



Newsletter

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D-I-T-T fine art gallery



To help fund its activities this year, D-I-T-T will be auctioning paintings donated to the D-I-T-T fine art gallery. We welcome your bids online.



Some pictures were bought by guests at a dinner at the Conrad in March. The informal auction was part of the D·I·T·T Benefit Art Event that followed a concert of poetry, music and dance at the Brussels Conservatory of Music.

A live auction of all paintings donated for auction will be organised in late autumn in Brussels. Meanwhile, please contact D·I·T·T prior to this date should you like to place a bid in advance for one of the paintings.

European Parliament to exhibit works by dyslexic artists



Robert Evans, MEP

Works by dyslexic artists will be on display on 11–15 June in an exhibition area of the European Parliament. The exhibition will be sponsored by MEP Robert Evans (see www.robtevmep.net) and organised by Jee Hirsch and Simon Fenaux with the assistance of D·I·T·T members and friends.

EU citizens should contact their MEP for entry to the Parliament to view the exhibition. (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/members.do?language=EN>)

Non-EU residents should contact the D·I·T·T office for entry arrangements and an official invitation to the opening reception.

The exhibition of works by dyslexic artists, entitled *Inside a dyslexic world – how I see it*, was inspired by Steve Doan, a former Art Director of McCann-Erickson who is himself dyslexic.

European Dyslexia Association members have been invited to send in three digital photographs of pictures from dyslexic artists in their area, attaching a short description of each local group, its name and functions.

Quote from dyslexic artist Robert Rauschenberg:
'I paint the what and way I see. I write the way it sounds. Curiosity and humour is free. I have a good life.'

UN Decade of Literacy 2005–15

Dyslexia has now entered this decade, which is setting ambitious literacy targets.

In March 2006, Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, wrote in the preface to *Literacy Initiative For Empowerment (LIFE)*:

'As stated in the preamble of the UN General Assembly resolution which proclaimed the UNLD, the acquisition of literacy is crucial to every child, youth and adult, for accessing essential life skills that will enable them to address the challenges they face in life. Literacy represents an essential step in basic education, which is an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century.'



Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO

‘Yet an estimated 771 million, adults – a clear majority of whom are women – lack this important skill. The rising generation is faring no better. Approximately 100 million school-age children are not in school and are not learning to read or write; as a result their future prospects are far from bright.

‘While the needs of adults with few or no literacy skills are central to the literacy challenge, our concern also extends to early childhood learning and primary education, where the foundation of all subsequent learning is laid.

‘It has now become apparent that existing literacy efforts would not be enough to achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, which is one of the goals agreed by the international community at the World Education Forum on education for ALL (EFA) in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000.

‘To address this situation, UNESCO has created a ten-year framework of collaborative action – the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) ...a key operational mechanism for achieving the goals and purposes of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD). As a priority, LIFE targets 35 of the world’s most challenged countries, where 85 per cent of the world’s population without literacy competencies live today.

‘The aim is to build literacy programmes that are grounded upon what works, that is, proven success – stories and best practices. Through LIFE, UNESCO will endeavour to raise awareness at international, regional and national levels about the importance of literacy, rally political will and mobilize resources, contribute to policy development, rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure effectiveness.

‘LIFE represents a major opportunity to contribute to the realization of the Education for All (EFA) agenda and the millennium development Goals. The Decade’s theme is “literacy as freedom” and this is the spirit in which LIFE has been conceived.’

D·I·T·T’s involvement

Writing to Goodwill Ambassador Her Royal Highness The Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, Mr Matsuura said that he welcomed the initiative of D·I·T·T to organise a conference within the framework of the United Nations Literacy Decade.

D·I·T·T believes that a first world conference on dyslexia represents a unique opportunity. In a co-ordinating role, it will work in close co-operation with colleagues, leading experts at ministerial, academic and local level, to define a programme that will result in lasting and far-reaching effects.

