



## Newsletter

No 22 · Winter 2005–6

### Contents

**The dyslexia dilemma 2**

**Profiles 7**

**What works 8**

- Language Shock – Dyslexia across cultures 8
- Ultimate Maths Invaders 8
- Notetaker 9
- User's Guide to Memory 9
- The Dyslexia Council 10
- Speech recognition software 10
- The LEXY treatment 10
- Study skills 10
- Special needs site 11
- The Special Needs Computing Research Unit (SNCRU) 11
- All kinds of minds 11
- The Dyslexia Institute incorporating the Hornsby International Dyslexia Centre 11

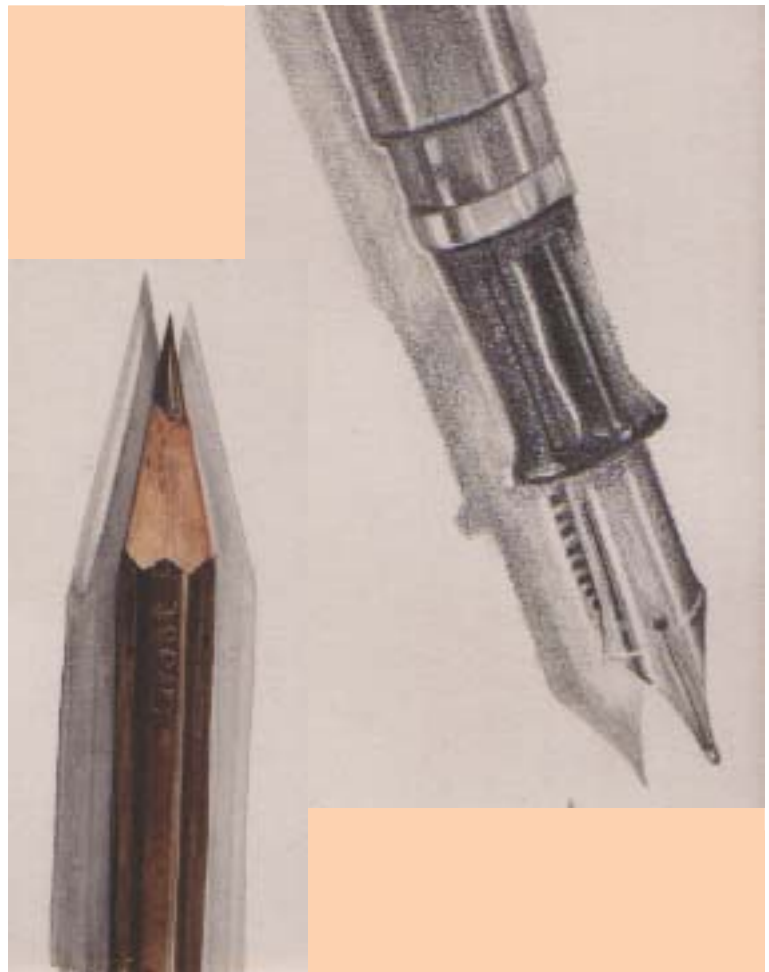
**Announcements 12**

**Money matters 14**

**Reflections 15**

- 'Imagination is more important than knowledge' 15
- Can you read this? 15
- Fun and games 15

### Instruments of destruction?



Writing answers under pressure in exams, filling in forms ... when pens and pencils destroy the dyslexic learner's best intentions.

Illustration taken from a picture by Paule Zoller.

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## The dyslexia dilemma

‘Tom Birch is as brisk as a bee in conversation; but no sooner does he take a pen in his hand, than it becomes a torpedo to him, and benumbs all his faculties.’

Dr Samuel Johnson  
(1709–1784) quoted in Boswell’s  
*Life of Johnson*, 1743

How many dyslexic students are set to fail their exams yet again because their difficulties with handwriting, spelling and organizing their ideas on the written page are still not being addressed?

Crutches for the lame, glasses for the short- or long-sighted – fine! But how many recognised dyslexic learners do not have the right to use a computer or the budget to buy one?

And even where dyslexia is recognised officially as a ‘handicap’, rights to appropriate learning facilities – extra help, adapted teaching and technologies – do not automatically follow.

What are the possibilities for seeing that all dyslexic young people have basic equal rights across the board?

In Europe it could be through just one case brought to the European Courts by parents, but only those who have already exhausted their national appeal systems at no small financial cost.

Who are the parents who not only have the money and courage to pursue a case, but who are also prepared to put their own child on the line?

