



Newsletter

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Dyslexia – on the right track



By courtesy of Virgin Trains

As crucial consultation continues, D-I-T-T invites your views on its new film *Dyslexia – on the right track*, and on planning for a first world conference on dyslexia at UNESCO.

At this year’s BETT show in London, D-I-T-T representatives used a questionnaire to take soundings from dyslexic learners, teachers, parents and providers on key factors to be addressed in its two latest initiatives:

- setting up a first world conference on dyslexia at UNESCO, which recently granted D-I-T-T operational relations status
- the production of the film, *Dyslexia – on the Right Track*, which will be featured at the conference.

The D-I-T-T stand at the BETT show attracted many local and international visitors



Visitors to the stand were asked:

If you were organising a conference or making a film to inform the public and promote support for dyslexic learners, which of the following would you see as priority topics?

Please tick **three** of the following boxes:

- research into root causes
- diagnosis
- improving teacher training and awareness
- technological tools
- changing the attitudes of employers
- involving ministries of education authorities

Further comments and suggestions were invited.

Responses were received from 218 people as follows:

- improving teacher training and awareness – 176
- diagnosis – 146
- technological tools – 119
- research into root causes – 77
- changing the attitudes of employers – 72
- involving ministries of education – 54

Priority topics

Identifiers for early recognition of dyslexia, and including dyslexic students wherever possible in mainstream schooling, were also considered important.

Dr Harry Chasty, an international consultant in learning abilities and disabilities, shared this view on inclusion. Speaking at the European Parliament in 1994, he said: '90% of dyslexic learners can be taught in the mainstream classroom if teachers are properly trained to identify and know how to respond to their learning needs.'

D·I·T·T will address all the topics in the questionnaire in the proposed international conference and film that will provide an occasion to reach ministries of education worldwide – see D·I·T·T at the Literacy Portal on the UNESCO website:

http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=48952&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Addressing the teacher-training issue

D·I·T·T e-consultancy team member Susan van Alsenoy, Learning Support Consultant, Chair of the Educational Support Committee, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO) (s.van.alsenoy@pandora.be) submitted news of her two-year project to access best teaching practices employed around the world to aid mainstream teachers in educating their LD (learning differently) students. These teachers could be working at pre-school, kindergarten, elementary, high school or university level.

In keeping with its mission statement 'to contribute actively to the global community with specific focus on education, the natural and human environment, multicultural understanding and international goodwill,' the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas Educational Support Committee (ESC) initiated a project paper – intentionally brief for use by busy teachers. However, all the strategies considered in the study, plus links to additional resources, can be found at <http://studentswholearn.fawco.org>.

The project has been translated into Arabic, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Norwegian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Thai, and Vietnamese. More translations are expected and indeed invited.

Fully accredited teacher training programmes in teaching dyslexic learners are organised by Dyslexia Action, which runs distance learning courses in more than 70 countries round the world. For more information, visit <http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/>

In Europe, the European Dyslexia Association promotes *Dystrain*, inspired by Ian Smythe, also a member of the D·I·T·T Dyslexia Consultancy e-Team. Visit <http://www.dyslexia.eu.com/news/eda2006a.pdf> or <http://www.wdnf.info/cvis.html>

Another useful resource: <http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/making-schools-dyslexia-friendly-102>

The needs of the adult dyslexic sector

D·I·T·T's team at BETT was taken aback by the number of stories it heard of children not receiving the provision they need even after being assessed. Reasons reported ranged from lack of funding and the long wait for an assessment to the overwhelming needs of the adult dyslexic sector looking for help.

Contact with the Adult Dyslexia Association was recommended – see *D·I·T·T Newsletter No.11 Spring 2003* and <http://www.ufi.com/dyslexia> where help of all kinds can be found.