Practical outcomes will include online training in teaching dyslexic young people and the setting up of supportive, ongoing training through forums similar to UK senco.

The conference will provide the opportunity to tackle dyslexia:

- At policy level
 - by reaching ministers of education in more than 190 UNESCO member countries worldwide with a view to their signing a declaration stating their formal commitment to action on recognising dyslexia, diagnosing and catering for the needs of dyslexic students.
- In education – teacher-training and schools
 - by sharing with heads of teacher-training programmes worldwide, good practice in research and teaching.
- Through awareness raising and ongoing training
 - by setting up and linking forums for debate and information.

This conference, planned for January 2009, will further enable D·I·T·T to carry out its specific mandate: to create and promote tools and technologies that enable dyslexic learners to succeed in a competitive world.

The working title is: *Literacy – Dyslexia and Inclusion*. D·I·T·T is taking advice from its Scientific Advisory Committee and the online panel of experts (See D·I·T·T [Dyslexia Consultancy e-Team](http://www.ditt-online.org) at www.ditt-online.org Projects – UNESCO)

Following this consultation stage, and with agreement from the panel of experts and scientific committee, a series of interactive exercises in each of UNESCO's five regions will be set up to bring out good practices that can be shared at the conference.

The Summer issue of our newsletter will contain a follow-up report and an invitation to share your views on what should be in the conference programme.

Current input from D·I·T·T to the UNESCO portal

During the summer of last year, UNESCO invited D·I·T·T, as an international NGO, to provide input for the UNESCO Literacy Portal. As of 17 October 2006, D·I·T·T was granted 'operational relations' status at UNESCO.



Alexia Tsapidou,
volunteer researcher

Alexia Tsapidou, who is managing a research project, wrote:

In the first part of our research, we listed for the five UNESCO Member States regions of the world (Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America and Latin America and the Caribbean):

- links to the Ministries of Education
- lists of the universities in each country, and
- local support groups, networks and associations focused on dyslexia.

All links were double-checked within D·I·T·T, and the UNESCO Commissions of each country were asked to approve our findings, which were sent to them individually. Each Commission received a letter together with the corresponding links. To date ten Commissions have replied and have verified our findings: Finland, Norway, Poland, Italy (Europe & N. America) Mauritius, Ghana (Africa), Barbados, Bermuda (Latin America & the Caribbean) and Micronesia and Timor-Leste (Asia and the Pacific). Some have also added extra links appropriate for the portal.

Other information researched has already been uploaded on the D·I·T·T website: [Projects – UNESCO country-by-country contacts](#). We await final approval from the rest of the Commissions.

This phase of the research was completed in January 2007 and ran simultaneously with stage two, which started in August 2006. The second part of our goal is to find out about research on dyslexia in the regions.

After identifying universities in each country with education, psychology, science and technology departments, we e-mailed a request for information about research projects. We also took the opportunity to introduce our own Scientific Advisory Board. To date all relevant universities from all regions have been contacted with the exception of Asia and the Pacific where we are close to completion.

This second part of our research requires a further eight months. We have received answers from four

universities. When more information has been gathered, our Scientific Advisory Committee will be asked for advice on how it may be referenced in the portal.

In Europe and North America, links relevant to dyslexia were sorted in three categories:

¹ Links to Associations and Support Groups to do with

<i>No. of links on dyslexia¹</i>	<i>No. of countries</i>	<i>% of countries in the region</i>
More than 4	7 ³	14%
Up to 4	17	36%
Only 1 ²	21	50%

dyslexia, under the title 'Other services and support networks' on the UNESCO Portal.

² France, United Kingdom, Austria, Poland, Finland, Norway and Italy.

³ European Dyslexia Association.

Good practice at tertiary level

Good practice in addressing the needs of dyslexic learners is most often found at tertiary (university) level. One good example of this is the instructions to tutors at Preston University, specifying the individual concerned. The full document is quoted here:

General

All academic tutors should be made aware that [John Smith] has specific learning difficulties.

