontal line (the reverse of ‘oo’ row 15); An angle looking downwards, the straight line forwards—the same as an half circle looking downwards, the dot forwards is V—[V] v v v is a Very Villain, or else the Victim of Violence. NB this is imagined to look like a man about to be beheaded. [Description ends]

A relief image of this work is available in the exhibition.

### Object 8:

George A. Hughes, *The New Punctiuncula Stenographic System of Embossing by Which the Blind of All Nations will be Able to Emboss for themselves on any Paper without the Use of Type and to attain a Perfect Knowledge in Reading, Arithmetic, etc, with Unprecedented Facility* (London, 1843). Book. Dimensions: 230 x278 x 23mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/11.

This book is open on pages 4 and 5. Page 4, the left hand page, has an embossed alphabet code pasted on it. Page 5, the right hand page, is the frontispiece page. The alphabet code is aligned from top to bottom, not left to right. The first line reads ‘Hughes’ Raised Reading and Writing Alphabet for the Blind’ and is printed in large bold capitals. Beneath this are the printed the 26 Roman alphabet letters, again in capital, arranged over two rows (A-N and O-Z with & at the end) with Hughes’s embossed equivalent character below each letter. Each embossed character is comprised of either small dots, large dots, or a combination of both. Underneath each row of embossed characters a continuous straight line is embossed, underneath the second embossed line is printed in smaller type ‘The raised characters are to be read, as being on and above the long embossed line’. Underneath this are printed Roman numerals and fractions, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0, ¼, ½, ¾. Underneath each printed number and fraction are the equivalent embossed characters. An embossed line runs underneath the bottom of the embossed characters. Underneath this are printed letter combinations and grammatical characters, bb, cc, dd, &c., comma, semi-colon, colon, full-stop, apostrophe, figure, sign. Underneath each printed character are embossed characters for each letter and number. An embossed line runs underneath the bottom of the embossed characters. Below this a line reads ‘192, Tottenham-court Road’. Underneath each printed character of this address are embossed characters for each letter and number. At the bottom of the page is printed some text in small type, transcribed as ‘The above example is the Inventor’s address, where may be had, his Embossed Books, Raised Music, and Portable Writing and Embossing Machines; adapted for running-hand and black Roman letter writing, raised Roman and short-hand characters, calculating, and copying composing music, without using types’.

The right hand page is the frontispiece. Transcription: ‘The New Punctiuncula Stenographic System of Embossing, by Which the Blind of All Nations Will be Able to Emboss for Themselves on Any Paper without the use of Type, And To Attain a Perfect knowledge in reading, arithmetic, etc, with unprecedented facility. By G. A. Hughes, (who is totally blind). Inventor and Teacher of the System. Entered at Stationers’ Hall. London: Published by the Author, 408, Strand, Opposite Adam Street, Adelphi. 1843 [end description]

A relief image of this work is available in the exhibition.

### Object 9:

*Fifth Annual Report of the Fund for Embossing Books for the Blind, by William Moon, of the Improved System of Reading* (Brighton: William Moon, 1853). Dimensions: 180 x 221 x 4mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: A1/2.

Object Description:

This pamphlet is open on pages 6-7. Both pages consist of black text, justified to the left and right with the start of new paragraphs indented. The transcription is: ‘returned home, he quite pined for his books; and now that he has got the gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, he reads them over and over again to his parents, who listen with interest to their blind boy, though they seldom hear much of the Bible in any other way. [New paragraph] It may be right to select a few more cases, to prove to our subscribers that their labour is not in vain. An old lady of 69, who felt certain, from a fruitless attempt with Gall’s alphabet, that she should never read, learnt in one lesson; and delights in the possession of an independent employment. Another lady, in her 82nd year, had stumbled on with Alston’s Roman alphabet, but could read only what she knew by heart. A friend gave her a lesson on Moon’s system, and on meeting her afterwards she exclaimed, “Words cannot express what I owe to you. I can now read *any* book; and my most delightful time for reading is in the silence of the night, when I cannot sleep.” The power to read is of the more value to her, because, like many of the blind, she can rarely go to church. The Liturgy is, for the same reason, a great comfort to her. [New paragraph] A similar testimony is borne by a blind man in Edinburgh, who had tried the systems in use in Scotland, but having only the partial use of one hand through paralysis, he had never been able to read without assistance. “I despaired,” writes a lady, “of his ever doing any thing at the reading, when, to my amazement, *one* lesson on Moon’s system was sufficient, and now he says he is quite independent, adding that none but those situated like himself, can tell the pleasure of being able to take up a portion of scripture whenever he likes. He felt much interested in hearing that Mr. Moon, like himself, had been deprived of sight 14 years. Ah, he said, it must have been somebody that KNEW the blind, to have invented that. I never thought I could have got from one line to another as I do. His gratitude and joy, on afterwards receiving the present of a large book from the blind lady before referred to, exceeded the power of utterance—he could only hide his face in his hands, and, with tears [end of page 6] rolling down his cheeks, breath a prayer for her and the inventor of the system.” [New paragraph] Individuals of the most opposite circumstances—of high rank, of lowly birth; highly educated, extremely ignorant; talented, wanting in intellect—residing in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Australia, form the company of readers who are pouring in their grateful testimonies respecting W. Moon’s books. Little groups of these have been informed in various neighbourhoods, by the zeal of some of the blind, whose energy forms the main-spring of these efforts on their behalf. [New paragraph] A letter from a lady residing at F---, describes “the great boon,” which she says “W. Moon’s simple method” has proved to some of her blind friends among the poor. “Penelope G.” she says, “a woman of about 70, is now steadily mastering the difficulties of the art. She was born blind, and had never learnt to read in any way, so of course the process with her is a tedious one. She has been *studying* about 6 months, and can now read much of the 14th of John with my help. Little Philip M., who is now at the Brighton School, began about 10 months ago. He had been well taught to read before he became blind, and soon picked up the art of using his fingers for this purpose, first with the common characters and then with W. Moon’s, which he quite pounced upon, as the facilities were so great. Lucy R., aged about 60, gave up in despair all hope of reading to herself, till this simple plan tempted her, and with the help and encouragement of an energetic young lady, she has mastered the difficulties famously. My poor Elizabeth E., must be between 30 and 40; she became blind when 13, and soon almost forgot the little learning she had acquired. I made her acquaintance about 12 years ago, and was so touched by her isolated condition—blind, deaf, and half dumb—that I had her come to me once a week to try how we could get on together. She had some recollections of the alphabet, and of the Lord’s prayer, so these I worked in bobbin on the cardboard, and she was so anxiously interested herself in the proceedings that we got on apace. But she never’ [end transcription]

### Object 10:

*48th Annual Report of Moon’s Society, For Embossing & Circulating the Holy Scriptures and other Useful Books, &c., in Dr. Moon’s Type for the Blind* (1896). Annual Report. Dimensions: 210 x 270 x 5mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: A1/1

Object Description:

This pamphlet is open on pages 2-3. Page 2 contains a large image, which is orientated from the bottom of the page to the top, rather than from left to right. ‘194, Queen’s road, Brighton’ is written above the image. Below the image is written: ‘Embossing Room. Showing the machinery used for embossing the Books for the Blind, also some of the drawers in which many thousands of the stereotyped plates are kept in readiness for immediate use’. The image itself is shows a room which contains machinery and two young male operatives (about twenty years in age). The men are positioned next to each other at the bottom left hand side of the image, facing a window on the opposite side of the room (towards the top of the right hand side of the image). Behind them on their left are a series of drawers. Both men wear white aprons over their clothes (waistcoats over white shirts – their trousers are not visible). The man closest to us holds what looks like paper in his hand. In front of them to the right is a large mechanical printing wheel. Page 3 contains text and a small photographic portrait titled ‘The Late Dr. Moon’, set in an oval frame and positioned within the text block about half way down the page on the left hand side. Text transcription: ‘Report. More than a year has now elapsed since the beloved Founder of this Society entered into rest; and in looking back upon that period, Miss Moon perceives with gratitude, how the hand of God has guided and directed her day by day in the work her much loved Father left her to carry on for those afflicted ones in whom he was so deeply interested, and with whom he suffered. Oftentimes has she felt a yearning for the counsel and encouragement she had been so accustomed to receive on every occasion whilst assisting her dear Parent; but she gratefully realises that a *Mightier Counsellor* has ever been near to advise her, and that His goodness and mercy have followed her throughout the trying year that is now past. Such being the case she is encouraged to believe that, as the days and months and years roll on (should she be spared to continue the Work), she will still be graciously supported by the hand of a loving Father who will incline the hearts of His dear people to contribute cheerfully of their substance, so that the Blind of *every nation* may have the Gospel of Life presented to them in the simplest of all Embossed types, one [end transcription].

