



## Newsletter

No 24 · Summer 2006

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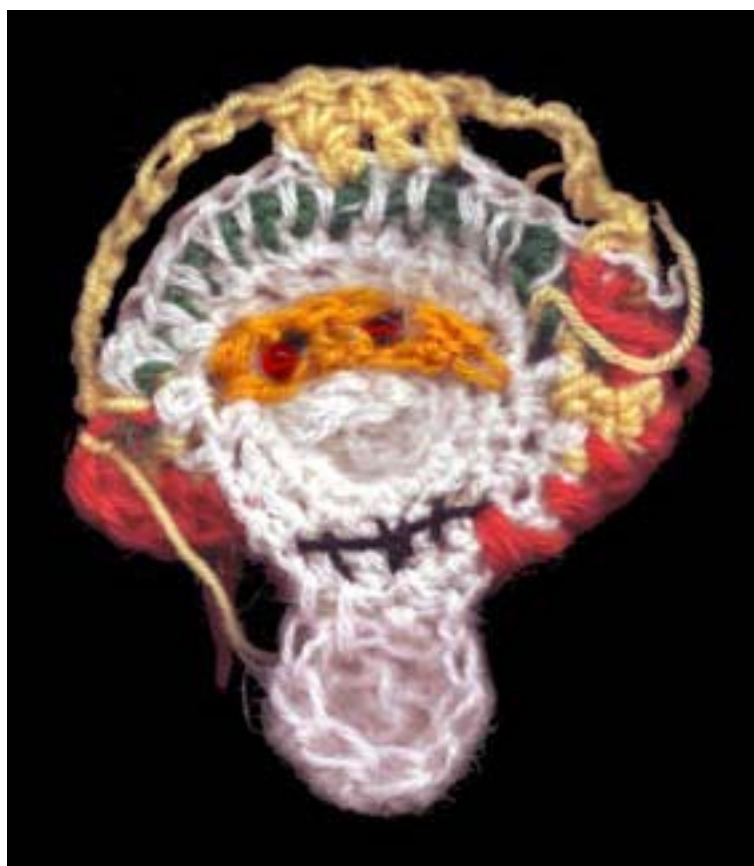
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One of a series of 'Masks' – prize-winning sculpture exhibit by Stephan Goldrajch: 2006 Global Events, Heysel, Brussels

Stephan Goldrajch (see *Newsletter* No.13, page 8) recently announced his dyslexia to his tutors at the Cambre College of Visual Arts in Belgium where he is studying. He found his tutors, who had no prior knowledge of dyslexia, understanding and supportive. This represents a breakthrough. In Belgium no official provision is made for dyslexic learners after the age of 12. Stephan has been praised for his 'exceptional' artwork.

### Partnering with UNESCO to reach a wider audience

UNESCO is organising the online Literacy Portal for the United Nations Decade of Literacy 2003–2012. By invitation of the Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, D-I-T-T has submitted information on dyslexia based on reliable research and experience. This information went live on the Literacy Portal in June (see here – the full Web address is: [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.phpURL\\_ID=48952&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.phpURL_ID=48952&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)).

D-I-T-T is now collaborating with all parties concerned to inform ministries of education of the facts about dyslexia and offer positive proposals for dealing with it. Organisations and researchers are working towards creating better life opportunities through adapted teaching and an increased understanding of dyslexia, its social implications and how it can be managed.



D-I-T-T and associates look forward to the opportunity of organising a conference on dyslexia, literacy and inclusion that would have far-reaching and sustainable effects. To obtain the support and advice of UNESCO, a delegation from D-I-T-T met the head of the Inclusion Unit at UNESCO Paris, Kenneth Eklindh. Whilst the value of holding a conference was recognised, D-I-T-T board member, Gabriel Bara, speculated on the benefits of holding a conference without preparatory stages in place.

‘The whole principle of repeated conferences on education seems to be at stake because of their high costs and relative lack of efficiency,’ he said. ‘I think the problem with conferences is that they are supposed to be a starting point for something new: reforms, concepts, recommendations, special theme promotion. Whenever there is an issue, a conference is set up. Then people attend it, go back home, and very few things actually change. People may be attentive to the fine speeches, but the chances of implementing the ideas expressed in them can be slim where they are remote from everyday routine in the participant’s country or organisation.