Tintin and Snowy to the rescue

Once again the functions and virtues of the Tintin CD-ROM were demonstrated – the valuable D·I·T·T educational tool designed to bring hope and help to the dyslexic learner at the stage where loss of self-worth looms large. Key features of the CD-ROM include:

- games of self-discovery that reward the user with up to 10 pages of print-out on his or her learning style in only 40 minutes
- learners being put in control as they systematically respond to 20 questions in five games with Tintin
- opportunities for learners to discuss their responses with an accompanying mentor
- more than 40 information pages on key topics on dyslexia in the bookcase in the Main Hall. (These can be printed out once the CD is loaded onto the hard disc.)



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- customisation of the background colour to the user's liking
 - a map to guide users so they always know where they are
 - clues to discover Professor Calculus' hiding place in a notebook with the user's name on it
 - the possibility of resuming games the next time the computer is switched on
 - links to tools and technologies that dyslexic learners and their mentors have identified as useful at www.ToSuccess.org – Success Self-Service.

Attitudes of employers towards dyslexia

For those concerned about the attitudes of employers towards dyslexia, D·I·T·T recommends the 'training days' run by the Dyslexia Assessment and Consultancy at the Dyslexia Teaching Centre in London. They write:

'There is increasing awareness of the need to support adults with dyslexia who are in employment, and also employers with little knowledge, but often little is known about what is needed or how to provide appropriate support. 'Dyslexia in the Workplace' training days aim to fill this gap. Using case studies to illustrate, they cover the key knowledge and skill areas needed for providing support. Information and guidance are given on important workplace topics such as the Disability Discrimination Act and its implications; the cultures and trends at work that particularly impact on those with dyslexia; identification, assessment and the question of whether or not to disclose dyslexia; possible interventions and support at various levels from the individual up to the whole organisation; effective IT support, and funding and access to work.

These seminars are highly recommended by former participants and more are planned for 2007, including several specific training days for employers. Also scheduled are:

Dyslexia assessment and identification of other Specific Learning Difficulties with particular reference to assessment in higher education – training days designed for the specialist teacher or psychologist wishing to follow new government guidelines on assessment in the UK. They are an opportunity to explore key aspects of adult assessment and to learn about tests and assessment tools. Topics covered include understanding the different

diagnostic labels, the responsibilities of assessment, recommended tests, how to interpret different patterns of scores, and the skill of writing effective and clear reports with useful recommendations.

The training days are run in London by Brenda Allan and Katherine Kindersley, Directors of Dyslexia Assessment and Consultancy. E-mail: info@workingwithdyslexia.com.

Conferences

UNESCO

Pictured right: Alic Merlivat – speaking out for dyslexic learners, Diane Hunter, putting the case for parents of dyslexic young people, Sue Flohr, consultant and helpline organizer for the BDA, D·I·T·T Honorary Board Member Jay Johnston – former development executive for BBC education, and Judith Sanson, D·I·T·T Executive Director.



D·I·T·T gained operational relations status at UNESCO on 17 October 2006 and subsequently arranged to meet staff at the UNESCO Education Department.

At a second meeting at UNESCO on 8 December 2006, Karin Brunger of the European Dyslexia Association joined D·I·T·T representatives.

'Human dignity' was the subject of a series of presentations and workshops on the NGOs' International Day in December at the Paris headquarters of UNESCO.

While the speakers approached the term from differing perspectives, they affirmed a belief in the importance of respecting the dignity of every human being and the need to work towards incorporating human dignity into every aspect of daily life.

With reference to the role of NGOs, Andreas Lakatos,

president of the NGO committee of the executive board at UNESCO, said: 'We are searching for further possibilities for developing the partnerships that are necessary for implementing our objectives [of promoting human dignity].'

The morning's speakers included two academics: Giovanni Filoramo, an historian at University of Turin, and Joseph Yacoub, a political scientist at the Catholic University and Institute of Human Rights in Lyon. Filoramo gave an overview of how concepts of respect for human life and dignity have emerged out of religious perspectives and cultural movements. He quoted Simone Weil's famous 'obligation' that we have not to let each other suffer.

During the afternoon three workshops were held that explored human dignity in terms of physical identity, its cultural dimension and its social dimension.