### Object 11:

*The Gospel by St John for the Blind: With an Introduction, Containing some Historical Notices Regarding the Origin and Establishment of a Tangible Literature for Their Use* (Edinburgh: Printed and Published by James Gall, 1832/34). Book, Gall type. Dimensions 300 x 480 x 50mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/8

Object Description:

This book is open on the frontispiece. The left hand page contains printed text; the right hand page contains embossed text. The printed text on the left hand page reads: *‘*The Gospel by St John for the Blind: With An Introduction containing some Historical Notices Regarding the Origin and Establishment of a Tangible Literature for Their Use: Edinburgh: Printed and Published by James Gall, 24 Niddry Street, 1834’. The writing on the left hand page consists of letters from an adapted version of the Roman alphabet in which curves and circle shapes have been changed to triangles. The text reads: The Gospel by St John in the Angular Characters for the Blind / Edinburgh: Printed and Published by James Gall, 24 Niddry Street, 1834.

### Object 12:

*The Gospel According to Saint John*, edited by T. M. Lucas (Bristol: Bristol Society for Embossing and Circulating the Authorised Version of the Bible, 1837). Book, Lucas type. Dimensions: 281 x 431 x 37mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/4

Object Description:

This book is open at the frontispiece. The left hand page contains printed text, the right hand page contains embossed text. [Transcription of the left hand page]: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN. Edited by T.M. Lucas, Inventor of the System for Teaching the Blind to Read by Embossed Stenographic Characters. July 1837. Bristol: Published and Sold by F. W. B. Reid, Secretary to the Bristol Society for Embossing and Circulating the Authorised Version of the Bible. And to be had of P. Rose and Son, Broadmead; And of the British and Foreign Bible society, London. Embossed by Philip Rose and Son, Printers, Broadmead, Bristol. Entered at Stationers’ Hall. [End transcription]. There is an ink inscription ‘Harriet Curry’ made by hand above the word ‘GOSPEL’ in the top left hand corner. The right hand page contains a series of embossed characters in Lucas’s type, comprised of horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines, as well as circles and semicircle shapes. [End description]

### Object 13:

*The Authorized Version of the Psalms of David in Metre, Embossed for the Use of the Blind* 2 vols (Glasgow: Printed in the Asylum at the Institution Press by John Alston, 1838). Book, Alston type. Dimensions: 266mm x 434 x 80mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/1.

Object Description:

This book is opened at the frontispiece. The left hand page is blank. The right hand page contains embossed writing, set inside an embossed decorative border of recurring leaf-shaped patterns. The embossed writing is a version of the Roman alphabet, in upper case. The text reads: THE [new line] AUTHORIZED VERSION [new line] OF THE [new line] PSALMS OF DAVID IN [new line] METRE [new line] EMBOSSED [new line] FOR THE USE OF THE BLIND: [new line] IN TWO VOLUMES [new line] VOL 2. [new line] GLASGOW: [new line] PRINTED IN THE ASYLUM, BY THE INSTI- [new line] TUTION PRESS, AND SOLD BY JOHN SMITH [new line] AND SON, GLASGOW: SMITH, ELDER & CO., [new line] LONDON. AND JOHN JOHNSTON, EDINBURGH. [new line] 1838. [End description]

### Object 14:

*The Gospel According to Saint John* (London: The London and Blackheath Association for Embossing the Scripture for the Blind upon Mr Frere’s Principle of the Combination of Elementary Sounds at the Establishment of No 6 Wood Street, Westminster, 1843). Book, Frere type. Dimensions: 270 x 675 x 50mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/6.