‘Conferences have a greater chance of succeeding if they are the final step of an initiative.

‘For example, if education teams were informed of a new perspective and for the next few years they were to

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gather documentation, try out new practices, and write reports or articles on this new way of tackling the problem, then a 'final' meeting would take on a special importance. Attendees at such a conference would have been put in a position of making a valuable contribution – they would have much to share (successes, failures, good practices etc.) and much to learn. A rich global exchange forum could be created.'

Bara also emphasised the important role that organisers play in motivating, animating and encouraging participants. 'I'm sure if you told teaching teams in the bush or in rich cities to work on such-and-such a brief and that whatever they produced would be shared, and you had teachers worldwide sharing with you on the same subject, it would be a huge incentive, and you'd have self-motivation and involvement,' he said.

'Teachers, schools inspectors, pedagogical researchers or education ministries should also be involved in the experiment, because the whole hierarchy is *de facto* a stakeholder in all educational processes. Both rich and poor countries need to introduce new ideas into their teaching if the interests of children not served by current teaching methods are to be met – so that they too can succeed like the others.'

At a later meeting with the director of the UNESCO Literacy Portal and at a further meeting with the UK delegation, D·I·T·T representatives discussed four practical initiatives for promoting literacy in the dyslexic sector:

- Setting up and coordinating a 'dyslexia consultancy e-team' – a panel of international experts and researchers recognised world-wide. The team would be headed by the D·I·T·T Scientific Advisory Committee, listed on the D·I·T·T Web site [www.ditt-online.org](http://www.ditt-online.org), which is connected to the UNESCO Literacy Portal. Members of this team would put forward agreed position papers to UNESCO detailing how dyslexia might be best dealt with at statutory and non-statutory levels. Team members would express their own individual views only when consulted in their own right.
- Creating an electronic directory of the more than 190 member countries of UNESCO, which will give contacts for ministerial, academic, professional, local support and any other organisations that provide appropriate education and support to dyslexic learners.

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- Forwarding a recommendation to the UNESCO Executive Board that D·I·T·T become an affiliated NGO. D·I·T·T has already received a recommendation by UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Her Royal Highness Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, addressed to the UNESCO Director General.
  - Planning a summit conference/colloquium – an international festival of findings on the topic of literacy, dyslexia and inclusion harvested throughout the five UNESCO-designated regions: Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America & the Caribbean, and Europe & North America.

## D·I·T·T and film making

### Talking pictures

Training films can be a highly effective way of communicating ideas and sharing good practices. Pictures and sound-bites are likely to live on in the mind.

For this reason, D·I·T·T decided to build on the experience of the eight-month pilot project on ICT for dyslexic learners, 'Unlocking dyslexic potential', run by D·I·T·T as part of the Microsoft 'Unlimited Potential' programme.

D·I·T·T board member and film director, Christopher James Ian, is currently finalising the storyboard for the film that will cover the latest approaches and technologies that have been proven to help dyslexic learners. The film is being developed in collaboration with the audio-visual department of the European Commission. Judith Stansfield, ICT and special education expert and member of the British Dyslexia Association Computer Committee, is a consultant on the project. Judith has acted as consultant on previous D·I·T·T projects and her PowerPoint presentation is available from the D·I·T·T Web site [www.ditt-online.org](http://www.ditt-online.org).

The new film will initially be offered to local television networks. Later it will be made available for free on the D·I·T·T Web site where other free films are already available.

One of these is *Language Shock – Dyslexia across Cultures*, which was produced by the BBC and shown on BBC2 in 2000, and is still popularly used to raise awareness. It

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features three dyslexic learners who speak about their experiences. They are young people who live in an international environment, coping with new cultures and having to learn to speak, read and write in new languages besides managing their learning deficits.

Professor Porpodas' short film, 'Dyslexia and Diagnosis', is also available free at [www.ditt-online.org](http://www.ditt-online.org) under 'Lectures and Workshops'.

The latest film, now at the planning stage will cover assessment procedures and will include a sequence on how to use D·I·T·T's latest educational tool, the CD-ROM *Tintin helps dyslexic learners*, and its linked Web site [www.ToSuccess.org](http://www.ToSuccess.org).