Other conferences

Conferences where D·I·T·T was represented by delegates and members included:

The International Dyslexia Association 57th Annual Conference

About 2,000 delegates attended the three-day IDA conference, held in the large modern Convention Center close to the State Capitol complex in Indianapolis, Indiana, 8–11 November 2006. Co-founder of D·I·T·T and a member of the board of directors, Ron Baker, attended all evening and daytime plenary sessions and two lectures. He also visited each of the 112 exhibitor's booths to interview participants. He made person-to-person contacts and gave verbal presentations of the CD-ROM *The Mystery of the Lost Letters*.

Thirty-four selected participants agreed to review the CD-ROM and complete the evaluation questionnaire. The concept of the CD-ROM was enthusiastically received by everyone though some had no immediate need for such a tool. Ron wrote: 'We also made an excellent contact with Pamela Johnson, Ph.D., vice president of TV/Radio Station WNEB in Buffalo, New York. WNEB have created a high-class, 58-minute DVD (see 'What Works' on page 11) similar in style to our BBC TV broadcast presentation. This was made with a \$500,000 grant from the Arrison Family Foundation.'

12th Online Educa Berlin



The conference exhibition area

D·I·T·T Board Members Gudrun and Rolf Dziallas set up a stand at the Hotel InterContinental, where the Educa Berlin conference took place towards the end of 2006: 29 November – 1 December.

This event is one of the world's largest international conferences on technology-supported learning and training. With high-level attendees from education, business and government – the three key areas driving e-learning adoption and innovation – representing 92 countries, it is a most important networking venue for experts, practitioners and newcomers from all over the world.

The conference was supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the European Commission (Directorate General, Education and Culture), and was organised by ICWE, who organised the e-learning conference at Addis Ababa in Africa in May, which was attended by D·I·T·T member Dr Daniel Ofori.

During the three days of the exhibition, Gudrun and Rolf Dziallas were able to demonstrate 'best practice for dyslexic learners' using the CD-ROM, *The Mystery of the Lost Letters*, to many visitors from around the world. The picture of Tintin and the beautiful colours of the program and, of course, Castafiora's thrilling singing attracted even those with no prior interest in dyslexia.

On Friday evening, Gudrun gave a new PowerPoint presentation for D·I·T·T entitled 'Computer, Internet and Dyslexia – best practice for those who fail with traditional teaching methods'. The chairperson for this session, Dr Paula Morais from Portugal, is dedicated to developing innovative ideas and runs Learn4U (www.learn4u.com.pt). She has a dyslexic child herself and was especially interested in D·I·T·T's activities.

According to the EU's Lisbon Agenda, learning and training should be equally accessible for all, but the 'one-size-fits-all' model is not suitable. 'Inclusivity' incorporates the idea that every individual has unique needs and preferences, and this concept is particularly applicable to learning and training. The European Commission supports several activities that promote inclusivity and has developed policies and strategies to fulfil the goal of the 2000 Lisbon Agenda.

At the reception one grateful dyslexic man, after hearing about the Tintin project designed to help dyslexic learners, shouted over the loud music a sentence which Gudrun suggests should be passed on to all our sponsors, supporters and colleagues at D·I·T·T with a big thank you: 'You are doing God's work!'

More recently, Gudrun and Rolf gave a presentation at a two-day information session at the European Commission.

Médialexie

On Saturday 13 January D·I·T·T member Diane Hunt went to a presentation of interesting new software including voice-dictation programmes and user-friendly tools. The presentation also showcased new spell checkers that are able to correct strange spellings and can be adapted to the user's special needs.

Also at the event, the Director of Collège Sainte Thérèse, Bougival gave a presentation of how he had used Médialexie. He has just opened a class for dyslexics and is trying it out as a pilot project. He says that his pupils are motivated and relieved to have found this kind of help.

Currently available in French (see www.medialexie.com), an English version of the Médialexie software will be available soon.

Profile – one in ten



It's official: working for D·I·T·T can help open doors.

For the past six years, Allison Lech-Bielinsky, 21, has worked as a volunteer at the D·I·T·T HQ, just off Brussels' bustling Avenue Louise, and this experience helped her gain a place on her current two-year advertising diploma course.

