



Dyslexia International – Tools and Technologies ASBL

building learning abilities

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Newsletter

No 18 - Winter 2005

Warmest Greetings!



The theme for this first issue of 2005 is **collaboration** – at all levels.

If you can volunteer your time and talent to help D-I-T-T in one of 4 key areas:

- ICT
- teaching
- administration or
- book-keeping

at our Brussels office or on-line, please contact Cecilia on 02-537 7066 or e-mail admin@ditt-online.org

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Cecilia's first language is Spanish; she also speaks English, French & German

Volunteers collaborating for D-I-T-T

Collaborator *par excellence*, Cecilia Gonzalez has been playing a key role for D-I-T-T. She has worked assiduously as administrative assistant *stagiaire* since August 2004, combining her interest in helping people with her experience of public relations and policy-making.

D-I-T-T is indebted to Cecilia for saying that she will continue working with the office team as a volunteer. She will focus on her liaison work with the European Ministries of Education, promoting the new D-I-T-T tri-lingual educational tool *The Mystery of the Lost Letters*, organising events, and raising awareness of the problems associated with dyslexia and how these may be addressed.

Born in Peru, Cecilia studied communication science in German and French from 1994 to 2000 at the University of Hanover before starting work as an events manager and PR officer.

Since D-I-T-T has no salaried staff, day-to-day running depends on the commitment of a loyal team of top professionals that includes the D-I-T-T treasurer, typographic designer, Webmaster, legal advisers, business consultants, technology expert and German specialist, editor and researcher.

In addition to its loyal board members – both honorary board members and the local management committee – D-I-T-T counts on the vital voluntary skills of Vicky Mason, Michel Tellier, Raymond and Régine Delsaut, Jutta Kearney, Sheney Hanson, Vicki Barriere and Jacqueline Midgley.

Paulina van Rijn acts as events and public relations officer. Currently Paulina is in charge of all the logistics for the St. Valentine's Day charity concert, working alongside Jacqueline Midgley, as artistic director, with the expert help of Kirsten Bell (see last page).

Most recently D-I-T-T was joined by Larry Moffett, a consultant in international business development and project management, who works in Brussels as managing partner of e-Strategy, the consulting firm he founded in 1998. His focus is on European information-technology projects and business incubation.

Larry generously gave his time and consultancy skills to help D-I-T-T submit an application to the Altran Foundation prize – this year on 'Overcoming social exclusion through scientific and technological innovation'.



Left to right: Jutta Kearney, Jacqueline Midgley, Paulina van Rijn and Larry Moffett

Parents collaborating with D-I-T-T – telling their side of the story

Parents' stories are rarely heard, and yet there are so many of them telling of the impact of the frustration and hardship that dyslexia causes in the family. The stark fact is that, even today, the only education that will meet a child's needs has too often to be bought.

Amanda's mother spoke to Virginia Haydon, D-I-T-T Press and PR consultant, of the nightmare of how her 13-year-old dyslexic daughter dropped out of school, left home and spiralled into drugs, pregnancy and a secret abortion, following the failure of the education system to support her learning difficulty.

Amanda decided to let her story be known as a way of collaborating with D-I-T-T in its aim to help young dyslexics rebuild their self-esteem and get a handle on how they learn best and gain control.

When Amanda's family returned to England, a stark choice awaited them – the result of which shattered their lives.

Two of their children have dyslexia and it was soon clear that the state school system would not be able to support their 7-year-old son's and 13-year-old daughter's individual educational needs.

But there was only enough money to send one child to a special school that would provide a suitable education. This left them with a decision no family should face: which child should go. After much heartache they finally opted to send their severely dyslexic son to an independent specialist school, hoping that their older dyslexic daughter would more easily be able to adapt to the state school system.

Little did they realise that this choice would lead them on a nightmare journey of school drop-out, drugs and a secret abortion for Amanda, their daughter.

In contrast, the brother's self-esteem has not stopped growing steadily in the supportive learning environment of a specialised fee-paying school.

Keeping the flag flying for brave families coping with the psychological and practical pressures dyslexia can impose, and to highlight the problems faced by many thousands of parents of dyslexic youngsters worldwide, Amanda's mother agreed to reveal her moving story of how, against the odds, she has finally managed to pull her daughter 'back from the brink'.

Trainers collaborating with D-I-T-T

D-I-T-T has an on-line group of trainers consulting on accredited training available and now looking at some exciting new developments, including the offer to have teacher-training in dyslexia up on the European Council of International Schools training platform.

Here, Honorary Board Member Ian Smythe writes:

'I am running two EU projects funded under the "Minerva" stream.

