Devised at EPL: Braille-writer developed

By Richard Spenkel

The twenty and students of MIT's Engineering Projects Laboratory have been working on "sensory aids and prosthetics" for the blind. One of the more challenging projects is their work on the development of an automatic "Braille-writer" - a device requiring a sighted operator with considerable skill in Braille. The total output of Braille books is 600,000 to 700,000 page-plates per year, which corresponds to half that many printed pages. The Braille-writer is an attempt to increase the efficiency and productivity of the system.

Several systems have been considered for the automatic production of Braille-encoded information in machine readable form. One system is a punched tape which would be placed in a reader by the blind person. The tape would then be read at regular speeds, giving a tactile display to the reader.

Typewriter Device

Another system is a machine with a standard typewriter keyboard which would embody the conventional Braille cells on punchable tape. A device of this type is considerably more sophisticated than an ordinary typewriter because there are symbols in Braille that are not on the typewriter, and the most often used Grade II Braille has many rules and conventions that would make a one-to-one correspondence between typewriter and Braille copy impossible.

The solution to this problem of incompatibility is to use one of the so-called Grade I Braille rules that are symbols in Braille which are not on the typewriter, and the most often used Grade II Braille has many rules and conventions that would make a one-to-one correspondence between typewriter and Braille copy impossible.

The Braille-writer is in the process of development by a team of MIT graduate students, including Robert T. Weidman, Richard Spenkel and Stephen H. Price, and is expected to be completed in early November.

Collapsible Canes

In addition to the work on the Braille-writer, EPL has done research on the design of collapsible canes which would be more convenient for the blind person to use.

EPL has also done research on the market which is aimed at blind and deaf people receive information, particularly how the blind utilize information received in their environment to navigate around various obstacles while walking.

One of the people in the team working on the Braille-writer is E. H. Weidman, who will have to commit to MIT in early November last year. He has been responsible for the design of the system which is under development for General Motors after getting his MIT degree. He spent three years at medical school and four more doing research and gaining experience.

EPL reports the ideas originate at graduate student thesis projects. If they look promising, they are developed.

Cane design

Prof. T. D. TypeError has done a review project of the work on cane design. One problem that is currently working on is the design of a practical collapseable cane. Collapsible canes are at present the most convenient for the blind, but they are not very comfortable for the user.

It was found that in many situations a cane user would prefer to be able to collapse it so that it could be carried in his or her pocket. Presently available canes are not able to withstand prolonged bending. Both folding and spirally collapse canes are under consideration.

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Allen, Glassman join Class of '64 presidential race; Kevin Kinsella vies for head of Sophomore Class

Three new candidates for class presidencies have declared themselves during the past week. Their platforms follow:

Class of '64

James Allen Jr.
With the tremendous rise of change occurring at MIT in both its expansion facilities and broadening of interests of the undergraduates it is paramount that the younger alumni take a large portion of the responsibility of updating the club's attitude toward M.I.T. particularly that of the pre-college student.

Opportunities do exist for our class to be of service. Examples: Open 7 a.m.-7 p.m.

Steve Glassman
Having served as Class President and Secretary-'Treasurer, I would like to call on my experience in student government as well as associations with the administration, Alumni Association officers, and Committeee to help me carry out the office of Permanent President.

The permanent officers will help maintain contact after graduation, organize reunions, encourage participation in local Alumni Clubs, try to enhance MIT's "image," and obtain funds for such things as a "Class of 1964 Scholarship Fund." Upon termination of my present executive responsibilities in planning for Commencement and Senior Week, I request the opportunity to continue serving the class.

Class of '67

Kevin Kinsella

The actions of our class this year have been characterized by a lack of initiative in the administration. The proposal was made this year to abandon the Freshman Council second term. Why? Because it was felt that it wouldn't do anything. The usual functions of the Freshman Council are certainly worthwhile. But, where is the originality? I know many of the students and their desires through crew and freshman basketball. From what I see, the class of '67 needs a Class Forum - regular open discussion meetings between the executive officers and any interested students.

This year, the class of '67 felt short of its potential because of the lack of dynamic and imaginative leadership. I can provide this leadership. Give me your support.

263 degrees given

The Registrar's Office has announced that the January graduation had numbered 263.

38 degrees were awarded, including 14 S.B.'s, 10 S.M.'s, 12 engineering degrees, 3 Sc.D.'s and 3 Ph.D.'s.

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