Until such a case is ruled upon, with no coherent policy or commitment by ministries and no cohesive response at international level, variations in provision for dyslexic students will remain; a few do benefit from being recognised and granted an assessment, extra time in exams, extra help and – all importantly – the use of a computer for their written work. But what of the rest?

### Positive responses

Where ministries do recognise dyslexia, provide guidelines and insist on the appropriate provision, and where such action is not left to the arbitrary decisions of individual schools and local lobbyists, the dyslexic learner is likely to fare better. D·I·T·T was pleased to be invited recently to make recommendations to the local Belgian French-speaking ministry of education.

Moreover, Estonia and other new Member States of the European Union are taking a keen interest in exploring changes to accommodate dyslexic students, and are ready to learn more about the latest scientific research.

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## A Belgian professional's experience



Johan Schepens, Co-ordinator of the Dyslexia Team at the Bevegem college in Belgium, says there is a lack of support where secondary schools are concerned. In Belgium statutory provision is in place for dyslexic learners up to the age of twelve; thereafter there is little or nothing. Schepens, who works with secondary-school children, has developed a new approach and he shares his experiences with readers below:

'I've been teaching languages for 30 years and I have always been bothered by the fact that there are able pupils who fail at languages despite their best efforts. I have been involved with dyslexia for many years too, and currently I am the co-ordinator of the team for adapted guidance dealing with all kinds of needs from dyslexia to terminally ill children.

'I have also gained first-hand experience of dyslexia as my wife is dyslexic. She comes from Ireland, and we discovered her condition when she was learning Dutch. A lot of people reacted with utter disbelief: "How could she have made a career in an insurance company while being dyslexic?"

'When we started to look for early signs my wife remembered that, when she was a child, her primary school teacher had sent her to an eye-specialist because she copied things incorrectly from the blackboard. As she had perfect eyesight, no further action was taken. After that she had a miserable time at school.

'I teach French and English in Flanders, the Dutch speaking region of Belgium, in a grammar school which offers Latin, Greek, modern languages and science. So I deal with teenagers who either come to us with a problem (about 40% of the students) or are found to have one during secondary schooling (60%). These are the ones I am concerned about.

'The following situation is unfortunately all too common for intelligent dyslexic pupils:

'They come into the 7th grade (12-year-olds) as top of their class in primary school. They start in the Latin section and, with a lot of work and problems, make it into the second year. Then they begin to experience difficulties with Latin, English and French, so they turn to putting their efforts into the sciences. They develop very good compensatory skills, but they struggle to cope. These young people and their parents are unable to explain their "sudden" difficulties in learning, and many

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**‘Flash-list’ – a list of warning signs that a learner may have dyslexia:**

- ❑ spelling problems in the mother tongue/foreign language
- ❑ writes phonetically
- ❑ writes illegibly: with crossings out
- ❑ lack of structure
- ❑ poor vocabulary
- ❑ better oral than written skills
- ❑ weak comprehension (reading and listening)
- ❑ poor short term memory
- ❑ fails to understand questions
- ❑ cannot read time
- ❑ cannot correct his or her own mistakes
- ❑ inverts numbers/miscalculates
- ❑ cannot remember dates/facts/series/tables
- ❑ makes personal mnemonics
- ❑ has orientation problems – knowing right from left
- ❑ coordination problems
- ❑ time-keeping difficulties
- ❑ separating essentials from side-issues
- ❑ reads with finger on page or guesses

teachers often have difficulty accepting there is a problem. They prefer to think that the pupil is lazy, unruly, sloppy and uninterested. If we can't help them at that very point when the first problems arise, then they mostly end up as drop-outs.

‘On the other hand, it's not that teachers don't want to help, but without proper training they don't really know what to do. But for myself, as someone who understands dyslexia and the way it can ruin lives – I do not find it difficult to recognise and over the years I've developed a simple strategy to support dyslexic learners.

‘First of all, acknowledge the fact there is a problem. Don't burden the child with useless remedial teaching. Try to speak to the child – establish a basis of trust. They all feel they are different, but don't know in what way (though if they learn 10 Latin words by heart in the evening, by the morning most are forgotten).

‘We then check of the student's learning ability against the “Flash-list”, a list of warning signs. As a general rule I advise my colleagues that if they have to tick off more than one third of the indicators, then there is reason for serious concern, and a proper test is advised.