"The first project, "Provision and Use of Information Technology with Dyslexic Students in University in Europe", involves 17 countries. The major product resulting from this project will be a book with recommendations, including a proposed framework for assessing the dyslexic adult. The book will be sent to all appropriate government departments and institutions of the partner countries. It will be an e-book and will be widely available.

'The second project is "Dystrain", details of which can be accessed at

<http://www.welshdyslexia.info/dystrain/>

'Please note that anybody can do the course, but they need to apply for a password to ensure the necessary feedback.

'We are evaluating e-learning by dyslexic adults. The e-learning courses are:

"Helping your dyslexic child at home" and

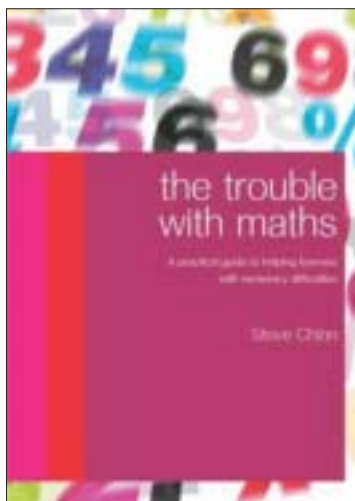
"Helping the dyslexic child in your classroom"

'These are full courses for which validation and accreditation will be sought.

'Here costs are involved since tutors would have to be funded.

'Currently only those concerned with teaching the dyslexic learner with English, Welsh, Swedish, Hungarian, Romanian, Chinese or Portuguese as their first language, or who are multilingual, can be included since these are the only languages for which funding is granted. Other language versions could be developed in future.'

What Works



The trouble with maths

NASEN/TES (National Association of Special Educational Needs and the Times Educational Supplement) Book Awards 2004 winner, *The Trouble with Maths: A practical guide to helping learners with numeracy difficulties*, is published by RoutledgeFalmer. Written by leading expert and practitioner Dr Steve Chinn, Principal of Mark College, Somerset, this book is described as being 'thought-provoking, fresh, accessible and very thorough with content that hauls the reader in. It moves away from the search for the perfect maths scheme and much more towards individual responses, looking at the reasons why children might arrive at a different answer and the steps that can be taken to prevent difficulties arising.

'You wouldn't have to be a learning support specialist to pick up on its user-friendly strategies.'

On-line dictionaries

Board Member Petra Zollner alerts us to a new set of dictionaries available free on-line at

<http://www.fdicts.com/concept.php>

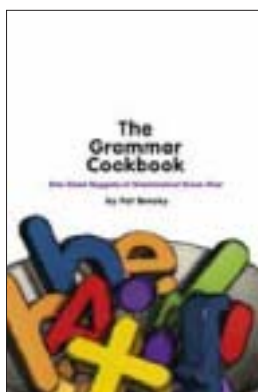
Kate'Art Editions

A delightful series of colourfully-illustrated books on arts and sciences in French for children, due to be published in English and Dutch.

Order on-line at www.happymuseum.com where fun and games await the visitor.



The Grammar Cookbook: bite-sized nuggets of grammatical know-how



Never know whether it should be

“its” or “it’s”?

“e.g.” or “i.e.”?

“who” or “whom”?

“complimentary” or “complementary”?

Find the answers to these – and many other – grammatical puzzles in *The Grammar Cookbook* – an easy-to-read reference book that shows you the most common grammatical, punctuation, and word usage errors, and how to correct them.

The book is divided into five sections: Punctuation, Word Usage, Confusables, Points of Grammar and Index, and covers UK and US usage.

You can read a few pages a day to brush up on your knowledge, use the Index to look up the answer to a specific question or even read it from cover to cover like a good novel. It comes in paperback, hardback, and as an e-book.

This handy book is by Pat Bensky and published by Tracker Press (2004). Sample pages can be seen here: <http://www.trackerpress.com/sample-pages/samples.php>

The Write Dance programme

Description and reviews here:

http://www.luckyduck.co.uk/shop/products/1_873_942_03_6/viewProduct

Philippa Bodien recommends ‘Write Dance’ from Lucky Duck publishing for the early years – music and movement leading to writing movements. She adds some useful tips too:

‘Talk about synthetic phonics taught multi-sensorily (see, hear, say, write, move). If kids know their phonics, better spelling tends to follow.’

‘Try to avoid giving kids books before they can decode...’ (heresy?)

‘Use small whiteboards to encourage emergent writing.’

‘Use Progression in Phonics to teach phonics. Games: talking, looking, moving...’

