

Computer-Controlled Braille Embossers

J.M. Gill

Research Unit for the Blind
University of Warwick, England

This survey is limited to commercially available devices which emboss braille directly on paper. Some machines have been developed for use by blind people who need access to computers, and others have been designed specifically for computer assisted braille production; the latter tend to be more robust.

These machines emboss conventional six dot braille cells on continuous heavyweight paper. The slower machines emboss one cell at a time, but the faster machines emboss a whole line at a time. The embossers normally produce the international braille page size of 11 by 11.5 inches; some machines can be adjusted for other page sizes. The paper is sprocket fed fanfold of 100 to 160 gsm. The surface finish of the paper is important since the dust caused by embossing can clog the mechanism.

Table 1 compares some of the main features of the available embossers. For ease of comparison the prices quoted are those which would have to be paid by a customer in England; these prices will vary with relevant exchange rates.

The information contained in this article has been provided by the manufacturers and the author has not verified the accuracy of their claims.

Table 1 Braille embossers

Model	Max cells across page	Double-sided	Double-sided simultaneous	Double-sided reverse paper	Can produce 8 dot cells	Alphanumeric keyboard	Tactile signals/alarms	Max operating speed	(cells per second)	RS 232C interface	Baud rates	150	300	600	1200	2400	4800	9600	Handshaking	Weight - Kg	Size - height mm	Size - width mm	Size - depth mm	Instruction manual	in English braille	UK price (incl. VAT) £	Delivery £	Delivery - weeks	Warranty - months	Year when launched	No. currently in use	- Europe	- North America	- Elsewhere	
Braille 270	42	*	*	*	*	extra	*	270	160	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	extra	200	1050	570	950	*	43125	extra	12	12	1980	2	2	0	0	0	
RS-14	40	*	*	*	*	extra	*	160	15	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	40	750	400	500	*	10925	0	8	12	1981	10	10	0	0	0	
REM 8BR	40	*	*	*	*	extra	*	15	15	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	extra	28	235	525	525	*	2875	115	12	12	1976	84	84	15	15	6	
LED-15	40	*	*	*	*	extra	extra	15	15	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	114	940	635	610	*	6454	287	3	12	1979	0	0	16	16	0
LED-120	40	*	*	*	*	extra	extra	120	120	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	114	940	635	610	*	11500	287	12	12	1974	16	16	185	185	5

Braillo 270

Manufacturer: Braillo.Norway A.S., Ringshaugvn. 118, P.O. Box 647, N-3101 Tonsberg, Norway. Tel: 033-30977.

Description: Prints on both sides of the paper (interpoint) simultaneously at up to 270 characters per second with a line length of up to 42 characters. A fail-safe mechanism prevents damage to pins if hard objects accidentally should be placed in their way while the printer is running. The vertical spacing between lines is variable. The printer may be operated by a blind person; control buttons are marked in both print and braille.

A text positioning program directs the text to be printed from top to bottom on one page, then from bottom to top on the other. Accordingly, the lines are laid out in normal left to right fashion on one page, and in the reverse direction on the next page. Cutting three sides of the stack and binding the fourth is all that is necessary to have a bound book. No handling of individual pages is needed.

Specification: Transmission ASCII RS232C asynchronous with maximum rate of 9600 baud. Variable pagelength, variable line length with 42 characters maximum, line spacing variable in increments of 1/10 of a line. Text storage space 6K bytes, program storage space 3K bytes. Height 105 cm, width 57 cm, length 95 cm. Operator controls: printer start/stop, power on/off, page count (4 digits), paper stop, page length, line length, test print, paper feed, page shift, reset printer.

Price: 450,000 Norwegian Kroner; delivery and installation extra. The price includes 15,000 pages of paper, a tool kit, and training of the operating and maintenance staff.

RS-14

Manufacturer: Resus International, Wijnhaven 102B, 3011 WV Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: 010-11.02.07/33.10.77. Telex 26321 RESUS NL.

Description: The mechanism involves 80 pins, suspended on springs, which can be locked by a cam controlled by a solenoid. On the opposite side of the paper is the printbar, with 80 holes, which is moved towards the paper so forming the dots. The construction of the machine is based on low maintenance