Object Description (to be embossed):

This book is open on the first page. The left hand page contains the imprint of the reversed embossed frontispiece text. The right hand page contains embossed writing, some in the Roman alphabet, but mainly in a symbolic system. The two lines at the top of the page are printed in the Roman alphabet and read ‘THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO [new line] SAINT JOHN’. The symbolic letters are arranged in rows, each marked by a raised Roman numeral sequentially numbered 1 through to 13 and placed at the start of each row on the left side of the page. The symbolic writing comprises letter characters of equal size in an array of shapes, including semi-circular curves; diagonal lines stretching both from bottom left to top right, and top left to bottom right, circles, dots, horizontal lines [translation not available]. [Description end].

### Object 15:

M. de Genoude, *Evangelie Selon Saint Matthieu* (Paris, 1868). Braille type. Dimensions: 380 x 540 x 60mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/7.

Object Description:

This book is open on the frontispiece. The left hand page features an alphabetic code for braille characters. There is a line of raised, Roman writing at the top of the page which reads ‘Ecriture des Aveugles [New line] Procédé de L. Braille Professeur Aveugle’. The code consists of 14 lines, alternating raised braille characters with raised Roman alphabet characters, including the 26 letters of the alphabet and accented French characters: grammatical signs and numbers. The braille lines are arranged on the top line, above their corresponding Roman alphabet character. The right hand page consists of embossed braille text. It reads: ‘évangle [new line] selon [new line] saint matthieu [new line] traduction novella [new line] par [new line] m’ de genoude [new line] ouvue et corrígée [new line] paris [new line] imprimerie [new line] de l’institution impériale [new line] des jeunes aveugles [new line] procédé l. braille [new line] 1868.

### Object 16:

W. and R. Chambers, *An Introduction to the Science of Astronomy* (Glasgow: Printed in the Asylum at the Institution Press by John Alston 1841). Book, Alston type. Dimensions: 181 x 511 x 65mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/2

Object description:

This book is open on an embossed illustration and some embossed writing in capital letters on the right hand page. A reversed embossed illustration can be seen and felt on the left hand page. The illustration on the right page is titled at the top centre of the page ‘Fig. 4’. Below this the text ‘North Pole’ is embossed, and below that a circle representing the earth stretches down to approximately the bottom quarter of the page. Underneath the circle is the text ‘South Pole’: to the left of the outer edge of the circle is the text ‘West’ and to the right is ‘East’. The circle has five embossed horizontal lines running across it - one through the centre and two lines either side that representing the main lines of latitude. Each line is labelled above it. From the top of the circle to the bottom the labels are as follows: 'Arctic Circle', 'Tropic of Cancer', 'Equator', 'Tropic of Capricorn' and 'Antarctic Circle'. A vertical embossed line runs through the centre of the circle from top to bottom cutting through the horizontal lines and is not labelled. A further diagonal line runs through the centre of the circle joining the outside edges of 'Tropic of Cancer' on the right hand side to the outer edge of the 'Tropic of Capricorn' on the left hand side. This line is labelled 'Ecliptic'. On the far left of the main illustration near the binding edge is a semi-circular line representing the surface of the earth. Above this line are lots of short lines representing waves. On the waves are three sailing ships sailing around the edge of the world. [End description]

A relief image of this work is available in the exhibition.

### Object 17:

Mrs Sewell, *Mother’s Last Words*, *In T. M. Lucas’s Embossed Characters* (1868). Book. Lucas type. Dimensions: 286 x 227 x 20mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/5

Object description:

This book is open on the frontispiece. On the left hand page is pasted an alphabet code with some embossed characters, and printed text. The right hand page contains embossed text. [Transcription of the left hand page]: ‘Key to T. M. Lucas’s System of Reading for the Blind, as modified by the committee in 1858, under the revision of the Rev. J. W. Gowring, B. A. Characters used for the Alphabet and Double Letters’. [transcription interrupted]. Below this line are three lines of Roman alphabet characters with corresponding symbols from Lucas’s alphabet embossed below. The first two lines are characters of the alphabet A-N and O-Z, the bottom line has double letters LL, SS, FF, TH, SH, PH, CH, NG, WH, GH, &C, again with corresponding symbols from Lucas’s alphabet embossed below. [Transcription resumed]. General Rules. 1. Vowels sounded in the Consonants are generally omitted, as b for be, nd for end, drk for dark. 2. Other Vowels, but not at the beginning of a word, are also often omitted in words of frequent use, if no mistake can thereby be made. The following are the chief instances of such Contractions:-- Abt about. Abv above. Agn again. Agnst against. Bes because. Bth both. Bn been. Sn seen. Btwn between. Bk book. Lk look. Tk took. Chf chief. Chld child. Cm come. Cn can. Dd deed. Dth death. Dp deep. Kp keep. Shp sheep. Slp sleep. Swp sweep. Wp weep. Gd good. Grt great. Hd had. Hst hast. Hth hath. Hm him. Hr her. Hs his. Hw how. Nw now. Jdg judge. Lt let. Lw law. Sw saw. Mnth month. Wk week. Yr year. Mr more. Nr nor. Nt not. Pc peace. Ppl people. Prev perceive. Wht what. Whm whom. Whs whose. Wrk work. Ws was. TABLE I. Words expressed by a single character. A and. B but. C Christ. D down. E ever. F for. G God. H have. J Jesus. K king. L Lord. M mother. N into. O over. P upon. Q queen. R are. S us. T the. U you. V verily. W with. X except. Y yet. Z zion, sion. FF from. TH thou. SH shall, shalt. PH Pharisee. WH which. GH ghost. TABLE II. Prefixes expressed by a single character, but not generally used when followed immediately by a vowel. C com, con. D dis. F for. M mis. N under. P pro. R re. S sup, sub. T trans. W with. X extra. TABLE III. Terminations expressed by a single character in words of more than one syllable. B ble. D ed. F ful. H hood. I ing. L less. M ment. N ness. R er. S soever. T tive. W ward. SH tion. TH eth. Sl self, selves. TABLE IV. Words contracted by the omission both of vowels and consonants. Bf before. Bl blind. Br brother. Brn brethren. Cd could. Fr friend. Gl glory. Gr grace. Hn heaven. Imy Immediately. Kd kingdom. Nsg notwithstanding. Nvs nevertheless. Pl pleasure. Pr prayer. Shd should. Sp spirit. St saint. Str strength. Thf therefore. Tr trouble. Wd would. Whf wherefore. S is added to some of the above Contractions to form the plural, as frs for friends; tabs for tables, &c., and some of these Contractions are also occasionally used in compound words, as elati for everlasting, otake for overtake, ur for your. 4. When, according to the preceding rules, two Contractions would immediately follow each other, only one generally is used. And when any of these rules are departed from, it is to prevent mistakes being made, as died is not changed into did. 5. The characters standing for the Double Letters are used to express both the Cardinal and Ordinal numbers, with the exception of first, which might often be mistaken for one. LL one [1]. SS two [2] second. FF thre, [3] third. TH four, ]4] fourth. SH five, [5] fifth. PH six, [6] sixth. CH seven, [7] seventh. NG eight, [8] eight. WH nine, [9] ninth. GH for the cipher, [0]. The Numbers above 9, are expressed by putting these Characters for their respective figures, as LL GH for 10 or tenth; LL NG for 18 or eighteenth; TH CH LL for 471 etc. The word Lord being in the Old Testament sometimes printed all in capital letters (LORD) which marks out that the original word, in the Hebrew, is Jehovah, this distinction is kept up by spelling the word Lord, in such cases, at full length, except when followed by the word God, as it is then almost always Jehovah. Proper names are spelt at full length. A semicolon or colon is expressed by a single dot at the bottom of the line, and a period by two dots. A greater space is also left whenever there is a fresh paragraph. The blind value these contractions as well as the short-hand writer, because by their aid they can read as fast with their fingers as any good reader (when he reads aloud) who is privileged with the blessing of sight. NB In the books previously published a greater number of Contractions have been used, as will be found by the Keys attached to these books. October, 1868. [end transcription]. The right hand page contains frontispiece details embossed in Lucas type [translation not given]. [End description]

A relief image of this work is available in the exhibition.