‘After dyslexia has been diagnosed we arrange a meeting of the parents, the pupil and the external advisor (a specialised dyslexia advisor). This meeting is important to establish a basis of trust. The pupil is involved in all steps of the process from making the support-plan to implementing it in order to strengthen self-confidence and self-esteem.

‘Together we agree on the way to help. The plan is then submitted to the class teachers to be discussed and implemented, and after exams we assess and adapt this plan if needed. It is my firm belief that dyslexic pupils can help each other, so I proposed a self-support group for dyslexic pupils. In future I plan to start a meeting point for parents. It is vital to involve them in the whole development process too in order to obtain the best possible result.

‘It is obvious to all that dyslexia can have a serious impact on the child's keeping up with the school curriculum, but it also has an impact on the personality and the social behaviour of the child, and on the family dynamics. With proper help, however, and even some apparently minor adaptations, dyslexic children have a real chance of making it through secondary school and even onto further education.’

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## **Progress in some areas**

In the UK the British Dyslexia Association and the teaching and assessment Dyslexia Institute have made a major contribution to bringing about statutory changes to ensure that dyslexia is better understood and addressed. Effective interventions are occurring at tertiary education level. Last term, as part of the British Dyslexia Association's Dyslexia Awareness Week, a London university college organised a variety of advice sessions and group workshops to provide information about dyslexia and study tips for dyslexic students.

## **D·I·T·T's response**

D·I·T·T, in co-operation with the D·I·T·T e-training consultancy group, proposed targets for an on-line training programme on teaching dyslexic learners to Intel in December. Intel works closely with the ministries and all classroom teachers benefit from the latest in on-line training – which in certain instances is pre-requisite.

D·I·T·T agrees with Dr Harry Chasty's statement that 'at least 90 percent of dyslexic learners could be taught effectively in mainstream classes if teachers received the appropriate training.'

The D·I·T·T proposal for on-line teacher-training regarding dyslexia is on the lines of the structure shown overleaf.

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■ **An understanding of what dyslexia is – definition**

- *definitions of dyslexia* – more than a century of findings: commonalities with current theories: broader and narrower definitions
- *aetiology* – latest research on the brain
- *physiological factors affecting dyslexic and non-dyslexic learners*:
  - audio/visual/kinaesthetic – affecting information input
  - the brain and processing of information
- manifesting symptoms of dyslexia
- resultant behaviours/psychological effects in dyslexic learners
- co-morbidities
- *personal experiences of dyslexia/testimonies* (see Tintin ‘Hall of Fame’ in *The Mystery of the Lost Letters* cd-rom)

■ **Discovering dyslexia in the individual student – assessment**

- The importance of understanding the individual learner’s capabilities/deficits and knowing how to:
- make a *first level assessment* + miscue analysis + effective tests available
  - consider *physiological factors* audio/visual/muscular
  - *birth factors?* – *developmental v acquired dyslexia*
  - *learning readiness* – *psychological factors* including parental attitudes
  - *social considerations* family circumstances – mobility/insecurity
  - *linguistic demands* – number of languages spoken/demanded of the learner

■ **Effective teaching – intervention**

- Featuring:
- *The teacher as a collaborator* – restoring confidence/ learning readiness/unblocking barriers to learning induced by prior negativities
  - *teaching methodologies* (video of complete lesson) that would include essential classic – multisensory – structured – overlearning in teaching r and w
  - *linguistic dictates*: sounds/structure/meaning as these affect teaching r and w methodologies for dyslexic learners) – second or third language considerations
  - *development of memory*
  - *systematic development of organizational/study skills + maths*
  - *matching the teaching to the learners style* – strengths to weaknesses approach
  - *insistence on celebrating abilities and positive outcomes for the learner*
  - *assistive technologies* – their virtues/limitations
  - *age appropriate approaches and materials*
  - *appropriate teaching environment* (see Judy Brooks’ BBC video)
  - *checklist of teaching tips* – interactive – video presentation

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## Profiles

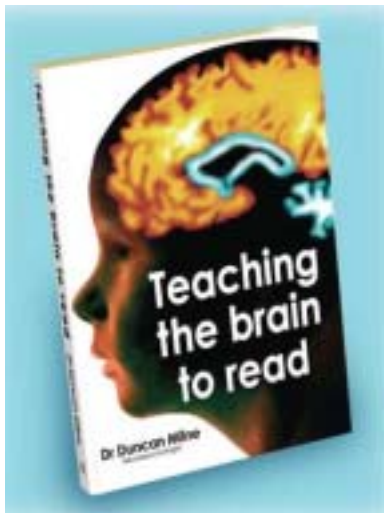
Two distinguished guest speakers, Dr Chris Singleton and Dr Duncan Milne, will visit Brussels for the D-I-T-T Annual Open Forum this Autumn 2006.



