



Dyslexia International – Tools and Technologies ASBL

building learning abilities

1 rue Defacqz
B-1000 Brussels
Telephone/fax: +32-2 537 70 66

E-mail: admin@ditt-online.org
Web site: www.ditt-online.org
Bank account: 310-1581288-80

Newsletter

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Welcome!

Many thanks is the key phrase for this start-up edition: first to all Members of the Board and the Scientific Advisory Committee for their enthusiasm and commitment. Warm thanks in particular to André Poncelet for organising the DITT office space and store-room, to Gordon Richards for supplying a computer, to Vanessa Lowndes and Paula Leaman for their kind sponsorship, to Ron Baker for his Action Plan for the *Pack* distribution and for his and Mike Gottlieb's excellent consultancy and wisdom, and to Joe Sepulchre for his care and professional skills; to Pauline Key-Kairis for her expertise as typographer and designer and for her kindness and patience – how else could we have produced a highly professional guide and now the new Millennium Edition at no charge? Thank you Ralph Palim, our new Treasurer, who is already looking into payment systems to make the *Pack* easier to buy across Europe.

Special thanks too to Dave Rowan for his professional skills and time setting up our new DITT Web site, and to Michel Tellier for all his translation consultancy and loyal support, Silvia Camilo in Portugal – what would we have done without you Silvia? – Paulo Staboli, Claudia Delpero, Maya, Gladys, Susan and Jackie, Kay Frommelt for finding us Liz, and, since this list could take up all this Newsletter, DITT is grateful to *all* contributors and well-wishers including the European Dyslexia Association (EDA).

Entirely on their own initiative, two student volunteers Selena Wriglesworth and Thomas Checuti, have written to 600 footballers on a Sponsorship Special. They plan to sell football memorabilia here in Brussels in the Christmas holidays. We have the backing of a major sponsor and go into autumn with renewed efforts to find more.

Thank you everyone for your energy, drive and care.

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Projects

CD Rom

We have the expertise, motivation and dedication amongst our interested parties and Board Members and, thanks to Gabriel Bara, DITT is in contact with a dynamic team of technologists who produce educational CD Roms. Gudrun Dziallas has generously offered to be Project Manager and has been attending meetings at the Parliament with a small planning team representing the dyslexic learners – thank you Toon Cox! – teachers and parents, and is looking at a feasibility study for a follow up to the *Pack* – inviting the involvement of some of the participants in the BBC video using André Poncelet's concept: a life-long evaluation and self-help plan: *Roadmap to Success*.

✍ **Action:** planning meetings with Parliament and Commission colleagues and specialist groups before e-mail to all Board Members with outlines and the creation of modules to go into the CD Rom linking with the *Language Shock, Dyslexia across cultures Multimedia Pack* and DITT.

The Pack

We are in process of formalising our arrangements with ECIC as regards activities relating to the *Pack*. It has proved to have huge potential as an information and lobbying tool – and we hope to have special promotional lift-off throughout the European Union next year. 2001 has been designated by the Council of Ministers as 'the Year of Language'.



✍ **Action:** Your backing please! Please direct potential trainers, parents or learners to our Web site for information and purchase and remember that the entire pack – printed guide and video – is available in English, French and German. On our Web site we also have Dutch, Greek and Spanish versions; we await funding for full printed and dubbed versions in these languages. Portuguese and Italian are currently being prepared. For information see www.ecic.be or, shortly, our own site: www.ditt-online.org.

DITT Award

We are inviting a member of the royal family here in Belgium to be associated with an award for excellence in research into understanding and coping with dyslexia. Prize money will be offered on a two/three-yearly basis and our Scientific Advisory Committee will be invited to organise selections. We invite special themes for research. An overview of existing tests in each Member State is one suggestion; another is research into comparative EU legislation in favour of dyslexic learners.

Expertise

Each issue we shall be inviting Board Members and volunteers to submit a profile of themselves giving an insight on their origins/education/involvement and future aspirations.

DITT Profile – Dave Rowan



*This month's 'volunteer' is **Dave Rowan**, who answered our plea for help in the Bulletin for a 'Web Man' and is currently developing the new DITT Web site. Originally from Barnsley in Yorkshire, Dave started working in the Hi-tech field straight from school:*

It was more low-tech back then – before PCs were invented. I was a trainee operator for a local steel firm and their mainframe computer only had 16k memory, card and paper-tape input, and magnetic tape storage – luxury!!

I taught myself programming whilst on nights and eventually moved into programming and analysis. I thought I'd 'have a go' at contracting in 1980 by going down south to Bracknell and working for Honeywell. I haven't lived at home since. After various contracts in Belgium, Scandinavia and the USA, I came to Brussels 'severalteen' years ago.

I started working with Web sites about 4 years ago, when I developed a site for my football club – Royal Brussels British FC (Web site is www.rbbfc.org by the way!) – and professionally since 1998. Hopefully, the new DITT site will reach a global audience and focus more attention on Dyslexia.

Watch this space! Next Newsletter we invite your autobiographical note with photograph. Pauline Key-Kairis, please step forward! One Board Member, Catie Thorburn of Generation Europe, has kindly agreed to contribute to the next edition. We need more please for this useful information and networking exercise.

AGM

The DITT favour a Saturday in May 2001 here in Brussels. Ideally we would have funding in place so as to allow this to be a workshop session bringing together the CD Rom teams in person. Please let us know your preferences.

Tools and Technologies

What works: Andy's story

Andy Harrison describes himself as a severe dyslexic with AD/HD and physical impairment. He has always felt that there should be facilities for those with reading and writing difficulties just as there are wheelchair facilities for people with physical difficulties. Andy says he uses voice-recognition software due to his dyslexia and often makes mistakes without noticing He wrote to us at DITT:

As a wheelchair user I have become used to society starting to recognise my needs as a disabled person. However this is very different for my dyslexia! Society has not made the appropriate alterations or given understanding to allow me to participate on equal terms. This is why I use the term 'hidden impairments' for people with dyslexia, ADHD, eating disorders and many other similar neurological conditions.