Further filming is planned on a wide international scale to share the broadest range of good practice possible. It is intended that this should coincide with the organisation of a proposed UNESCO-supported international conference. (See above)

### **What goes around, comes around**

Ten years ago, Irene Menegoi Buzzi wrote about young people with specific educational needs in the journal, *Context*: 'Each country has its own philosophy and practices for the education of pupils with specific educational needs and capacities. These are captured in legislation and national, regional and school policies and in the every day practices and materials used by teachers. They are reflected in their newspapers, educational journals and parental communications.'

But it is vital now, with increased global communications, to share examples of good practice in order for agreements to be reached on how best to improve the situation of dyslexic learners. Still, their life chances remain poor. Dyslexia is still not widely understood, and is therefore still not properly addressed. D·I·T·T's latest film will set out to spread the word and demonstrate what can be done.

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## D·I·T·T in Africa



Dr Daniel Ofori of Accra University, a D·I·T·T member and former project manager, was our elected representative at the first e-learning conference in Africa, held at Addis Ababa, in May. More than 800 delegates attended.

According to Dr Ofori, delegates were very enthusiastic about the new teaching methods that were discussed. 'Conference participants that I spoke to were open and receptive to the idea of trying out new e-learning tools in new ways and to technologies and tools that offer improved access to people who learn differently too,' he said.

'Delegates involved in frontline education, as well as those involved at the policy level were equally receptive. But the fact that only one paper out of the more than 200 presented addressed the learning needs of people with some sort of learning disability attests to the enormous scale of the needs still waiting to be addressed. Clearly the needs of people with learning difficulties are not receiving anything like sufficient attention from the relevant authorities, and their academic development continues to suffer.'

Although free evaluation copies of the Tintin educational CD-ROMS for the conference delegates were delivered to Addis Ababa on time – thanks again to our generous sponsors, DHL – they were nevertheless held up in customs. D·I·T·T has now proposed that these copies should go to schools that will most benefit from them, at

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the discretion of the Minister of Capacity Building, Mr Tefera Walwa.

On D·I·T·T's further suggestion, conference organisers at ICWE, the international group that focuses on education and training, have now written to ask delegates if they would like to receive a free copy. D·I·T·T has received more than 50 requests to date. The *Tintin helps dyslexic learners* evaluation copies are being sent to all parts of Africa. The offer remains open until the end of September.

In a letter to D·I·T·T, Dr Ofori wrote:

This conference afforded me the opportunity of learning about e-learning and how e-tools can be cascaded in education and research. Specific contacts I made could now lead to:

- training opportunities on how to design and develop e-learning course content for tertiary education with support from the World Bank Institute;
- training opportunities on how to deliver e-learning course content for tertiary education within an African context;
- an introduction to European Research Developments in the Service of African Technology-Enhanced Learning, with the possibility of developing research proposals and applying for European Commission support as early as 2007, targeting
  - support for research and education networking in Ghana
  - e-learning for sustainable development, and
  - teacher training initiatives in Ghana.



Dr Ofori, who was selected for this year's Marcelle Napier Award, was thanked by the organisers for his active participation 'thereby ensuring its success as an enriching and positive experience.'

The post-conference report can be found here – the full Web address is:

[http://www.elearning-africa.com/pdf/report/postreport\\_eLA2006.pdf](http://www.elearning-africa.com/pdf/report/postreport_eLA2006.pdf)

For pictures see:

[http://www.elearning-africa.com/press\\_gallery.php](http://www.elearning-africa.com/press_gallery.php)

Dates are now being set for next year's conference – to take place in Kenya – by the efficient organising body, ICWA, based in Berlin.

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## Profile – Christopher Ian



An architect of many of D·I·T·T's successful events in recent years, Chris has used his wide-ranging talents to help others who also have dyslexia – those that march to the beat of a different drum, you could say.

Filmmaker, writer, producer...in short, polymath, Christopher Ian has been a valuable addition to the D·I·T·T team since its early days six years ago. Chris's own history of dyslexia is a little longer. However, he wasn't diagnosed with the condition until relatively late in life.

Like many people of his generation (Chris is 61), unaware that he was dyslexic, Chris simply believed that he had to work harder than everyone else. As a radio presenter, his problems with spelling weren't so difficult to overcome. He could always get someone to check his scripts, or he could simply write what he felt comfortable speaking.

