

the French Revolution his school was incorporated with les Quinze-Vingts.

Hauy was also the first to use embossed paper which could be "read" by touch. The story goes that one of his first pupils, Francois Lesueur, was sorting papers on his teacher's desk when he came across a card strongly indented by the printing press. He showed Hauy that he could decipher several of the letters; when Hauy traced further signs on the paper with the handle of his pen, the boy could read them.

Various experiments were made subsequently with raised or embossed letters, but it remained for Louis Braille, a blind teacher at the Institute National des Jeunes Aveugles in Paris, to develop the sixdot code which marked its one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary in May its 1975 and is universally accepted today.

Among the earliest schools for the blind were those of Liverpool (1791), London (1799), Vienna (1805) and Berlin (1806). Institutions such as these meant that the blind themselves began to join forces to do something about their own situation, not only by improving the lot of those who had lost their sight but also by trying to prevent the sighted from losing their sight.

This is not to overlook the example set by gifted blind individuals like Nicholas Saunderson in the seventeenth century, who was appointed on the recommendation of Sir Isaac Newton to fill the chair of physics which Newton had himself occupied at Cambridge, or Maria Theresa von Paradis born in Vienna in 1750, who travelled around Europe giving music recitals and was particularly concerned about the conditions of her fellow-sufferers.

The principles of integration were eventually given expression in what amounted to a "Bill of Rights of the Blind" during an International conference at Oxford in 1949. The delegates laid down the following:

"To enable blind persons to participate fully in the life of the community and to contribute to its strength, blind persons, whether children, young persons or adults, should be given full opportunity for general and vocational education in schools adequately equipped for the education of the blind and with fully qualified teachers.

"The Conference puts on record its conviction that every national system of education should ensure to all blind children education according to their interests and aptitudes at least equal to that which they would have received if they had not been blind."

Two years later the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind (WCWB) came into being, its purpose being to provide the means of consultation among organizations of and for the blind in different countries, and wherever possible to promote joint action toward the introduction and improvement of minimum standards for the welfare of the blind in all parts of the world. The Council has official relations with WHO and enjoys consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, ILO and UNICEF, and as a member of the Conference of World Organizations Interested in the Handicapped plays a part in the United Nations coordinated programme for rehabilitation of the handicapped.

WHO is playing an increasing role in the prevention of disease, with major campaigns to control such infectious diseases as trachoma and onchocerciasis. Trachoma, known for 3000 years, attacks the lining of the eyelid (conjunctiva) and the cornea (the transparent front portion of the eyeball); it is caused by a micro-organism against which antibiotics and sulfonamide drugs prove effective. Onchocerciasis, or "river blindness", is a general infection transmitted to humans by the bites of the blackfly found in large areas of Africa and in Mexico, Guatemala and Venezuela.