



Dyslexia International – Tools and Technologies ASBL

building learning abilities

a non-governmental organisation in operational relations with UNESCO

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Newsletter

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Dyslexia in the UN Literacy Decade – a 3-year programme: Dyslexia and the right to read



D-I-T-T, in collaboration with colleagues world-wide, is launching a three-year programme to create a global network that provides understanding and practical help for dyslexia.

D-I-T-T is committed to making literacy a reality, not only for those for whom learning to read and write is easy, but also for those who will never become literate without special help to meet their specific learning needs. As many as 300 million people world-wide risk struggling with getting through school, getting into training or finding employment as a result of their dyslexia.

D-I-T-T volunteers work with leading experts, creating and promoting tools that enable dyslexic learners to succeed in a competitive world

Dyslexia is 'a disorder manifested by difficulty learning to read and write, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence and sociocultural opportunity.'

World Health Organization

Since symptoms of dyslexia – difficulties with reading, writing, spelling and memory and organisation are common in many learners, non-dyslexic and dyslexic alike, all learners will benefit from adapted teaching methods that will at the same time allow dyslexic learners to integrate and to overcome their difficulties.

As of January 2008, after extensive consultation, D·I·T·T colleagues and associates will develop a challenging programme to bring together high-level educators in public and private sectors including ministers , administrators, experts and teachers.

The programme will establish a platform for a world-wide network of supportive training, forums, twinings and partnership for sharing good practice and wider understanding.

The programme will meet its goal through four key initiatives: a new Web portal; a film entitled *Dyslexia – on the right track*; the first world dyslexia forum at UNESCO, and the publication of an easy-access teachers' guide.

The World Dyslexia Forum

This will be held at UNESCO in 2009 – date to be announced early in 2008. 460 high-level education decision makers will be invited from more than 190 UNESCO member states.

The purpose of the Forum is to open up dialogue between ministries, teacher training departments and researchers. This process will give an opportunity for sharing ideas and reaching agreement on essential elements to include in national teacher training programmes to promote literacy in all sectors including the dyslexic learners. It is not designed to be a scientific congress, nor is it solely for experts in dyslexia. It aims to reach out to ministries, teachers and teacher-trainers across the world, some of whom will know nothing of dyslexia. It is designed to:

- provide a broader understanding of the causes and symptoms of dyslexia
- explain how dyslexic children and adults learn differently, and encourage systematic provision of suitable teaching and teacher training
- approve the elements for appropriate teacher training programmes, on-line wherever possible, that can break the cycle of failure
- create on-line links and networks of forums/ partnerships for continuing support and professional training.

Speakers will include:

John Stein, Professor of Physiology, University of Oxford, UK

Dr Duncan Milne, Director of Tools for Literacy

Professor Linda Siegel, Dorothy C. Lam Chair in Special Education, Yale University, USA, and University of British Columbia, Canada

Dr. Maria Luisa Lorusso, Neuropsychologist, Scientific Institute, E. Medea, Italy, Lecturer in Remediation of Developmental Dyslexia, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy

Dr Guinevere Eden, Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics and Director, Center for the Study of Learning, University of Georgetown, USA

Professor Costas Porpodas, University of Patras, Greece

Professor José Morais, Free University of Brussels, Belgium

Dr Elena Grigorenko, Adjunct Professor of Psychology at Columbia University, USA, and Moscow State University, Russian Federation

Dr Jésus Alegria, Free University of Brussels, Belgium

Professor Ludo Beheydt, Chair of Dutch Linguistics, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium

Professor Heinz Wimmer, Department of Psychology and Center of Neurocognitive Research, University of Salzburg, Austria

Dr Harry Chasty, Psychologist and international consultant on learning abilities and disorders

Professor Bennett A. Shaywitz, Professor of Pediatrics and Neurology, Yale Center for the Study of Learning, Reading and Attention

Andrew Law, Head of BBC Worldwide Interactive Learning

Themes

■ Discovery

Day 1: World experts in neuroscience will share research into physiological factors and the results of brain-imaging and genetic studies.