### Object 18

*List of Books Printed for the Blind at the New England Institution*, 1838. Boston Line type. Dimensions: 400 x 220mm

RNIB Collection Acc No: L1/12

Object Description:

This is an embossed list of book titles, in a modified version of the Roman alphabet. The titles are set within a decorative embossed border made up of foliage details. The list is titled: ‘list of books printed for the blind at the new England institution’. Below this titles are given on the left hand side of the page, their prices (in dollars and cents) on the right hand side. The list of titles and prices are as follows: ‘new testament, complete. $12.00. the psalms of the old testament. $3.00. outlines of history, ancient & modern 3 vols. $10.00. howe’s geography 1 vol. $2.00. blind child’s first book. $1.00. blind child’s 2nd book. $1.00. dairyman’s daughter. $1.00. howe’s atlas u.s. states. $2.00. howe’s general atlas. $3.00. the Harvey boys. $1.00. spelling book. $1.00. English grammar. $1.00. the pilgrim’s progress. $2.00. baxter’s call. $1.50. Six penny glass of wine. $0.50. life of melancthon. $1.00. book of sacred hymns. $1.00. book of diagrams illustrative of natural philosophy. $1.00. English reader: selections in prose & verse from English authors. $2.00’ [end list]. At the bottom of the page the date is embossed, ‘boston april 1st 1838’ [end description].

A relief image of this work is available in the exhibition.

### Object 19:

*Dr T. R. Armitage’s Journal*, 1880-82, Braille. Dimensions: 210 x 500 x 40mm (open)

RNIB Collection Acc No: PP/1

Object description: This book is open, and contains two pages of braille text. [journal transcription available from RNIB]

### Object 20:

Braille writing frame as used by Dr T. R. Armitage, c. 1880. Wood and brass. Dimensions: 210 x 260 x 40mm

RNIB Collection Acc No: Mus/5

Object description:

The writing frame consists of two parts, an oblong wooden base and a brass 35 braille cell writing frame. The wooden base has five equally spaced holes running up both the left and right hand sides. The writing frame is positioned over the second from bottom hole. The writing frame consists of two plates - a bottom plate with small depressions for each braille dot and a top plate with holes cut out in it in the shape of braille cell. The writing frame overlaps the wooden base by about one centimetre on either side. Each end of the writing frame are brass clamping screws which enable the paper to be put through and held into place. A label is fixed above the bar, with the text ‘Exhibition of the Arts and Industries of the Blind’, 1914. Class C. Braille Writing frame used by Dr T. R. Armitage, lent by Alice S. Armitage.

### Objects 21 and 22:

Klein Type Box, c. 1840 (folding box, green felt backing to type board, 24 lines, lead type. With key and catches). Dimensions: 360 x 460 x 46mm.

RNIB Collection Acc No: Mus/2.

Object Description:

This is a folding box made of mahogany wood. On the left hand side is a wooden frame consisting of 24 horizontal straight lines (running left to right), underneath which is a green felt backing lining a type board. On the right hand side are 30 compartments (10 rows of 3 columns) inside each of which is placed a lead type, the head consisting of sharp pins. The left and right side of the box are joined by two hinges placed towards the top and bottom edges. The far side of both left and right contain a key and clasping mechanism. [End description]

Klein Type letters in display case, c. 1830. Dimensions: 210 x 265 x 40mm

RNIB Collection Acc No: Mus/4.

Object Description:

This is an open box made of dark wood. Set into the inner frame about two centimetres deep are 42 rectangular lead types, with heads consisting of sharp pins. They are placed in evenly spaced squares cut into the wood (7 rows of 6 columns).

### Object 23:

Typograph, by W. Hughes, 1850. Wood, brass and paper. Dimensions: 420 x 350 x 120mm

RNIB Collection Accn No: tbc.

