

Bank Statements in Braille

J M GILL

Warwick Research Unit for the Blind

Braille statements have been available on request from some banks for many years, but have taken so long to produce that the value of the information has been reduced. Customers of Lloyds, Lewis's and Midland banks can now receive regular statements in braille with considerably less delay.

Under the new system, the information is input to a computer and a linked braille printer embosses the batch of statements within minutes. The banks supply the information on computer-readable magnetic tape which means that the system is totally automatic.

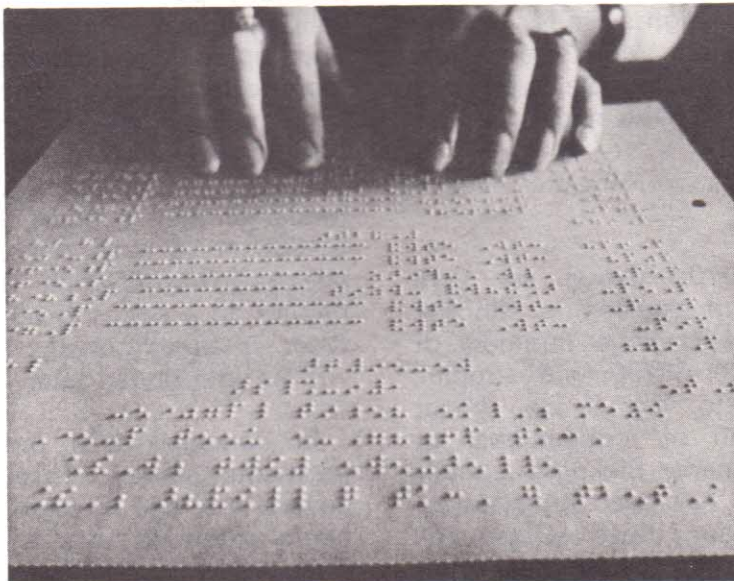
Confidentiality for the customers is maintained because the information on the magnetic tape is identified by the account number only; the customer's name and address are not mentioned.

The banks provide the braille statements at no extra charge to their blind customers. Customers also receive, free of charge, a folder for storing the braille statements, a braille key and a guide to the services

provided by each bank. The key explains the meaning of such things as cheque numbers. Blind customers requiring their statements in braille should inform their own branch.

This service is obviously only of use to braille readers. However, branches are often prepared to arrange for a cashier to read a customer's statement onto tape; the blind customer usually has to supply a blank tape.

This technique for producing braille statements can also be used for producing other types of output. For instance there is an unknown demand for "clear" print which is a high quality image on matt paper—either black on white or white on black. The number of people who have sufficient residual vision to read at all but who cannot read with correctly prescribed optical aids under optimum lighting conditions is relatively small. The potential user population is considerably larger if one includes those who cannot read at present since they do not have suitable optical aids or do not know how to use their aid. There is considerable doubt as to the wisdom of using print of considerably larger than normal size. The main application for "clear" print will probably be when the normal inkprint version is of very poor visual quality and the reader has to track accurately across a blank area of paper; bank statements are an obvious example.



"Reading" a braille bank statement produced by the Warwick Research Unit for the Blind.