It was only after several years of living in Belgium that Chris began to believe that his way of learning French contrasted with the normal way of learning. Chris was troubled by his need to translate every word he heard in French into his native English in order to comprehend what was being said. After going to see a language therapist and taking tests, he discovered that dyslexia was the reason.

Chris has always known that it was necessary for him to make notes in order to keep vital appointments and remember to do things, but his understanding that some of his difficulties related to dyslexia has now given him a new perspective on his life.

As we report in this newsletter, D·I·T·T is producing a new training video, which Chris speaks about with infectious enthusiasm. He is particularly pleased that Richard Branson, a fellow dyslexic learner, has given permission to shoot some scenes of the film on one of his Virgin trains.

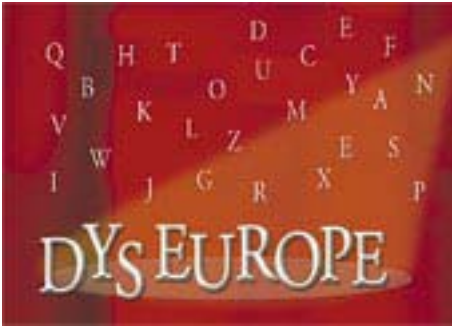
Chris has been working for some time on the first volume of his autobiography. His story is certainly one worth telling. In the 1960s Chris was a part of the Cambridge music scene that produced Pink Floyd. As a drummer, Chris played with many of the chief performers of the period and was a friend of Pink Floyd guitarist, David Gilmore.

One of his many passions is architecture, and Chris takes great interest in the house in Antwerp where he lives.

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## What works

### DYSEUROPE



[www.dyseurope.com](http://www.dyseurope.com) – the new site to visit without fail!

Scrupulous care has gone into this major achievement by the mother of a dyslexic young learner. Since 1999, Marlène Merlivat has worked on English, French and German versions of a Dutch method launched in 1965 by psycholinguistics specialist Dr de Haan. The method has enjoyed phenomenal success.

A full report and review of a course, designed in the first place to assist dyslexic learners, will appear in the next *Newsletter* (Autumn 2006).

### What did you say about phonics?

Philippa Bodien of the SENCO forum shared her views:

‘Not all phonics advocates disagree with sight vocabulary as a concept....

About 75% of English words can be decoded phonically. Some most definitely cannot be so decoded or spelled, such as ‘said’ and ‘does’ – both every-day words necessary early on in the reading process.

Phonics are a means to the end goal, which is a fluent sight vocabulary – similar to Frith’s three- stage model of the acquisition of reading, from logographic (gross cues – such as first letter or word shape) to alphabetic (phonics) to orthographic (sight vocabulary).

Children need to be taught high-frequency words that are both phonically regular and irregular. Synthetic phonics teaching does not exclude this approach; a Scottish study taught sight words as well as phonics. Their publication *Fast Phonics First* describes their teaching in detail (see <http://www.phonicsteaching.com>) .

### Choice exhibits

Allison Elliott, who is dyslexic herself, has selected the following items collected at the British Education and Technology show this year, :

- MathBase (helpful and simple to understand)  
[www.mathsproject.com](http://www.mathsproject.com)
- Multi demo CD, Primary Ages (computerised screening and assessment for dyslexia, learning needs, ability,

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baseline and memory training)  
[www.lucid-research.com/freedemo](http://www.lucid-research.com/freedemo)

- Number Shark 3 (41 games for innumeracy – useful and colourful)  
[www.simonmidgley.co.uk/software/numeracy/numbershark](http://www.simonmidgley.co.uk/software/numeracy/numbershark)
- Word Shark 3 (37 games for word recognition and spelling – the directions are easy to follow and there are numerous word games to do)  
[www.wordshark.co.uk](http://www.wordshark.co.uk)
- RosettaStone (Language Learning Success – not only does it help you speak in your chosen language but also helps you read and write)  
<http://www.rosettastone.com/en/individuals/demo>
- <http://www.mobygames.com/game/super-solvers-spellbound> (a great way to learn how to spell – it’s fun and entertaining and by the end of the game you are surprised at how many words you know how to spell!)
- Recent publications for school education  
[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school\\_education/publications\\_resources/default.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/default.htm)
- Educational software in general  
<http://www.simonmidgley.co.uk/software/index.html>
- Chart that helps you determine your learning styles  
<http://www.chaminade.org/inspire/learnstl.htm>
- Learning Style Test:  
<http://www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm>

and for Teachers

- Tutor2u (for economics and politics, business and English) [www.tutor2u.com](http://www.tutor2u.com)

## **New review**

D·I·T·T has invited Dr Steve Chinn to review the following for our next newsletter:

- *Flying with Shapes – Everything about shapes for years up to 8*
- *Flying with Fractions – Everything about fractions for years 4 to 10*
- *Flying with Factorisation – Everything about factorisation for years 7 to 11*

A summary of the evaluations done by Worcestershire schools is available.