Like many people with dyslexia I've been brought up being called 'stupid', 'thick' and many other negative names. No wonder I don't like telling people that I cannot read and write! While I have a very severe degree of dyslexia, I'm able to write my name. However I can't complete my address. I have managed to achieve many goals that perhaps some academics have failed in. When I left school I started work with an electronics company. Within just three months of starting work I was transferred to the prototype wiring section. Normally people would have to have served their apprenticeship before moving to this department. Then I got bored. At 17, I started working in a factory as a floor sweeper – the only job I could get at the time. After seven months I became assistant manager of this multi-million-pound turnover business.

After moving to Nottinghamshire, UK, I started getting involved with more voluntary work – with a project that was struggling to get started. The steering committee was chaired by a professor for three years but both academics on the interim committee resigned, at which point I was asked to chair. Within six months we achieved funding to secure jobs for three years, found premises and appointed a co-ordinator. The committee understood that I had a significant dyslexia difficulty and arrangements were made to provide me with secretarial help four days a week.

I have multiple impairments and participating in society is very difficult. I have tried endless different specialist courses to improve reading and writing skills without success.

My 12-year-old son Christopher has significant difficulties fitting in with school life. When he was aged 8 he was diagnosed with ADHD. Then I too got the same diagnosis.

I have always been interested in technology and computers, and once they became cost-effective I started using voice-recognition software. This, with the use of medication for my ADHD, has opened up new opportunities. I have always felt that I need a 'wheelchair' piece of equipment for my dyslexia. Now it's available and I find this extremely valuable for participating with the written world. Still looking for improvements!

Christopher and I have started up a new Web site – www.hi2u.org – for people with hidden impairments. NOW were so impressed with his cartoon drawing they have now asked him to do another drawing – this time paid. The Web site uses art and comedy to provide some fun! Not everyone enjoys pages of written text. Neurological impairments like dyslexia can often overlap with many other neurological conditions, but society has failed to recognise the needs of people who have invisible medical conditions. Therefore we are hoping that this site will provide a platform for people with hidden impairments to voice their needs, hopefully gain knowledge and have an opportunity to participate with society on equal terms. The next phase of this site will be for people with dyslexia. We would appreciate any support and help to shape these pages.

I'm not really sure I class myself as being successful, but if I'd had more use of technology to provide me with appropriate tools for my dyslexia, I feel sure that my contribution to society would have been much greater.

✉Andy can be contacted by e-mail at: Andy@hi2u.org

From Alan Duddy – www.texthelp.com

Alan Duddy sent us information on www.texthelp.com. Recommendations are enthusiastic. Thank you for sending us demo disks and information, Alan. This text-to-speech product works on the internet, is easy to use, and can be adapted to suit the individual. The text-reader window highlights words as they are spoken providing audio-visual feedback – for general use to assist reading. **Free!**

'Hello Europe' CD



For young people, Europe is about travelling and studying abroad, developing through new experiences, and jointly addressing the political challenges facing our societies today: how to protect the environment, maintain peace, create jobs, and much more. *Hello Europe* is a comprehensive reference and study guide on the European Union and the European countries. It explains EU actions and policies, the EU institutions and history, and the geography and way of life in the 15 Member States and the 11 countries applying to become members. *Hello Europe* contains 1,700 pages of factual information presented with a complementary feel and is illustrated by over 500 photos, video clips, interactive functions and other multimedia features.

For all our subscribers – here is a useful tool. Please apply to Susan Calamassi at the DITT office about obtaining a free copy.

Minimum PC system requirements:

- Windows 95 or NT 4.0
- Pentium 133 Mhz processor (higher speed recommended)
- 32 MB RAM (higher capacity recommended)
- 8x CD-ROM drive (higher speed recommended)
- Display at 900 x 600 resolution, 65.000 colours
- Sound card.

Policies, practice – and parties

DITT is evolving. We need your ideas on vision and direction. Please keep them coming – why not in the form of *Letters to the Editor* so we can vote on any policies or ideas at our AGM.

It has already been suggested that we invite the EDA to submit an article and eventually profile their activities in the different EU countries – the EU being our first focus.

Parties

We might make ‘get working’ or just ‘networking’ a regular feature. The sandwich lunch on Fridays for the hands-on *Pack* labelling volunteers is already becoming a tradition – feel free to join in: Fridays 12.00–2.00pm at 1 rue Defacqz.

News Flash!...News Flash!...News Flash!...

- DITT hopes to meet Jackie Stewart with our Action Plan shortly.
- The British Chamber of Commerce 2000 Ball proceeds will go to DITT. Many thanks to their Executive and all concerned with supporting DITT!
- Donald Schloss is organising an Adult Dyslexia event (in French initially) in Brussels, with Marty Miller, volunteer EDA desk:
Saturday 7 October 9.30 – 17.00 at rue Charles Quint 114, 1000 Brussels.
Telephone +32-2 735 31 95 for more information.
Bravo Donald and organisers!

DITT Membership

In the next Newsletter we shall have a proper form to fill in. Meanwhile, please, especially Board Members (so you have voting rights in DITT affairs) we would be grateful to have your 20-Euro Membership fee, which will be officially acknowledged:

DITT Bank Account 310-1581285-80

BBL – Banque Bruxelles Lambert
Agence Bois
Avenue Louise 487
B-1050 Brussels

The DITT Statutes are available in the office in French and English, should anyone require a copy.

Editor for this issue: Judith Sanson, volunteer – acting Executive Director, DITT