Object Description:

This machine is made of mahogany wood and brass. It consists of two sections. The first section is a wooden surface, with a clasp in the middle of the bottom edge. The second consists of a wooden tray with rounded edges: a grooved bar runs across the middle of the tray from the widest point of each curved end. On the left hand side, a brass circular index mechanism is positioned, with raised Roman alphabet letters evenly spaced around its outer edge. In the centre of the tray, underneath a wooden shelf feature, a piece of paper is positioned. [end description]

### Object 24:

Hammond 2 braille typewriter, c. 1902. Wood, metal, plastic. Dimensions: 370 x 430 x 171mm (without lid)

RNIB Collection Acc No: Mus/1.

Object Description:

This typewriter is set on a mahogany wood base, which is curved at the front. The letter keys are positioned in two curved lines, the second line raised above the first which is at the front. Most of the black square keys are inscribed with Roman alphabet letters and numbers. On the lower line and raised lines are four ivory round keys: on the lower the third and sixth from left and right respectively and on the raised line the second and fifth from the left and the fourth and seventh from the right. A curved ivory panel is set alongside the top of the keys in the raised line: it is inscribed ‘MADE IN USA. Hammond’. Behind this is a wheel made of vertical metal springs, and behind that a cylinder made of metal meshing. On the left hand side of the cylinder is a metal lever, on the right hand side a grooved turning wheel. Raised above the mesh cylinder and at the highest point of the typewriter is a metal strip containing the Braille alphabet, fixed by screws.

### Object 25:

W. Sharp after A. Fisher, *Oliver Caswell and Laura Bridgman*, lithograph (1844). Dimensions 353 x 297mm

Wellcome Library no 16376i.

Object Description:

This lithograph in black and white tones shows two young blind people: on the left Oliver Caswell (a boy of about 14) and standing next to him on the right Laura Bridgman (about 16 years old). They are positioned in an interior: behind Laura to the right is an open window, with tree leaves just visible behind the window frame, and what appears to be the sea’s horizon beyond. In front of Laura to the right is a desk, on which rests a large book and a sheet of paper, which has been partly inscribed: a ruler rests below the last line of writing. Both Oliver and Laura are facing forward, but both lean in slightly towards each other. Oliver wears a long sleeved coat which stops at a white collar and black cravat. His eyes are closed. Laura wears a dark, long-sleeved dress, over which a large white collar can be seen. Her face is turned towards Oliver, and her eyes are covered by dark glasses. Laura and Oliver hold a book, Laura’s left hand is laid over Oliver’s left, which is positioned on the book, his index finger stretched out to touch the paper. The lithograph is inscribed with Oliver Caswell and Laura Bridgman’s signatures, made in square handwriting in Roman script. The print is inscribed in pencil at the bottom right hand side: ‘Lady Ingliss, with Mrs Howe’s [wife of the Perkins director, Samuel Gridley Howe] kind regards’.

### Object 26:

*The Bible for the Blind. Home Teaching Society for the Blind, (Moon’s Type). Minute Book* (London, 1877). Minute book. Dimensions: 192 x 321 x 34mm (open)

RNIB Collection Accn No: RNIB/1

Object Description:

This is a frontispiece to a minute book, consisting of a label made of green paper pasted onto a page. It contains both text and image. At the top of the page is written ‘The Bible for the Blind’. Below that is an engraved drawing of a cottage interior scene. On the left hand side of the image is a fireplace, towards the right is a window. A desk fills the space between fireplace and window. Seated at the top of the desk, nearest to the left hand side of the image, is an older woman, about forty years old. Both her hands are positioned on an open book resting on the desk. To the right of her, sat behind the desk, is a young man of about mid-twenties: his right hand is placed over the woman’s left, his left hand is pointing up. Another book volume rests on the desk to his right, and his hat is positioned at the furthest right front edge of the desk. A young boy of about ten is seated on a stool in front of the right hand edge of the desk. His head is upturned, and a book volume rests on his knees. His hands are positioned on the book, his fingers tracking the paper.

### Object 27:

Carte de visite from *L’Institution des Jeunes Aveugles*, Toulouse (1860s/70s). Dimensions 113 x 68mm.