While continuing to help out two mornings a week, Allison is successfully pursuing her goal in spite of her dyslexia that caused her to fall behind in school – and in spite of being told that she would never pass her third-year at high school. 'The course is easier for me than it was at high school because all the classes are related to the one subject, and I'm more motivated,' she says.

Allison is also thriving on the more 'participatory' approach to teaching that the diploma course takes – she is required to give presentations and make contribution in class – compared with high school, which she says was a passive experience. She also says she needs to work harder, however, and sets herself advanced targets for completing assignments in order to meet deadlines. 'If I want to do well, I know I have to put in more time [than other, non-dyslexic, students],' she says. 'Sometimes it seems unfair, but I know that's what I have to do.'

In fact, dyslexia isn't the only difficulty that Allison is facing up to. Though she was born in Belgium, she spoke English at home with her Australian mother and Polish father before moving to England and then the USA. Moving back to Belgium seven years ago entailed learning a new language, one that she says she has had to work very hard to master. The advertising course is in French, and while she says that it's no great barrier now, it was difficult to take classes in a foreign language when she first moved to the country. 'Having to learn to write in a second or third language can often be the final trip-wire for the dyslexic learner' say D·I·T·T helpline staff.

Allison says that reading has never been a major problem for her and, encouraged by her mother, she began reading at the age of three. Problems with grasping concepts following directions and other common difficulties associated with dyslexia, however, led her mother to suspect that she might be dyslexic. Typically, her teachers at school thought that she was lazy, but she has shown great motivation to pursue her studies. After the course, she says she may move to London, where possessing a second language (French) may be seen as more of an unusual asset.

What works



'Demystifying Dyslexia'

A DVD produced by WNED with Arrison Family funding, (\$500,000) has been sent to D·I·T·T for evaluation. For more information, visit <http://thinkbright.org/dyslexia/default.asp>

Afaya-Pen

Please test this product and let us know your views: Afaya-Pen at <http://www.afaya.com.tw>

Read-e

Feedback is also welcome for the downloadable program on <http://www.Read-e.com> or send your views to the product's owner: Phil Teare, Read-e, Curriculum Online Registered Content Provider, Tel: 0800 8496760 (UK) or 01144 208 4452871 (US).

Announcements

Dr Duncan Milne's presentation, European Parliament, autumn 2006, will be available from the D·I·T·T website shortly.

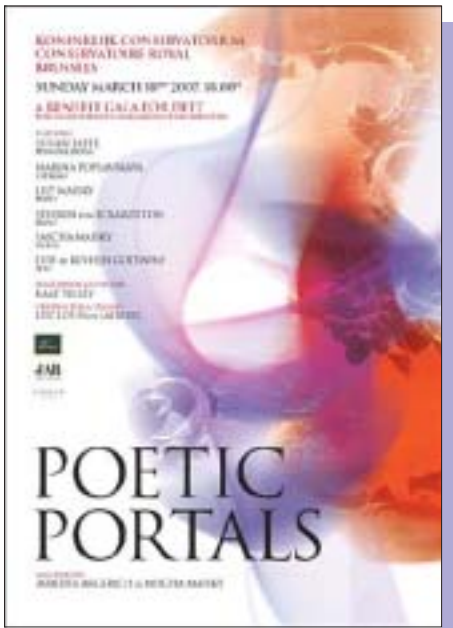
The assessment tools by Lucid Research, described by Dr Chris Singleton on the same occasion may already be viewed from the D·I·T·T website.

See www.ditt-online.org

Dr Duncan Milne educational neuropsychologist has agreed to join D·I·T·T as an honorary board member. Duncan, who was profiled in our last *Newsletter*, is the author of *Teaching the Brain to Read*, a teacher-friendly version of his PhD in education and psychology. He studied at the University of Auckland, New Zealand and the Brain Research Institute, Australia.

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

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



Please take note!

On Sunday 18 March at 6.00 pm: 'Poetic Portals', a gala benefit, will be held at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles, 30 rue de la Régence, 1000 Brussels.