‘Kids need the basics taught well – socially-disadvantaged children benefit if the teaching is of high quality.’

And what about the flashing lights theory ?

Prof. John Stein, frcp, of the University Laboratory of Physiology, Oxford, and Member of the D.I.T.T Scientific Advisory Committee, responded to the question put to D.I.T.T: 'What about the flashing lights theory?'

'Allegedly the flashing lights synchronised with heart beat reset the parasympathetic to sympathetic ratio. This can be achieved much more simply by deep breathing, but that doesn't have the high tech. placebo effect. As usual a grain of truth, but there are much more direct ways of improving things.'

Debate – two sides of technology

Lisa Classens-Coen, child psychologist and psychotherapist in Brussels, writes in the 'Alliance for childhood' Web site about the pitfalls of relying on computers and the negative effects to children that might include damage to physical and emotional health (see www.allianceforchildhood.net/projects/computers).

But there is another aspect to consider: for those young people wanting to boost their skills and counter learning difficulties, some of the excellent software is literally life-saving. It activates audio, visual and muscular paths to the brain and quickens the pace whilst allowing privacy and the non-competitive atmosphere in which learning can flourish.

Where dyslexic adults are concerned and some non-readers and writers, the computer is the vital crutch and the only way to read or write at all. Given the appropriate technologies there is little they cannot do that their non-dyslexic peers achieve on the literacy front.

This is not to write off the importance of understanding basic rules of reading – the importance of grasping how to acquire and build up a competence in reading, writing, memorising and organisation.

Dr. Yota Dimitriadi writes:

'I would say that technology has been a great support to people with dyslexia. Depending on the age group and the profile of the individuals, new technologies have facilitated tasks that normally hinder their performance at training institutions and at the work place. Personal organisers, phonically structured spellcheckers, Voice Activated Software have all offered a platform for the development of skills, knowledge and understanding in areas that even high-achieving individuals with dyslexia may find difficult.

'The multisensory character of electronic applications and resources coincides with the diversity of learning styles that is evident in every user, giving the dyslexic user the opportunity to access and synthesise information in ways that are more approachable to his profile. As motivation and self-confidence for a range of tasks that seemed difficult or impossible for him to achieve are enhanced through the effective use of appropriately-designed technology, productivity and ingenuity for the tasks also increase.'

'Where effective delivery of interventions for young people with learning disabilities is concerned, the three key players are likely to be scientists, practitioners, and politicians working with ministries at national and local level.'

Quoted from invited editorial (D·I·T·T) in Pediatric Rehabilitation, January – March 2005 (ISSN 13638491)

Over 1,000 copies of the CD have now been sold, singly via www.ditt-online.org or in bulk. D·I·T·T is keen to identify distributors.

As a non-profit organisation – where all proceeds go directly to projects – D·I·T·T welcomes the fact that the CD is sold ever more widely, spreading the word.

Tintin is an excellent ambassador when it comes to promoting information on what dyslexia is and its serious effects, and in opening the way to discovering the latest learning and training tools.

Collaboration at ministerial level

D·I·T·T continues to correspond with ICT contacts and other specialists concerned with dyslexia in ministries of education including those in the 25 EU Member States.

Collaboration at diplomatic level

Ann Steppe, Stephane Albecq and Nicolas Rougy first opened up the possibility of D·I·T·T's working with the excellent Belgian commercial *attachés*' world-wide network at Brussels Export.

Mr Yamamoto, Belgian Economic and Commercial *attaché* in Tokyo, is to be thanked especially for his part in a fund-raising event in support of the Tintin cd-rom *The Mystery of the Lost Letters – Tintin helps dyslexic learners worldwide*.

Mrs Branders, the wife of the Belgian Ambassador to Japan, most kindly hosted an event with flautist Christian Plouvier to support D·I·T·T's work.



Following Mrs Branders' generous initiative D·I·T·T has been invited by 'Alloquium', the Belgian Embassy wives association in Brussels, to the Palais d'Egmont 25 January.

Marianne Klees, Member of the D·I·T·T Scientific Advisory Committee and leading Belgian expert and logoped trainer, will speak on dyslexia, and D·I·T·T Board Member Christopher James Ian will present the cd-rom, explaining its purpose and how it assists the young users wanting to gain understanding and control over how they learn best.

Collaboration at professional level

Presentations of the Tintin CD have been requested in The Hague, Prague, London, Nice, Munich and further afield.

D·I·T·T is putting together a presentation/training pack to assist presenters addressing audiences wishing to know more about dyslexia, from the brain to teaching methods. Most topics are already addressed on the D·I·T·T Web site where free e-publications and the popular illustrated quarterly e-newsletter are readily available.