Tutors should give him as many directions as possible in their suggestions for reading.

Tutors should not ask him to read aloud in group situations without the opportunity to prepare adequately.

Particular attention should be given to properly supporting oral presentations.

Tutors should be lenient on grammatical and spelling errors in their marking.

Tutors should make appropriate allowances for his handwriting difficulties.

Tutors should be aware that he is likely to have greater difficulty structuring and organising his work than others.

He needs support to develop his self-esteem and self-confidence with respect to literacy.

He needs positive and constructive feedback on literacy issues to help him improve his personal performance.

Copies of Powerpoint slides and notes should be made available at the beginning of lectures where possible. Alternatively, notes could be posted on the Intranet as appropriate.

Specialist tutor support

Access to a specialist tutor is required to:

- give him guidance to help him plan and structure his essays and similar assignments more adequately;
- give him direct literacy support when he is preparing written work and assignments, including access to a proof reader.

A total of [x] number of hours per week will be needed to ensure these instructions are working.

Examination support

Extra time will be required in written examinations for him to:

- read questions carefully;
- plan and structure answers, and
- check answers.

Suggested amount of extra time – 25%
(This should be kept under review)

Technology & other aids

He should have access to a tape-recorder for use in lectures, seminars and similar learning situations so that all relevant work is on record for later use.

He should have access to a computer system, especially word processing software and general support software (e.g. textHELP/read & write and Inspirations) to put emphasis on content rather than literacy.

Initially the level of access provided by the University network systems should prove adequate for his needs. However, he will require training in

the use of this software. He should have a computer to help him in his private work.

Other support

Good use should be made of any lecture or courses on 'study skills' provided by the University.

Books on the topic of study skills, often available in the University library, should also be browsed with particular reference to:

- time management
- exam technique
- planning and structuring essays, exam answers, assignments
- ensuring an understanding of typical exam expressions
- general organisation of the learning environment (e.g. file systems etc).

A structured diary system is essential if he is to make the best use of his chosen course. The use of coloured overlays to reduce the contrast between font and paper colour may prove useful.

Profile: one in ten

Some educationalists argue that e-mail and text messages have introduced 'written' communication to a young generation that would otherwise have relied on phone calls and other non-written means of communication. While it may be debatable whether 'c u lster' constitutes literacy, the communities found on the Internet have certainly benefited some with reading difficulties, as this week's one-in-ten profile attests.



Thando Blondel

Thando Blondel moved to Belgium from South Africa 12 years ago when he was 15. Moving to a French-speaking area was not a problem: his father is Congolese, and French, along with English, is a mother tongue. But Thando was already falling behind at school. 'For a long time books were a problem, concentration was a problem, and I would try to find ways of getting around reading,' he says.

While his mother suspected dyslexia might be the reason for his difficulties, Thando says that his father, 'because he is close to the French-speaking community, didn't recognise it to be a problem'. An early diagnosis in South Africa didn't lead to any special treatment, and Thando

followed his father's line of reasoning – that dyslexia was an 'excuse for not working'.

But when his father left for the Dominican Republic five years ago, Thando re-examined his thinking. At the same time, he became interested in the role-playing game, *Dungeons and Dragons*. A developing interest in fantasy led naturally to JRR Tolkein and *The Lord of the Rings* books. Thando says that it was this interest that helped him overcome his reluctance to read. 'When you like something, you make the effort,' he says.

Role-playing games have improved his self-confidence and his ability to speak in public. Thando is also interested in online virtual world communities such as *Second Life*. The advantages of such sites are they provide the user with the possibility of being 'another you', Thando says. 'You are in control of who you are... in a world that doesn't judge you. You can use your computer skills to upgrade your position in life'.

According to online resource Wikipedia: 'Second Life is one of several virtual worlds that have been inspired by the cyberpunk literary movement, and particularly by Neal Stephenson's novel *Snow Crash*. The stated goal of Linden Lab is to create a world like the Metaverse described by Stephenson, a user-defined world of general use in which people can interact, play, do business, and otherwise communicate.'