The programme embraces opera, piano, cello, dance, poetry readings and the acting out of poetry never before performed. International stars taking part include prize-winning soprano Marina Poplavskaya (winner of the 2005 Maria Callas prize), Severin Von Eckardstein and other remarkable young artists: Lily Maisky (piano) and Sascha Maisky (violin), children of the renowned cellist Mischa Maisky, alongside counter tenor Luis de Kheven Godinho and two exceptional accompanists, Richard Hetherington and David Miller, known respectively at Covent Garden in London and La Monnaie in Brussels.

Véronique Liévin, leading ballerina of the Royal Ballet of Flanders and highly regarded choreographer and opera producer Ivan Putrov take part in this glittering constellation of brilliant artists.

International choreographer, Luc Louis de Lairesse, will illustrate his poetry in dance and music with Kajienki, who studied at the Juilliard School of Music.

Here is an evening of promise and excitement that unites all the arts in one splendid bonanza.

Tickets for sponsors include dinner at the Conrad Hotel. To reserve, telephone or fax 02 537 7066 or e-mail dittevents@gmail.com

As of 1 February 2007, tickets will be on sale at €60, €40 and €20 at

- Waterstone's, The English Bookshop
Bvd. Adolphe Max 71-75, 1000 Brussels
Monday to Saturday: 10.30–18.00
Telephone 02 219 2708 or fax 02 209 0430
- FNAC Brussels – visit www.fnac.be or telephone 0900 00600

The Interchange Institute's training of trainers program

'Crossing Cultures with Competence' provides teaching on how to put together an effective host country overview, how to explain core cultural differences in attitudes and values, and how to help people understand the family and individual challenges they face when moving to a new country. The training is designed for:

- Trainers and coaches wanting to acquire cross-cultural skills
- Human Resources managers wanting to ease global employees' transitions

The Interchange Institute is a non-profit organisation specialising in assisting families relocating globally. The Institute conducts research on the impact of intercultural transitions on individuals and families. Based on the results of this research, a variety of services are provided, including workshops and training, publications and products, and consulting services. For more information, visit www.interchangeinstitute.org



Congratulations

Many congratulations to Cecilia, a former D·I·T·T *stagiaire*, on the completion of her MBA and to both Cecilia and Rolf on the birth of their daughter Victoria.

Money matters

This autumn, D·I·T·T volunteer Amy wrote to loyal sponsors:

'...as one of the sponsors who knows personally of our work and our intentions, and who have so graciously helped our all-volunteer organisation in the past – please help us and dyslexic prisoners who cannot read and whose depression knows no bounds by buying a box of 100 or 200 CD-ROMS to send to remand homes in French, German and English speaking countries in 2007.

D·I·T·T is offering to give a free presentation of the CD-ROM in prison settings in 2007, and warmly appreciates benefactors' sponsoring a box or half a box for this vulnerable sector of society.

Reflections

- ‘Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.’ Henry Ford.

Quoted by the Geneva-based network supporting the families of children with learning difficulties:

www.allspecialkids.org

- A scientist’s view

‘As a general observation, I can see that concerned parents will try anything if the system is failing their children. But testimony from a few people who have had success with one kind of treatment is not proof that it will work for everyone.

‘Also, choice of one method may preclude looking at other equally good or better methods, and when some people go public on the Internet, there is a danger of building up false hopes.

‘Human physiology and psychology is so variable.’

- ... Chinese Proverb – forwarded by friend of D·I·T·T Bettina Hauschild

With money you can buy a house – but not a *home*

With money you can buy a clock – but not *time*

With money you can buy a bed – but not *sleep*

With money you can buy a book – but not *knowledge*

With money you can see a doctor – but not *good health*

With money you can buy a position – but not *respect*

With money you can buy sex – but not *love*

With money you can buy blood – but not *life*

- Why not become a friend of D·I·T·T? Join the D·I·T·T mailing list to receive regular quarterly news, and add your support to D·I·T·T endeavours to make the world a better place for dyslexic learners. See www.ditt-online.org – Membership and donations.

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