Collaboration at commercial level and with the general public

Thanks again to Brussels Export, with special mention of Mr Christian Mouvet in London and the Brussels staff and *attachés* who have been so supportive. D·I·T·T will give a presentation of the CD in London on 8 February at the London Anglo-Belgian Club in the presence of our Patron, Her Royal Highness Princess Margaretha of Liechtenstein, with a number of possible UK distributors present.

It is hoped that similar events can be held in Germany and France and in other English, French, and German-speaking areas too. The possibility of adapting the current cd-rom to the language that best suits different localities is not ruled out.

Collaboration at local level

Mr Freddy Thielmans, Mayor of Brussels, and the College that supervises events at the splendid Grand Place Town Hall in Brussels have graciously allowed D·I·T·T to organise its benefit concert in the Gothic Hall – see the last page of this newsletter.

We encourage all readers who can to attend and lend their support. Please note that, as D·I·T·T no longer invites subscription fees, this benefit concert is another way of giving D·I·T·T support.

Collaborating with Microsoft – the Unlimited Potential (UP) programme

D·I·T·T will receive €25,000 for a new programme building on the experience of the eight-month pilot in 2004.

Jerome Selosse of Dweb has accepted to be the project manager, working closely with the Belgian Ministries of Education and Employment, using the excellently devised UP syllabus with special reference to technologies that increase dyslexic learners' chances of success.

Announcements

D-I-T-T pays homage to Professor Bevé Hornsby, M.B.E., Ph.D., M.Ed., F.C.S.T., A.F.B.P.S.S., A.M.B.D.A.m, Chartered Psychologist, Speech Therapist & Teacher, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, who died on 14 December.



Bevé was always ready to support and work with those committed to seeing dyslexia better understood and addressed.

You can find Bevé on no less than 23 pages on a Google search, and in our e-Newsletters from the outset – as a visiting promoter of teacher-training in 2001 right through to her support at the Palais de Bellevue press launch in November 2003 (see picture).

Warmth, enthusiasm, generosity, high seriousness, a sense of fun and endless energy were hallmarks of her character.

D-I-T-T was honoured to be instrumental in the French translation of her book, *Overcoming Dyslexia*, thanks to Jean-Bernard Bergouignan in Paris and other collaborators. Most recently translated into Spanish, this is a book that has helped and continues to help countless families and professionals.

We at D-I-T-T have benefited from the excellent training programmes Bevé set up. She will be remembered for her inestimable contribution as protagonist, author, organiser, trainer and originator. Thanks to her dedication and tenacity she leaves us with a lasting legacy of seeing dyslexic learners better diagnosed and taught.

Congratulations

D-I-T-T offers congratulations to volunteers Baihua in China and Richard in Belgium – both proud new parents.



Above: Baby Blossom



Right: Baby Enya with a delighted Richard

From D-I-T-T Board Member Gudrun Dziallas – a message...

Dear friends in South Asia,

This earthquake in the Indian Ocean was profoundly shocking.

Thousands lost their lives, their relatives, their friends and their whole existence.

Many are wounded or traumatized. We all share in this with you.

Our thoughts are with you as we send our wishes for all that is good and well in the New Year. There is no need to lose our optimism after all!

Coping with loss and sadness can be very hard



Michael Rosen is most sad when he is thinking about his son, Eddie, who died. In his *Sad Book* he writes about his sadness, how it affects him and some of the things he does to try to cope with it.

'Its truth will surely touch you', writes the reviewer, 'and will raise your spirits too and help you to cope with loss.'

Once again Quentin Blake is to be congratulated on his brilliant and sensitive illustrations.

What is dyslexia like?

'Writing a nightmare, reading not a problem, short-term memory like a sieve, spelling problematic, hearing what people say to me problematic, organisation only achievable if I focus like a narrow-band laser beam.

'Just a few things that are part and not part of my dyslexia day-to-day experience.'

Alan Shoreman

Hearts, Flowers and all that Jazz!

a St. Valentine's Day charity concert in aid of
Dyslexia International – Tools and Technologies

helping children with learning difficulties

The Gothic Hall, Hôtel de ville, Grand Place, Brussels
Monday 14 February 8–10 pm

Artists include: Francis Goya (guitar), Teun Michiels (tenor),
Jeremy Chapman (flute) and Dan Whieldon (piano)

Admission, including a glass of champagne, €50 per person – book now!

E-mail dyslexia@tiscali.be or telephone 02-537 7066



Music *is* the food of love!

sponsored by