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## **Touch-type Read and Spell**

A computer-based course for children and adults who have spelling and reading difficulties, visual impairment, hearing impairment or other learning/behavioural difficulties: <http://www.ttrs.co.uk/>

## **And of course the D-I-T-T Web site – YES!**

Here you can find films, a PowerPoint presentation on tools that assist the learner and more, by leading experts – a heady mix!

## **Tintin offers hope and help**

To a dyslexic child saying 'Why me? I know I'm not stupid!' while trying to bolster up a fast-diminishing sense of self-worth that can be just as problematic as the dyslexia itself, Tintin offers a ray of hope by presenting positive role models and by providing positive feedback on how to gain control over how best to learn.

*Tintin helps dyslexic learners* might well be recommended by every reader of this *Newsletter* that wants to help see young learners succeed.

Be sure to spread the word to everyone you know. The D-I-T-T Web site, [www.ditt-online.org](http://www.ditt-online.org), offers a PowerPoint presentation in English, French and German.

Feedback is welcome. We received the following comments from Stadt Heidenheim in Germany recently:

'Our 17-year-old dyslexic pupils have already successfully worked with the *Tintin helps dyslexic learners* educational tool. They consider the CD-ROM an excellent and valuable tool to support them in their learning. We congratulate you on having produced this very innovative e-learning resource.'

## ***Understanding dyslexia – a guide for schools* CD & DVD by Alan Sayles**

Pauline Cogan, D-I-T-T Honorary Board Member, highly recommends this new product. She writes:

'This is an excellent and essential tool for all teachers, be they mainstream or teachers of special education. Alan presents the information about dyslexia and its educational management in a clear and comprehensive way. It is a rich source of information for teachers and parents. It has been made freely available to all Irish schools where it has been most warmly received.'

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## Coming up

Look out for reviews of the educational CD made by teacher Mgr Miloslav Adam – teacher from the Czech Republic – in our next *Newsletter*.

## Announcements

### D-I-T-T pays tribute

The untimely death of Geoff Grant of the Dyslexia Action organisation has deeply affected all who knew him. D-I-T-T members offer their condolences to his family and friends, remembering a man of remarkable cheerfulness and whose commitment to promoting the interests of dyslexic learners was outstanding.

### Michiels online

Teun Michiels, D-I-T-T musical ambassador, invites us to visit his Web site to keep up-to-date with his lively musical calendar as singer, carillonneur and writer of songs: [www.teunmichiels.be](http://www.teunmichiels.be).

### Gala concert in aid of D-I-T-T

A Gala Charity Concert for D-I-T-T – ‘Poetic Portals’ – will be held in Brussels at the Conservatoire Royale on 18 March next year. The event, which will be choreographed by Luc Louis de Lairesse, will feature opera, dance, music, acting and design. Performers include the ballerina, Susan Jaffe, soprano Marina Poplavskaya, pianists Severin von Eckardstein and Lily Maisky, violinist Alexander Maisky and alto Luis de Kevhen Godinho.

It was Peter Horemans, D-I-T-T Treasurer who first introduced Luc. Both have given generously of their time and energies towards planning this event.

