



Newsletter

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Do we all see the same world?



Front cover of the Europa diaries distributed in all Member States to 16–18-year-olds. Reproduced by kind permission of the Generation Europe Foundation: www.generation-europe.org

'Ever since dyslexia was first described over a century ago, the link between eye problems and reading difficulties has been suggested as a possible cause, but this has been one of the most controversial areas of research...' (Keith Holland – see article on next page)

Eyes and Dyslexia

Keith Holland founded The British Association of Behavioural Optometrists in 1991. He is the director of a specialist practice in Cheltenham, UK, dealing with the assessment and treatment of vision-related learning difficulties.

D·I·T·T has asked Keith for his thoughts on computers and eye strain for the Summer newsletter.

Meanwhile, the full version of this article can be found on the *Tintin helps dyslexic learners* CD-ROM – see www.ditt-online.org – amongst a treasury of authoritative articles on dyslexia: click on the book-case situated in the Main Hall, beside the parrot.

Ever since dyslexia was first described over a century ago, reading difficulties have been linked to eye problems. Patching one eye, wearing coloured lenses, prism lenses, and eye exercises have all been suggested, and all seem to be of benefit to some dyslexic learners. But how do you choose what to try?

Children with vision-based reading difficulties share similar problems. A visual assessment is advisable for a child that often loses his/her place when reading, or misses out words/rereads the same word among other symptoms. The causes of vision problems can be complex, but they usually involve difficulties with convergence control, focusing, eye movements and peripheral awareness. Accurate and comprehensive assessments are key. Parents are advised to see a specially trained behavioural optometrist.

In Britain the best source of information is the British Association of Behavioural Optometrists (see www.babo.co.uk). Two American organisations maintain lists of specialists around the world: the Optometric Extension Programme (www.oep.org), and the College of Optometrists in Vision Development (www.covd.org).

Recommended treatment may include:

- special lenses to stabilise focus and convergence control – often bifocal lenses are used to provide optimum help at different distances. Prism lenses may also be used to minimise the effects of poor convergence
- coloured lenses to help with integration, though while they can reduce symptoms, they do not cure the underlying problems, and the effects may be short-lived
- exercises (vision therapy) to develop long-lasting visual control – probably the most permanent approach and one that can change the entire system, not only helping reading but also general coordination skills, thinking skills and the speed of information processing.

Many children identified as dyslexic are also suffering from fundamental visual problems. While specialist tuition is important, they also need assistance with their vision. An optometric assessment is a vital part of a dyslexic child's diagnosis.

Profiles

Catie Thorburn



Catie Thorburn, a member of D·I·T·T's Board of Directors, is President of the Generation Europe Foundation, which she established in 1995. She has been the driving force behind the creation of the Generation Europe consumer and citizenship awareness diaries, currently published in 27 countries and distributed to 1.3 million students.

Prior to this she created and ran a small multinational (Lexitech Inc.) in the field of multilingual document production and took it onto the New York Stock Exchange (Nasdaq) in 1986. She was a Consultant for Eurexpansion (Expansion, Dow Jones and Handelsblatt publishers) at Europe Information Service and thereafter became a Board Member of the 'Club de Bruxelles', a leading European think-tank.

'If dyslexia is not diagnosed early, then it really can become a lifelong problem,' says Catie. She became interested in dyslexia when her daughter was diagnosed with the condition; her daughter was one of the fortunate ones and received one-to-one tuition and extra classes. Her school, Singelijn in Brussels, was alert to the learning disability at the time and provided excellent support. In spite of this experience, Catie says that 'educational systems are notoriously impoverished and few have the resources to provide the help we received.'

According to Catie, 'training the trainers is a good place to start, making them more aware, which is what D·I·T·T does so well.'

The benefits to her daughter have been considerable. Catie believes that techniques to 'help retrain the brain' have to start early and they also have to start with helping parents overcome the idea that their child is handicapped for life.