■ Good practice

Day 2: D·I·T·T Language *rapporteurs* will present findings from research into how dyslexia is addressed in the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian-speaking areas of the world.

'I have seen the tremendous cost to these children and their families of having reading problems that often were unidentified and misunderstood and inadequately treated. What we found was that the persistently poor readers seemed to have lower verbal ability from the beginning and to attend more disadvantaged schools than the group that had compensated.'

Professor Sally Shaywitz, MD.

- ICT and on-line training

Day 3: Speakers will show how technology can serve the interests of dyslexic learners by exploring the educational benefits of information technologies; setting up on-line teacher training using elements agreed by delegates; creating support networks through forums and partnerships.

Website

A new portal will be created that will:

- promote the World Dyslexia Forum 2009
- showcase a range of tools and technologies for dyslexic learners
- direct users to forums for professional support
- list an expert consultancy team
- provide a country-by-country e-directory on dyslexia with extensive local and national links in the five regions and the six official languages of UNESCO
- enable users to access training, virtual tutorials and other materials, including training films.

Film: *Dyslexia – on the right track*

The film will describe the purpose and goals of the programme in 26 minutes on multimedia and in any language for diffusion throughout the world. It will feature:

- methods of motivating dyslexic learners
- assistive technologies
- input from leading scientists
- testimonies from young people
- how the barriers of social exclusion may be overcome.

D·I·T·T's first outstandingly successful film produced by the BBC, *Language Shock – Dyslexia across Cultures*, showed the magnitude of the problem. The new film will show how these difficulties may be overcome.

Produced by Christopher James Ian, D·I·T·T's director of media and technology, it will be directed by Len Brown of Footsteps Productions, which has BBC and Channel Four (UK) experience in making TV programmes world-wide.

People involved in implementing the programme

International consultants

D·I·T·T benefits from the insights of a team of experts in dyslexia that constitute the D·I·T·T Dyslexia Consultancy e-team, headed by the D·I·T·T Scientific Advisory Committee. (<http://www.ditt-online.org/Eteam.html>)

Language *rapporteurs* for the World Dyslexia Forum at UNESCO

Six principal language *rapporteurs* have been appointed for the UNESCO World Dyslexia Forum 2009 to research, write up and give a half-hour presentation on day two of the Forum on 'good practice in interventions in teaching dyslexic learners and in teacher training'. *Rapporteurs* will be required to assemble specific data in each of the six official languages of UNESCO: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish respectively.

In selecting *rapporteurs* the D·I·T·T Forum co-ordinating team looked for recognised professionals in dyslexia, with the ability to work well with people and to research and synthesise feedback on effective interventions in diagnosing and teaching dyslexic learners, both children and adults, and in teacher training.

Rapporteurs will use a prescribed 10-question survey and to translate this into the language concerned. They agree to navigate through controversies objectively, and to give credit to the sources of scientific research. They will advance the objectives of the Forum by making partnerships, taking part in on-line forums and promoting training wherever possible.

Regional ambassadors

D·I·T·T is grateful to Dr Daniel Ofori of Ghana, Hilda Anam Ogutu of Kenya, and Adelaide Mkonza of Swaziland, Sona Ngoh for acting as D·I·T·T regional ambassadors in Africa; Cecilia Gonzalez for South America and the Spanish speaking sectors; Larry Moffett for Europe; Ronald Baker for Canada and North America and Sobha Varghese for India.

Thanks to their support, D·I·T·T is widely represented across the world. Their support in attending local conferences, sharing information and directing inquiries to the e-consultancy team and other resources at www.ditt-online.org is invaluable and greatly appreciated.

'All young learners, dyslexic and non-dyslexic alike, should be given the opportunity to learn to read and write by the end of primary education.'