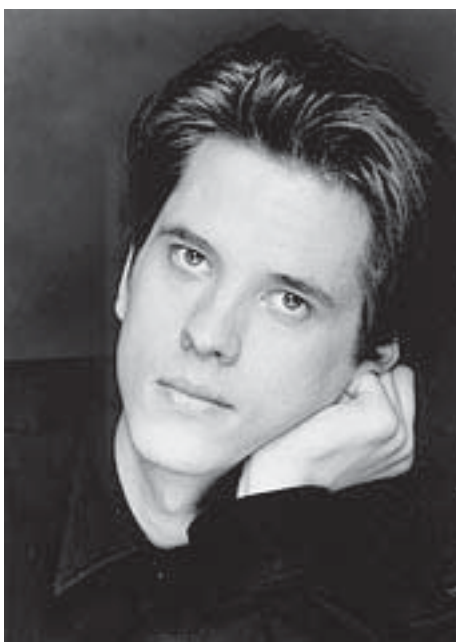
### D-I-T-T Annual Open Forum 2006

The 2006 Forum will take place in Brussels on Saturday 30 September. Reserve in advance at [admin@ditt-online.org](mailto:admin@ditt-online.org)

This year D-I-T-T has invited two distinguished guest speakers: Professor Chris Singleton of Lucid Assessments, who will explain the procedures and rationale for



Luc Louis de Lairesse



Severin von Eckardstein

assessing dyslexia on line, and Dr Duncan Milne, New Zealand neuropsychologist, author of *Teaching the Brain to Read*. Dr Milne will address some of the big questions: How does the brain learn to read? What are the best techniques for teaching the brain to read? Why do some brains have problems learning to read?

For further details, please go to [www.ditt-online.org](http://www.ditt-online.org), D·I·T·T Newsletter No.22 pages 7–8.

## Money matters

As part of a three-year campaign of promotional activities – to include media, conferences, arts events and publications – to increase public awareness and provide essential core funding to the organisation, D·I·T·T has asked 100 top local Belgian companies for their support. Instructions for making donations and tax-deductible gifts can be found from our home page: [www.ditt-online.org](http://www.ditt-online.org). Please give generously to support the projects listed on page 7 of the Annual Report.

## Reflections

Danielle Gurion, a clinical child psychologist, wrote in 1998:

‘I think you are right in presenting dyslexia as a language deficit rather than a reading deficit – the current conceptualisation. There is, however, an additional aspect to the relationship with culture that you may or may not have included. It is not just the question of cultural difference in values which presents a problem. Since dyslexia is a language problem, i.e. a communication problem, and since communication is basic to the accurate reading of environmental cues (particularly in interpersonal relationships, for example: gestures, facial expression, body language) culture change really takes a toll on the dyslexic child.

‘Reading interpersonal cues is basically the reading of symbols and those symbols change from one culture to another – it is like reading a new language. Dyslexic children have difficulty reading cues in their own culture. This is where their poor social skills come from.’



The D·I·T·T *Annual Report 2005 – forward as one* is now on the Web site: <http://www.ditt-online.org/About.htm>

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## **An inside view**

Dyslexic teenager, Adam Dray, once said, 'If somebody were to ask me what it's like being dyslexic, I would be unable to answer because I have always been dyslexic, and so I have no basis on which to make a fair comparison. Lots of people use the label dyslexia and think they know what it is – difficulty with reading and writing. But it's much more for me. I had problems with co-ordination. I couldn't catch a ball or kick a football in the right direction. I also had to have lots of speech therapy when I was younger and sometimes now my words run into each other and people can get impatient. I have difficulties getting things in the right order. I still do a bit now – especially with my speech.

It's all of those things but for me it feels like I have a different way of thinking and this way of thinking creates all sorts of problems in most areas of my life. People think in different ways, and one of these many different ways is dyslexia.

I came through my crisis. I now feel really confident. I understand my dyslexia and its limitations and advantages and it does not worry me any more.'

## **It's in the numbers**

In Belgium about a million children and teenagers attend school.

If 4% of them have dyslexia to some degree, then that makes a group of 40,000 children and teenagers.

If 30% of these are gifted (that is have an IQ of well above 125) then there is group of 12,000. And if just 10% of those belonging to this group are unrecognised as dyslexic, then that leaves 1200 children. (Quote from Johan Schepens, Belgian teacher.)

## **Dyslexic giftedness?**

D·I·T·T board member Gudrun Dziallas recommends the following article that shows how the superior visual abilities that are often associated with dyslexia give an advantage in the field of radiology:

[http://www.ecr.org/media/download/History\\_and\\_Disease\\_040306.pdf](http://www.ecr.org/media/download/History_and_Disease_040306.pdf)

D·I·T·T invites your articles and comments – please send these to D·I·T·T marked for the attention of Jon Eldridge, editor.

Thank you.

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*Newsletter edited by Jon Eldridge,  
designed by Pauline Key-Kairis*