Private collection

Object description:

This sepia toned photograph shows three figures next to each other and facing forward in what appears to be an interior setting. In the middle sits a nun, turned slightly to the left. She wears a long black dress, with a white wimple and collar, and a crucifix rests on her lap, along with a piece of paper, which her right hand, index finger stretched out, touches. On her left stands a young boy of about six years, dressed in a long sleeved blazer and trousers. Both his hands feel the book resting on the nun. To the nun’s right stands a young girl of about eight years, wearing a dark pinafore over a light coloured dress. In her right hand she holds a wooden frame, her left hand holds a stylus which she presses into the frame. [end description]

### Objects 28 and 29:

Unknown photographer. *Ann Whiting*, ambrotype photograph (c. 1850s-60s). Dimensions: 72 x 64 x 10mm

Private collection

Object Description:

This object is a photograph in a gilt frame. The photograph itself depicts an older woman of about 50 years who is seated, facing forward, in an interior location (behind her left shoulder is a detail of a fireplace). She wears a white lace bonnet and a dark full-sleeved gown, and her eyes are closed. A book rests on her lap, and both her hands are placed on the text, her fingers touching the paper.

Unknown photographer. *Unknown Woman Reading an Embossed Book*, tintype photograph (c. 1860s). Dimensions: 100 x 60mm

Private collection.

Object Description:

This object is a photograph of an older woman, about fifty years of age. She is seated in an interior location. She is dressed in a long, full-sleeved jacket, buttoned from the neck to the waist, worn over a long full-length skirt, all in a dark, silk material. Her eyes are open and look white. She holds a book with her left hand on her knee: her right hand rests on the edge of the book, her index finger stretched out touching the paper.

### Object 30:

William Moon, *Light for the Blind: A History of the Origin and Success of Moon’s System of Reading (Embossed in Various Languages) for the Blind* (London: Longmans & Co., 1873). Dimensions: 220 x 270 x 30mm (open)

Private collection

Object description:

This book is open on the frontispiece portrait. The left hand side contains a photographic portrait, the right hand side frontispiece details. The photograph fills about the middle third of the page and is set within a decorative border consisting of two red parallel lines about 1.5cm from the image edge. At the bottom of the image, within the border, is inscribed in red typeface ‘W. Moon, LL.D.’ The image depicts a William Moon, a man of about fifty years, standing in an interior setting. Positioned in the centre of the image, he is turned facing right. He wears dark glasses, and is dressed in a smart long coat, worn over a jacket or waistcoat. He is of a medium-large build, with a rounded stomach. He is turned towards a wooden desk with a decorated foliage edge. A large book volume rests on this desk, on which both Moon’s hands are placed, his fingers stretched out feeling the text. The frontispiece on the right page bears the following text: Light for the blind: A history of the origin and success of Moon’s System of Reading (Embossed in Various Languages) for the blind. By William Moon, LL.D. F.R.G.S., &c. London: Longmans & Co., Paternoster Row, And all booksellers. 1873.

### Object 31:

W. Ridgeway, after George Smith, *A Blind Girl Reads the Bible by Touch to her Illiterate Family in the Dark*, engraving (1871). Dimensions 702 x 902mm

Wellcome Library no 574955i

Object Description:

The scene is set within a dark cottage interior, populated with ten people and furnished with a selection of furniture and spinning wheel. To the right of the picture by a fireplace is seated a young blind woman approximately 18 years old, dressed in a long sleeved white blouse tucked into a long light grey-toned skirt which covers her feet. Although furthest from the window her face, blonde hair, and blouse are brightly lit. A large book volume rests on her knees which both her hands track over: lines and symbols are just discernible in the text. Her mouth is open in speech. An old woman sits immediately to her left and appears to be listening. A young girl of about twelve is sat on the floor to her left and looks at her hands; and behind her, an older man of about fifty, leaning back in a chair looks in the direction of the blind girl. A young woman of about twenty stands in between him and the old woman, holding a baby; her gaze is directed to the right, where two men of about 25 stand, linking arms, before an open door frame next to a window, discernible by a step and light on the wall. The men are half turned in the direction of the blind girl and woman with baby, but the man to the furthest left gestures outside of the door. Another woman of about twenty, standing to the right of the older seated man, is turned towards the young men, her hand reached out and pulling the sleeve of the man nearest her.