Catie helps with D·I·T·T's fund-raising efforts, bringing her own experiences gained from her work with Generation Europe, an NGO that concentrates on helping young people understand complex issues relating to the EU. Says Catie: 'My experience of working with institutions is that it is arduous and increasingly difficult, but many talented experts and officials exist and the art is to identify those with whom one can work!'

'An EU directive on learning difficulties is a long way off, but there is no reason why there shouldn't be one.' Although at present none of the EU departments has a programme specifically for dyslexia, she thinks Ministers would soon wake up if they focused on the number of people in prison who have dyslexia.

Catie believes that D·I·T·T's recently-produced educational tool, a CD-ROM featuring Tintin, needs to be culturally adapted for other countries – not just translated into other languages. 'But it would be really great if it was handed out free to all teachers,' she says. 'and finding the means to make this happen is vitally important.'

New member of Scientific Advisory Committee



Dr Maria Luisa Lorusso, recently invited to join the Scientific Advisory Committee, is grateful for the opportunity of making her contribution to D·I·T·T. She hopes that her expertise can help D·I·T·T's activities to progress, especially in the area of rehabilitation. She would like to send an optimistic message to people suffering from reading problems: improvements can be made over a short period with computerised intervention programmes for dyslexia. More and more scientific papers show that the neurofunctional organisation of the structures involved in reading can be changed – even in adults and even in severely reading-impaired persons.

Maria Luisa was born in Milan, Italy, and lives in Mandello, Lake Como. She gained a Master's degree in psychology (1990) from Padua University and one in clinical linguistics (2001) from the Royal University of Groningen, The Netherlands. She completed her Ph.D in developmental neuropsychology with a dissertation about the factors involved in the rehabilitation of dyslexia.

Since 1991 she has been working at IRCCS (Scientific Institute for Diagnosis and Research in Childhood Pathologies) in Italy. Her area of expertise is the organisation and co-ordination of clinical and research activity in cognitive psychology and neuropsychology. She is engaged in neuropsychological assessment of children (pre-school and school-age), supervision of neuropsychological rehabilitation, speech therapy treatments and teacher counselling. She co-ordinates various research projects in the fields of specific learning

disabilities, specific language disorders, and other neurodevelopmental disorders.

She has long-standing research collaborations with Dirk Bakker – investigating hemisphere-specific stimulation in dyslexia – and with Gad Geiger (MIT Boston) – studying the visual components of dyslexia. With her group, she has been running studies comparing intervention programmes and investigating neuropsychological factors. The group is also interested in the neurobiology of dyslexia, using psycho-physiological and neuro-imaging techniques and performing genetic analyses in order to better understand the biological mechanisms of reading and dyslexia.

Maria Luisa is professor of assessment of cognitive abilities at the University of Pavia and of rehabilitation of developmental dyslexia at the University of Milan, Bicocca.

One in ten



Continuing our series profiling dyslexic people, who make up a tenth of the population, we talk to Richard Kelly, a sports and remedial massage therapist based in Brussels.

Richard Kelly only discovered his dyslexia at the age of 24 when he began a degree course in business studies at Derby University.

A lecturer noticed that he was good communicator and could talk knowledgeably about his subject but that his essays appeared to be written by someone else. She suggested that he take a test for dyslexia. The test lasted three hours and showed he had a very high IQ but had difficulty in writing things down – a typical disparity for dyslexic students.

He was taught a mind-mapping technique that proved extremely helpful for his studies, and he still uses the technique today. The method, pioneered by Tony Buzan, entails circling key words and drawing arrows to important points relating to the term. The university was sympathetic to Richard's needs: he was given an extra half-hour to complete his exams and was able to demonstrate his grasp of the subject with the mind maps. 'They [the examiners] were astonished by the amount of information I was able to recall,' he says.

Although Richard's dyslexia appears to affect only his writing, it knocked his confidence while growing up in

Manchester in the 1970s and '80s. At school, he says, teachers just thought he needed to read a bit more and take his time. 'At that age, it's your whole life,' he says.

Richard, 38, is in the process of completing a sports therapy qualification from the UK, and he has already certificates in massage therapy – in particular the Bowen technique, which first introduced him to alternative therapies.