International ICT conference



Hilda Anam Ogutu, D-I-T-T regional ambassador

An example of the benefit that D-I-T-T gains from its regional ambassadors is the following report from the second international conference on ICT in Nairobi, Kenya, sent to us by Hilda Anam Ogutu who attended on D-I-T-T's behalf.

The event addressed the requirements of an African development plan in order to reach the Millennium Development Goals set for 2015.

Opening the conference on ICT for development, education and training, George Saitoti, Minister of Education in Kenya, said that Kenya, like other African countries, is currently dealing with the issue of rural electrification and ICT capacity building. The Kenyan government has a national ICT Policy and, jointly with Kenya ICT Trust Fund, has developed a National ICT strategy for education and training. It is also benefiting from the NEPAD initiative.

The event, which was entitled 'Building infrastructure and capacities to reach out to the whole of Africa', attracted attendees from a total of 81 countries including Canada, Germany, Sweden and the UK, besides major development organizations such as UNESCO, UNEVOC, the Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) and the World Bank. Representatives of governments from Africa, Europe, Asia and North America also supported the event, which covered e-learning in the health sector, life skills, mobile learning, open source and open content in e-learning, and e-learning in schools, higher-education institutions and in the public sector.

The conference also highlighted key ways of supporting e-learning including distance learning (ODL), e-schools, open source, open content, mobile learning, universities and technical colleges. The major challenges are:

- building the infrastructure for computer use in Africa, where many rural areas don't have electricity
- the cost of buying computers and their maintenance
- managing students' preference for computer games rather than educational activities
- responsibility for content filtering
- development of local content with cultural consideration

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- language barriers in open content and open source
 - management of change/acceptability/adaptability to keep pace with developing e-learning systems
 - building sustainability components into e-learning projects from their inception.

The conference was an important step in creating awareness of e-learning as the most effective way of reaching out to the whole of the Africa and a means of facilitating rapid development. It also helped raise awareness of the possibilities of Africa to attain 'Education for all by 2015' through numerous networking and collaboration possibilities with international and bi-lateral agencies. The event has forged a dynamic network of stakeholders and now has links with decision-makers from governments and administrations with universities, schools, government and private training providers, industry, and partners in development co-operation.

The conference helped send a strong message to decision-makers across the world. 'Traditional methods of education and training cannot address the scope and scale of the learning challenge, but technology can now provide solutions' said John Daniel, President & CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning.

While dyslexia and other learning disabilities were not well covered by the conference, many dyslexic learners can well benefit from e-learning. It provides the opportunity for an individual to set his or her own pace in learning and resource materials are affordable. E-learning motivates learners to want to engage in continuous learning and allows for individuals to cultivate the very best of themselves.

Profile: one in ten

Steve Doan



Artist Steve Doan, 58, was a highly successful creative director of the major advertising company McCann Erickson, but he had a secret. This 'secret' was presented to D·I·T·T patron HRH Princess Margaretha of Liechtenstein at the recent exhibition of artwork by dyslexic artists held in the European Parliament.

'The Secret' is the name of the painting containing jumbled text which Steve produced specifically for the exhibition and presented to the Princess at the opening reception. It represents the dyslexia that Steve kept from his employers for many years. He would cover up his dyslexia behind an air of creative snobbishness. 'I was a snotty arrogant creative type,' he says, 'and was all too ready to delegate report writing and other written tasks.'

Before the computer era arrived, a secretary would be available to help him write proposals and communicate with clients. Today, creative directors have to be able to produce good written communications and, since leaving his last job, Steve has struggled to find new employment. He is articulate and personable but unable to write application letters to help him get interviews.

Nevertheless, Steve continues to find outlets for his creative talent. He recently exhibited a selection of his paintings on request at an exhibition in Bordeaux on the theme of nature. He has also made a proposal to the Centre Public d'Action Sociale de Bruxelles (CPAS), which provides funding for cultural ideas through its Project X programme. Steve's idea is to create an international cultural centre that runs workshops on art, dance and contemporary music.