**Dr Chris Singleton** is a chartered psychologist, senior lecturer in educational psychology, and director of the Psychological Assessment Unit at the University of Hull, UK. He lectures in educational psychology, cognition and learning, and child development. His main research and professional interests are in the development of literacy and the identification and education of children and adults with dyslexia or other learning problems. He is internationally known for his pioneering research that resulted in the development of computer-based systems for the screening and assessment of dyslexia, known as CoPS (Cognitive Profiling System), LASS, Lucid Rapid and LADS. These systems are now used in more than 7,000 schools and colleges in the UK and have been translated into several languages. For further information, visit [www.lucid-research.com](http://www.lucid-research.com).

From 1996–99 Dr Singleton was editor of the *Journal of Research in Reading* and he remains a member of the editorial board of that international journal. He is a former member of the British Psychological Society's Committee on Test Standards. He has also been a member of the Computer Committee of the British Dyslexia Association for 15 years, and has chaired three international conferences on computers and dyslexia. He was chairman of the National Working Party on Dyslexia in Higher Education, which investigated the assessment of, and provision for, dyslexics in higher education. More recently he has become a member of the British government's working group on dyslexia in higher education.

Dr Singleton has been keynote speaker on the assessment, diagnosis and support of dyslexia in children and adults at many international conferences, including events held in Belgium, Brazil, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA. He is author of more than a hundred scientific papers on dyslexia and the development of literacy, as well as author/editor of several books, including *Computers and Dyslexia* (1994) and *Psychological Assessment of Reading* (1997).



**Dr Duncan Milne** is the author of *Teaching the Brain to Read*, a teacher-friendly version of his PhD in education and psychology. Dr Milne studied at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and the Brain Research Institute, Australia.

Much of Dr Milne's research has involved advanced brain-imaging techniques including electro-encephalography (EEG) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Dr Milne has also worked, at the University of Auckland Reading Centre, with children with learning difficulties.

He is passionate about dyslexia, both from a research and an intervention perspective, and has written numerous articles, educational resources and psychological assessments relating to reading and learning difficulties.

Dr Milne is the managing director of international publisher Smart Kids, a director of the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA), an advisor to the Education Show (EMAP, England) and a speaker for the National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN).

## What works

### ***Language Shock – Dyslexia across cultures***

The Guide that formed part of the *Language Shock* pack is already available in five languages as an e-book. Now the video is to be made available at [www.ditt-online.org](http://www.ditt-online.org) – the full version in English and shorter versions in French and German.

### **Ultimate Maths Invaders**

'The new, fun space attack maths game that drills number, facts and tables features cool, exciting 3D-style graphics and wide-ranging content for ages 5-14+. The game caters for all players, from those with special needs to the arcade addict, pushing each player to their personal skill and maths limit. Extensive record keeping allows both parents and teachers to monitor each pupil's progress.' See [www.edalive.com](http://www.edalive.com)

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## Notetaker

From Don Johnston at the California State University, Northridge (CSUN), Notetaker gives students a simple, portable way to get printed text into an electronic format. This tool is valuable for dyslexic students because electronic text can easily be adapted to accommodate their learning needs and abilities.  
(www.donjohnston.com)

## User's Guide to Memory

Sally Raymond, from Plymouth, recommends *Your Memory: A User's Guide* by Alan Baddledley. 'It's fascinating', she says.

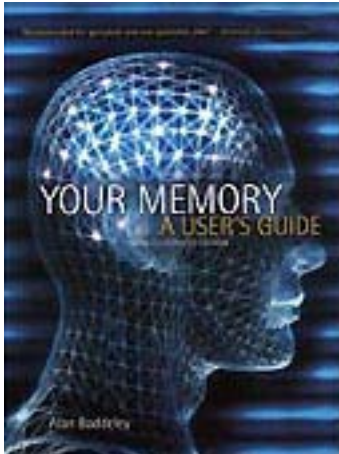
Given pupils' differences there is no single solution in the classroom, but she suggests that teachers:

- Discuss with pupils how they remember things. Do they have strategies to aid memory? (The findings of this discussion should be shared.)
- Discuss how pupils might identify important/irrelevant inputs. (Discover which students don't pick up pointers that teachers think they are using).
- After a lesson, discuss how much information is retained/dumped by the memory. Only a small fraction is actually retained. Be aware that children may often give you the answers they think you want and that there will be less capacity for processing other things.