An enthusiastic sportsman, especially for contact sports like football and rugby, Richard often found he was in need of sports physiotherapy. His Belgian wife suggested receiving Bowen therapy and Total Body Modification, a holistic form of therapy developed in Australia that, like acupuncture, stimulates key points of energy flow.

He practises in Brussels and specialises in sports injuries and rehabilitation as well as back and neck pain, muscle tension, allergies and metabolic imbalance.

Are you a One in Ten?

Why not share your story and write in to admin@ditt-online.org?

What works

Study skills

Thank you Susan van Alsenoy, the great resource adviser, for directing us to this useful site: Study Guides and Strategies (<http://www.studygs.net/>) – a well-structured site giving advice on all aspects of learning in 30 languages. We invite readers to send us their feedback.

Get your site to speak

Ian Litterick of IANSYST writes:

Browsealoud <http://www.browsealoud.com> and
speakaloud <http://www.readspeaker.com> are both
ways of getting the site to speak.

They are both tools that the Web site owner has to pay for in order for them to work with the site.

There is also the free Techdis toolbar (<http://www.techdis.ac.uk/gettoolbar>) which you can download. I presume you could install it or offer it from your own Web site.

There's also our Readable program, which allows you to configure most pages, whether Web or Windows, with

your own choice of colours, fonts, sizes and so on, www.readable.com, but the user has to pay for that.

See www.dyslexic.com.

Synthetic phonics again?

See www.syntheticphonics.com

ARROW

Judith Stansfield, ICT Special Education Consultant and consultant to D·I·T·T projects, wrote on the SENCO forum:

Have you looked at ARROW (Aural Read Respond Oral Write)? This has been around for a long time using a tape recorder, but is now in computer format.

It has progressed: the student records words or a passage of text and then has the benefit of using their own voice as a dictation provider. The big advantage is that the passage of text can be on a subject that interests the students and gives them much more ownership and independence in self-remediation. Early work was all done in schools, but is now done with Young Offenders and even in the Navy!

An independent research project at Exeter University has mapped progress in spelling, writing and reading, but also a marked increase in self esteem – look at the Web site (www.self-voice.com) or contact drcolinlane@yahoo.co.uk for more details.

For information about SENCO, please contact: senco-forum-owner@lists.becta.org.uk

Announcements

D-I-T-T links with

■ Lebanon

On D-I-T-T's behalf, husband-and-wife team Paulina van Rijn and Simon Robbins attended a Brussels gala event in favour of dyslexic children in Lebanon.
(See www.cles-lebanon.org)

Marianne Klees, dyslexia and dyscalculia specialist, member of D-I-T-T's Scientific Advisory Committee, acts as consultant to this excellent initiative that has attracted the interest and the involvement of the local education authorities there. The organisers and all concerned are to be congratulated.

■ Africa

Dr Daniel Ofori is to be D-I-T-T's delegate at the eLearning Africa conference. Former project manager of the Portuguese version of *Language Shock – Dyslexia across Cultures*, generously supported by Femmes d'Europe, Daniel has been awarded Marcelle Napier Foundation funding this year to attend this conference. 400 copies of the CD-ROM will be sent as gifts to the teachers and pupils of Ethiopia; see <http://www.elearning-africa.com> – transportation sponsored by DHL.

■ America

Founder Board Member, Ron Baker, will attend the November conference of the International Dyslexia Association in Indianapolis on D-I-T-T's behalf, having already visited the Baltimore offices on different occasions for a useful exchange of information on projects in hand.

■ Europe

D-I-T-T hosted the European Dyslexia Association extraordinary General Assembly on Saturday 29 April. The meeting was attended by delegates from:

AID, Italy: Giacomo Stella

APEDA, Belgium: Marianne Hallet

BDA, England: Panos Bouras

BRAVO, Slovenia: Marija Kavkler

BVL, Germany: Christine Sczygiel and Christiane Löwe

DAI, Ireland: Anne Hughes and Mary Ball



European SchoolNetWeb editor, Paul Gerhard, who spoke at the meeting, with Petra Zollner, Secretary to the Board of D-I-T-T and Executive Director, Judith Sanson.