While he has lived in Europe for more than 30 years, Steve has not forgotten his Texan routes. He is hoping to form exchange partnerships with a similar cultural centre called The Mac in his home city of Dallas.

It was at Junior High School in the States that Steve was diagnosed as having dyslexia. He received private tuition, but unfortunately it 'didn't help a bit'. The tuition stopped following a move and the transition to high school. Here he developed a system of memorising information. However, the limitations of this method were exposed at University, and by only registering for art classes he was eventually failed.

Despite this, it was the art courses that led to his highly successful career. D·I·T·T wishes Steve all the best with his future projects so that he may continue to overcome the obstacles that his dyslexia presents – no longer in secret but out in the open.

What works

D·I·T·T recently received an e-mail from Josephine Power in New Zealand who has been diagnosed with classic dyslexia. She writes:

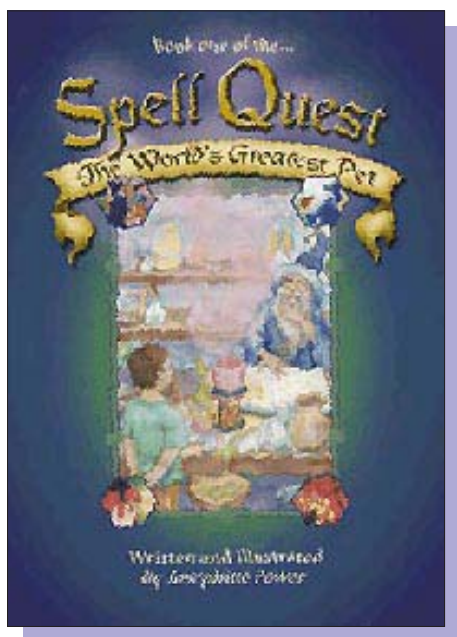
I have struggled through the obstacles of dyslexia myself. I have made a career for myself both as illustrator and an art and craft teacher and have worked with a large number of children with learning disabilities.

Five years ago I did a postgraduate university course where I wrote and researched a dissertation titled 'Children's book illustration and its connection to learning disabilities'. I examined how children have a natural ability to read visual pictures and dissected this pictorial language into comprehensible elements that compare with our written/verbal language. I then researched my findings on a large number of children both with and without learning difficulties, and found that young children, children with diagnosed learning problems and highly imaginative children demonstrated a near-perfect reading of these complex pictures, a much higher result than that found with the highly academic early readers.

Taking this research into account, I have written, designed and illustrated a children's book. The book invites children to under go on a 'quest' which, while written in the form of an adventure story, entices readers into solving spelling and grammar riddles disguised among both the words and the pictures. The book is called *The Spell Quest* and is the first in a planned series of books.

The book will be available this coming month.

We look forward to supplying our readers with further details in our next issue.



Speaking books

Message from D·I·T·T Scientific Advisory Committee member Dr Maria Luisa Lorusso who wrote to us about a recent research study on the advantage of using 'speaking books':



...The two groups of adolescent dyslexics (who were comparable on all tested variables at pre-test), re-tested after 5 months, showed significantly different improvements in the following variables:

- reading accuracy
- proficiency in history and geography
- attitude towards school
- aggressive behaviour
- hyperactivity and attention deficit
- oppositional behaviour
- social problems
- externalizing problems.

All these differences were to the advantage of the group who had used the 'speaking books'. Of course, all other types of intervention were suspended during the experimental period.

Both groups improved in self-esteem measures.

We were very satisfied about the results and are now organizing a stable implementation of the system at the institute, with a consulting service that keeps contacts with the family and the school, analyses needs and makes a first-level assessment of all the parameters that will be transmitted to the Lions 'speaking book' service in Milan, so that they can make the recordings of the relevant parts of school books. Moreover, we should be able to download books already recorded from the media library of the Lions, who helped fund the study and with implementation.

Ka-Ching!