With dyslexic learners the short-term memory (STM) often gets overloaded due to weaknesses in specific processing skills, 'using up' more STM space. Long-term memory traces can be weak due to overload, lack of understanding, lack of significance/relevance/purpose, or erroneous traces laid down at an earlier date.

'Triggers' that prompt retrieval of existing memory traces may not be those the teacher expects. For example, language-based memory trace of meaning of the word 'multiplication' may not be accessed accurately/quickly leading to a failure to be engaged. The word may also trigger anxiety, and the word 'multiply' may be confused with 'divide' These affect subsequent processing activity.

Learning involves the memory processes, and anything we can do to aid memory and memory processing is important. Apart from the factors already mentioned, memory prompts, memory strategies and understanding of how we remember/forget things will help raise our awareness of this complex and fascinating subject.



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## The Dyslexia Council

has a new interactive Web site:

<http://dyslexiacouncil.jot.com>

that has the facility for continual update by individual Council members.

And take a look at the graphic Web-search engine on the Dyslexia Links page – see the illustration below.

## Speech recognition software

Ian Litterick of Iansyst writes:

As far as speech recognition is concerned, see Dragon Dictate and other comparables at

<http://www.dyslexic.com/dictcomp.htm>.

## The LEXY treatment

Psychologist Jurgen Tijms presented his PhD thesis at the University of Amsterdam (Faculty of Psychology) last year: a study entitled 'Psycholinguistic treatment of dyslexia: an evaluation of the LEXY-treatment'.

In this study Jurgen Tijms claims positive effects of the psycholinguistic LEXY-treatment with adults and children with dyslexia. At the end of the treatment the dyslexic students have reached functional levels of reading and spelling that seem to have lasting effects.

## Study skills

The Web site [www.studygs.net](http://www.studygs.net) is not to be missed! It has been recommended by Susan van Alsenoy, D·I·T·T member and valued researcher, who keeps all of us on her mailing list abreast of new findings on both sides of the Atlantic.

Result of a Kartoo search on 'dyslexia' – the searcher can use either the list on the left-hand side, the sponsored links on the right, or the elements in the centre map to go further

<http://www.kartoo.com/>



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### **Special needs site**

[www.snapassessment.com/resource.htm](http://www.snapassessment.com/resource.htm) by Dr Gavin Reid of the *Mystery of the Lost Letters* games – ‘an excellent site for special needs recourse’, says van Alsenoy.

### **The Special Needs Computing Research Unit (SNCRU)**

at the University of Teesside is an active body of academics, research staff and postgraduate students that offers expertise in the areas of accessibility and web technologies – a wide range of knowledge and skills based around Web design, e-learning, virtual learning environments and mobile technologies.

### **All kinds of minds**

A Web site recommended by Simon Midgley of the [senco-forum](http://www.senco-forum.com) ([www.simonmidgley.co.uk](http://www.simonmidgley.co.uk)) Says Midgley: ‘Very well worth a look. I use the site to provide me with a source of great strategies either to use with my students or to recommend to other staff to use in their subjects. It is a good for ideas, tips and hints to include on individual education programmes.

See [allkindsofminds.org/learningbase.aspx](http://allkindsofminds.org/learningbase.aspx)

### **The Dyslexia Institute incorporating the Hornsby International Dyslexia Centre**

is offering a level 3 Distance-learning course, accredited by Surrey & Region OCN, from January 2006. It is open-access and is suitable for teachers and assistants. For further details visit the Web site: [www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk](http://www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk).

Why not check out and send us your feedback on items listed in ‘What works’?

D-I-T-T always welcomes ideas and suggestions for improving the advice it offers.

E-mail your comments to: [admin@ditt-online.org](mailto:admin@ditt-online.org)

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## Announcements

### ***The Mystery of the Lost Letters* CD-ROM goes out worldwide**



- The British Council, *Alliance Française* and Goethe Institute are now being offered complimentary copies for evaluation at all their offices across the world.
- Commercial contacts have been established through Brussels Export in 78 countries.
- Training on-line – working with ministries:

D·I·T·T is hoping to distribute the cd-rom on a wider scale at ministerial level in partnership with Intel.