Paul gave a brief introduction to the workings for European SchoolNet – an international partnership of more than twenty **European** Ministries of Education

See www.eun.org



DYSPEL, Luxembourg: Raymond Claes

FINDER, Finland: Airi Valkama

FMLS, Sweden: Jan Sundquist and Sven Eklof

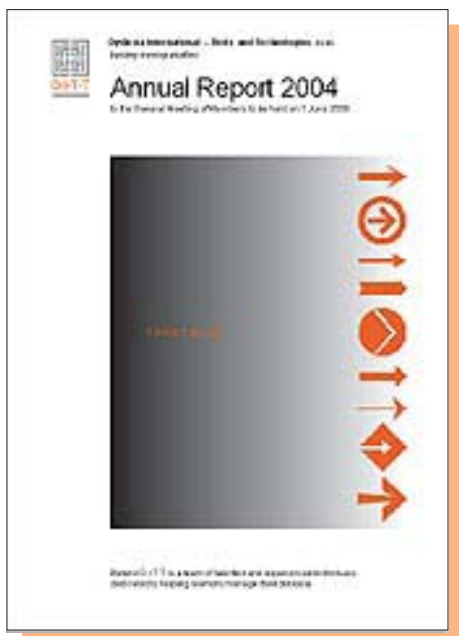
ÖBVL, Austria: Elisabeth Ryslavý

ODD, Denmark: Hans Pauli Christiansen and Lars Sander

PDA, Poland: Marta Bogdanowicz.

The EDA Board Members attending were Michael Kalmar of Austria, who was elected as the new President, Steve Alexander of the UK, Carina Carlsson of Sweden, Alan Sayles of Ireland – the outgoing President as he takes up his job in the Ministry of Education as inspector, Robin Salter of the UK – former Chair, Maria Potamitis of Cyprus and Karin Brünger of Germany. See www.dyslexia.eu.com.

The D-I-T-T *Annual Report 2004 – forward as one* is now on the Web site: <http://www.ditt-online.org/About.htm>



■ UNESCO

D-I-T-T attended a meeting in Paris with the UNESCO Education Section on 15 December and subsequently submitted a report: *Dyslexia and the Right to Read*.

From the meeting it was clear that, if dyslexia is to be considered at UNESCO, it is vital to have a well co-ordinated and unified approach. In response, the members of the Board approved the creation of the D-I-T-T Dyslexia Consultancy eTeam, headed by the D-I-T-T Scientific Advisory Committee. A distinguished panel of experts – researchers and practioners – are signing up to putting forward their views as one in 'position papers' on how dyslexia can be best addressed, and are also agreeing to be consulted individually on their area of expertise and experience.

D·I·T·T submitted input for the UNESCO UN Literacy Decade Portal, invited by the Assistant Director General Peter Smith, and hopes to be admitted officially this Autumn so as to be in a position to create an opportunity of running a conference on dyslexia at international level, to be in consultation with 191 ministries of education world-wide.

D·I·T·T's Annual Open Forum 2006

30 September, Brussels – French/English interpretation.

Bookings are already in hand (see Winter Newsletter: <http://www.ditt-online.org/Archives/DITT%20Newsletter%20No22.pdf>) for what is poised to be a great training day duo with Professor Chris Singleton of Hull University and Dr Duncan Milne. To ensure your place, please write directly to D·I·T·T. Further details will follow on our Web site in June.

D·I·T·T changes its Web site

Thanks go again to Dave Rown who is currently updating the Web site. Contacts in each country by region from the Home Page will be especially useful for D·I·T·T's inquirers looking for support facilities in different parts of the world.

Microsoft 'Unlimited Potential' (UP) round-up

A full report was submitted by Jérôme Seloise who managed post-pilot 2004 courses in French through to December 2005. Proposals for future courses by Jérôme and a film proposal by all concerned have been outlined.