Although some may view exploring virtual and fantasy worlds as merely an escape from reality, Thando reports an improvement in literacy and confidence as a consequence of his experiences. And thankfully, Thando has pulled back from the addiction and dependence that surrounds a lot of online games.

What works

A poem for grammar

Ruth Newbury says 'This is probably Victorian – but none the worse for that!'

Three little words you often see
Are *articles* – **a, an** and **the**.

Verbs tell of something being done,
To **see, count, walk, skip, jump** or **run**.

A *noun's* the name of anything
Like **school** or **house** or **boat** or **swing**.

Adjectives tell the kind of noun
As **great, small, pretty, white** or **brown**.

How things are done the *adverbs* tell
Like **slowly, quickly, ill** or **well**.

Conjunctions join the words together,
Like **man** or **woman**, **wind** **and** **weather**.

Instead of *nouns* the *pronouns* stand
His hat, **her** coat, **their** car, **my** hand.

A *preposition* goes before
A *noun* as **in** or **through** a door.

Interjections show surprise.
Like **Oh!** **How pretty!**– **Ah!** **How wise!**

SENCO (Special Education Needs Coordinators, teachers and advisory staff discussion forums)

<http://lists.becta.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/senco-forum>

Multi-sensory teaching system

Graham Kendall writes, 'Literacy is a combination of phonics, irregular keywords and generalised spelling patterns – you cannot concentrate on one of these areas in isolation to 'cure' reading problems. In desperation I have put my own intervention system together for early literacy skills. It's called *The Five Minute Box* and costs less than £100. It requires no photocopying and takes only a few minutes a day for a tutor to use with a child. Most importantly, it works! Hundreds of schools and Education Authorities are reporting remarkable results with it. If anyone can help me to find a way to alert the powers that be that my system is a better way to help children to read and write that doesn't incur an



enormous cost, lengthy training for teachers and a five-year research study, I would be very pleased to hear from them.'

See: www.fiveminutebox.com

Learning styles – a resource for parents and students

In 1987 Neil Fleming, a New Zealand educationalist, designed a questionnaire that helped students (and parents) understand how they best learn. Fleming took the concepts of visual, aural and kinaesthetic and added a fourth mode 'read/write' which, though taken in visually, is based on text and print media. The questionnaire can be found on the website, www.vark-learn.com. It is free to use for those in the public education sector (not private trainers, who must be licensed).

The recently revised questionnaire consists of just 16 questions, and each respondent gets a profile of four scores, one for each mode. The questions mirror life and allow for more than one answer. There is a 'junior' version for those aged 12-18, and the questionnaire is reproduced in a number of languages. A key feature is the advice (helpsheets) for students who may have a preference for a particular mode or combination of modes. Most users (55-60%) use a combination of modes or all four modes. Although the system has not been designed specifically for those with dyslexia, it should prove helpful to anyone with learning difficulties.

More than 60% of those who respond to the questionnaire say that the results match their own perception of how they learn and fewer than 6% say that it does not. The questionnaire webpage has received 84,000 visitors since September 2006, and 26,000 of those gave some biographical information. A range of supporting books and software products are available. Fleming is expected to visit the UK in August/September 2007 and will be running his popular, interactive VARK workshops. If you are interested contact him at flemingn@ihug.co.nz.

www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire

Money matters

Gudrun Dziallas, D·I·T·T Board Member, examines funding in North American and Europe for dyslexia projects:

EU and US project funding

ADysTrain Leonardo da Vinci Project

Title: ADysTrain – ‘Train the trainers for the Dyslexic Work World’

http://www.fh-joanneum.at/aw/home/Studienangebot/Business/mim/News_Events_5036211/news_5037057/~bdil/Leonardo_da_Vinci_Projekt_ADysTrain/?lan=de