Honorary board members Christopher James Ian, Peter Horemans and Judith Sanson visited Dr Andreas Dott, consumer programs manager EMEA, Intel, in December. Dr Dott showed how technology functions at the heart of education. He demonstrated Intel's on-line training platforms developed with ministries. These are already used in schools throughout Germany and Austria – just a mustard seed sample of the on-line training that is destined for much wider use.

D·I·T·T was invited to submit a proposal for learning objectives for basic training in teaching dyslexic students, a project that would evaluate their latest learning tool, the cd-rom produced by the BBC for D·I·T·T, and also to give a presentation of the cd-rom in Munich this spring.

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## UNESCO

D·I·T·T has been invited to submit a paper to UNESCO as a partner by the assistant director general for education for the UN Decade of Literacy. D·I·T·T plans to play a co-ordinating role in putting forward position papers based on the views of an e-training consultancy group. The main long-term aim: a conference on dyslexia at UNESCO to bring together education ministries from across the world to share best practice.



## German Dyslexia Congress in Berlin

For the first time ever at a German Dyslexia Congress, educational representatives explained the situation and outlined the progress that had been made in their individual states (*Bundesländer*) in order to help and support dyslexic children.

Together with Tintin and Snowy, Gudrun and Rolf Dziallas represented D·I·T·T at the 15th Congress of the German Dyslexia Association (BVL) at the Humboldt University in Berlin, 22–25 September 2005. It was attended by over 1300 delegates and about 120 experts were invited to speak. There was an exhibition of relevant materials, and Gudrun and Rolf organised presentations of the cd-rom throughout the day. *Das Geheimnis der verlorenen Buchstaben – Tim hilft legasthenen Schülern* attracted many visitors and inquiries.

More details about the congress are available on the BVL Web site: [www.bvl-legasthenie.de](http://www.bvl-legasthenie.de)



## BETT 2006

D·I·T·T was recently invited to run a seminar at BETT, the world's largest educational ICT (Information Communications Technology) ([www.bettshow.co.uk](http://www.bettshow.co.uk))

## Inter-national

D·I·T·T warmly thanks its international array of young people who have taken time to help in so many ways: Maria from Russia for her research, Dalto from Brazil for administration and packing, and Wakana from Japan for organizing the Winners Team and recommending software in French that helps with reading, writing, spelling, memory, organisation, maths, language learning and keyboard skills. Cecilia, who is now studying for an MBA, still drops by the office to give invaluable support,

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as does Dr Vincent Goetry – in the middle of his many other commitments. Recently we welcomed Ami of Japan, whose mother Eiko Todo founded the Japanese Dyslexia Association. This February we also welcome our new part-time *stagiaire*: Marta, from Poland.

## Money matters

Your support is needed. Please do not hesitate to send your donation or hold your own fund-raising event to help us develop our projects and run our modest offices in central Brussels. Details can be found at [www.ditt-online.org](http://www.ditt-online.org) under Membership and donations.

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## Reflections



**‘Dyslexic learners have many talents that just don’t happen to include reading and writing.’**

**Professor John Stein, Chair,  
D·I·T·T Scientific Advisory  
Committee**

### **‘Imagination is more important than knowledge’**

Thus said Einstein – who was, incidentally, dyslexic.

Not far from the D·I·T·T offices an exhibition: ‘Einstein, the other view’ is being held to mark the 100th anniversary of the publication of four of his major scientific papers that turned the world of physics on its head in 1905. Einstein was a man of charm and commitment, who had close links to Belgium and the Belgians.

[www.tempora.be/einstein.htm](http://www.tempora.be/einstein.htm)  
[www.alberteinstein.be](http://www.alberteinstein.be)

### **Can you raed tihs?**

Msot popele can. I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod acualty uesdnatnrd waht I was radnieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno’t mtaetr in waht oerdr the ltteres in a wrod are, the olny iproamtnt tihng is taht the frsit and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it whotuit a pboerlm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Azanmig huh? yaeh and I awlyas tghuhot slpeling was ipmorantt!

So where does this put phonics – with all the regional variations too?

For information on synthetic phonics see [www.syntheticphonics.com](http://www.syntheticphonics.com).

### **Fun and games**

Can you get those Member States located?

Try this interactive quiz:

[www.ditt-online.org/Archives/EU-MS-quiz.ppt](http://www.ditt-online.org/Archives/EU-MS-quiz.ppt)  
– but be warned – it’s not easy!