Two top translators

A huge asset to D·I·T·T – Audrey Parent and Michael Hiard of ISTI (Institut supérieur de traducteurs et interprètes) gave their services full-time throughout the month of April. They translated reports, articles, D·I·T·T publicity, a film script and our submissions to the Literacy Portal for the UNESCO site into French. Our thanks to both for their professional competence and commitment.



Money matters

D·I·T·T warmly thanks the Foundation for Charitable Works of Her Majesty Queen Fabiola and the many other generous benefactors who give in money and in kind to enable D·I·T·T to develop its current projects (see listing on page 7 of the Annual Report). Here the costs of running D·I·T·T, even without salaried staff, are shown to be €25,000 *per annum*.

D·I·T·T is grateful in particular to Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard for their on-going support for the post-pilot phase of the D·I·T·T 'Unlimited Potential' course.

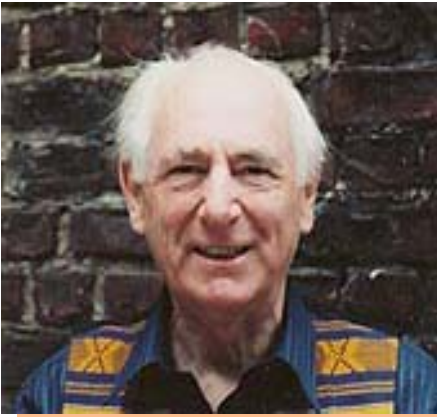
Farewell to Ralph

To quote the Annual Report – read out at the D·I·T·T AGM on 5 May:

This year our Treasurer, Ralph Palim, will be stepping down. Few NGOs can boast of a treasurer with such a distinguished career path as ours, nor with such willingness to give so generously of his time and skills.

But it is Ralph's wise advice and sense of humour that all of us who have had the good fortune of working with him have so greatly appreciated. Our consolation is that he will continue to look in on D·I·T·T and will not lose contact with us.

And now it is time for D·I·T·T to warmly welcome the new Treasurer who will take over in 2006, Honorary Board Member, Peter Horemans. We are grateful to Peter for his keen interest and the energy he invests in finding new sponsors. We hope 2006 sees his initiatives for D·I·T·T flourish.



Reflections

What makes a successful team? Does understanding core personality traits, intellectual styles and behaviour in oneself and one's colleagues really help us to function better in a team?

For nine years, Meredith Belbin and his team of researchers based at Henley Management College, England, studied the behaviour of managers from all over the world. Different groups of behaviour were identified as underlying the success of the teams. These successful behaviour types led to the development of nine team roles in three groups:

- Action-oriented roles – Shaper, Implementer, and Completer Finisher
- People-oriented roles – Co-ordinator, Teamworker and Resource Investigator
- Cerebral roles – Plant, Monitor Evaluator and Specialist

Results showed that there are a finite number of behaviours or team roles that can be readily adopted by various personality types. The accurate delineation of these team roles is critical to understanding the dynamics of any management team. For more about the team roles see <http://www.belbin.com/belbin-team-roles.htm>.

Also to think on

Shane Murphy's Steps to Success – forwarded by D·I·T·T Board Member, Gudrun Dziallas:

- Focus (orientation)
- Think creatively
- Trust your talent
- Stay calm
- Concentrate
- Don't give up
- Mobilise all energies
- Think like a winner

Shane Murphy is a leading US sports psychologist in performance excellence (see www.selfhelpmagazine.com/articles/sports/achizone.htm).

I firmly believe that deep in their soul everyone has a champion that can overcome obstacles and do great things.

Bruce Jenner, former Olympic Gold Medalist – dyslexic

A great story

'The Three Languages' by the brothers Grimm has a message for everyone on how we learn and indeed see differently – see:

<http://www.authorama.com/grimms-fairy-tales-43.html>

To read the fairy tale 'Die drei Sprachen' from the Grimm brothers in German, visit:

www.maerchenlexikon.de/khm/khm-texte/khm033.htm