Duration: 2 years (01/09/2006 – 31/08/2008)

Grant amount: € 292.616

DYSTrain MINERVA Project – promotion of open and distance learning – information and communication technologies in the field of education

Title: DYSTrain – E-learning for those teaching dyslexic individuals

<http://www.welshdyslexia.info>

Duration: 2 years (01/10/2003 – 01/10/2005)

Grant amount: € 180.000

Approved Budget: € 244.992

DyPaTec Socrates Grundtvig2 Project

Title: Dyslexia Parents’ and Teachers’ Collaboration

http://www.dyspel.org/dypatec/index.php?en_theme

Duration: 3 years (2005–7)

Grant amount: (not stated)

AGENT-DYSL IST Project – funded under the 6th Framework Programme

Title: Accommodative intelligent educational environments for dyslexic learners

<http://www.agent-dysl.eu>

Duration: 3 years (01/09/2006 – 31/08/2009)

Project Cost: € 2.6 million

Project Funding: € 2 million

NEURODYS LifeSciHealth Priority-5 Project – funded under the 6th Framework Programme

Title: Dyslexia genes and neurobiological pathways

<http://www.neurodys.com>

Total cost: € 3,040,000

Commission funding: € 3,040,000

Florida State University – National Institutes of Health

Florida State University has been awarded a \$ 6 million grant from the federal government over five years to fund research efforts aimed at more effectively understanding, predicting and preventing the development of learning disabilities such as dyslexia in children.

The grant will fund the creation of a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Multidisciplinary Learning Disabilities Center at FSU. The centre, which will be one of only four in the US, represents the NIH's flagship research program for learning disabilities.

First world conference on dyslexia

D·I·T·T is seeking funds this spring to ensure its valuable work in relation to the UNESCO Conference 2009 is fully underwritten.

Donors who contribute € 5,000 or more will benefit from widespread publicity via our website, media productions and future publications. They will also feature in our online roll of honour.

Please note once again that all donations through the King Baudouin Foundation are tax deductible: account number 000-0000004-04, mentioning L79549 – Dyslexia International – Tools and Technologies (D·I·T·T).

Thank you for your support and generosity.

Announcements

Teaching the Brain to Read in Spanish



Louisa Hay, translator

Louisa Hay, a professional translator, has been a huge asset to D·I·T·T. In collaboration with Maria Villaron in Madrid, Louisa generously gives her ongoing assistance to D·I·T·T's projects, translating written texts into Spanish.

Louisa has offered to translate Dr Duncan Milne's book, *Teaching the Brain to Read*, into Spanish. Duncan's book is also being translated into French by Grégory Lafaye and two new *stagiaires*.

This will be the starting point for the 2009 UNESCO conference. It communicates its ideas clearly and is the ideal learning and teaching tool. The author is himself dyslexic.

Her Royal Highness Princess Margaretha of Liechtenstein, D·I·T·T Patron, met the talented artists assembled by choreographer/producer Luc de Laresse at the recent Gala Benefit.



Princess Margaretha also met D·I·T·T sponsors and supporters – seen here: Mr Faruk Akosman, DHL Manager.



Open Forum 2007

A request has been made that D·I·T·T invite a UNESCO specialist on their Literacy Initiative for Empowerment programme (LIFE) to speak in a televised session.

Annual General Meeting

This is planned for 12 pm, 5 June.

Reflections

Take it from Gudrun

- A – Acceptance – yes, dyslexia exists!
- B – Better understanding – what is dyslexia?
- C – Compensation and Computer – which tools and technologies can help?
- D – Diminution of workload – why dyslexic children learn more, if they get less work
- E – Extra help

Don't give up hope!

Agatha Christie wrote:

'I myself was always recognised as the 'slow one' in the family. It was quite true, and I knew it and accepted it. Writing and spelling were always terribly difficult for me. My letters were without originality. I was an extraordinarily bad speller and remained so....'

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