One mother, writing from Holland, recommends this resource:

The Ka-Ching Business Parenting course comes highly recommended. According to its designers, it is a first step towards empowering children with sound financial and entrepreneurial skills that will positively influence the rest of their lives.



The course provides parents with everything they need to introduce their children to responsible money management, self-sufficiency and financial savvy – with a little fun, and a great deal of reward, along the way.

<http://www.businessparenting.com/home/>

Dyseurope

Some readers have found the website DsyEurope.com to be a very useful resource. Says site developer, Marlene Merlivat: 'I keep receiving testimonials that we publish in their entirety. All you need to do is read them.'

www.dyseurope.com/en/testimonials.html

Latest Penfriend software

The latest versions of both Penfriend XL and XP 3.0.4.1, both demos and full installers, are available to download from its website (www.penfriend.biz/downloads).

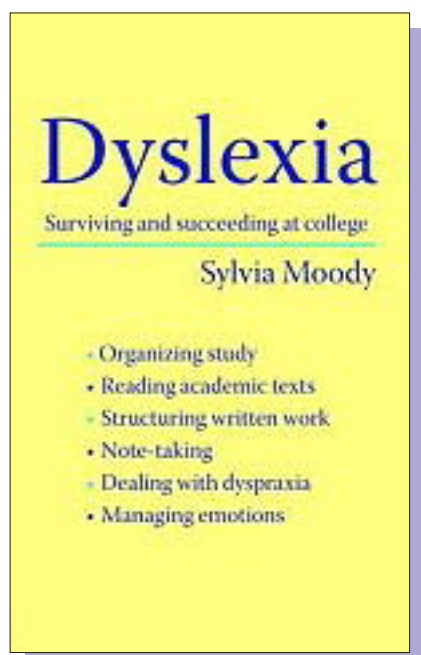
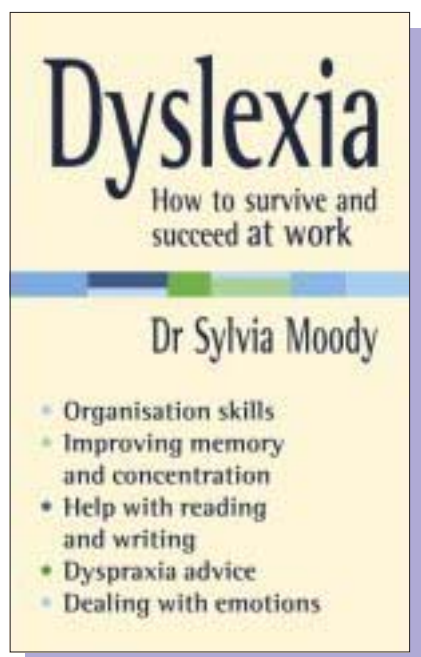
Distinguished books

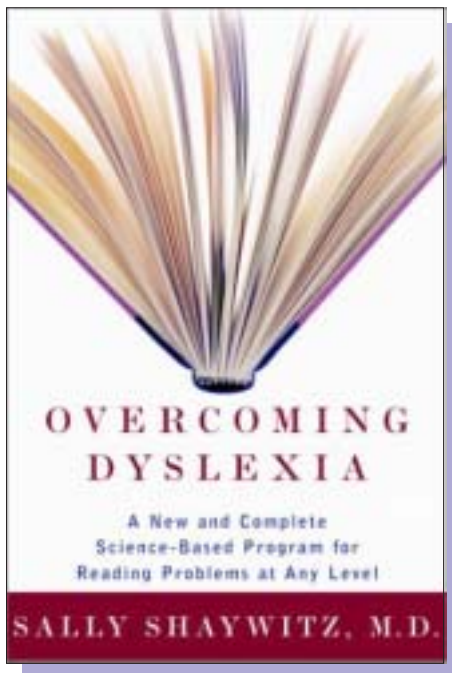
■ *Dyslexia: how to survive and succeed at work*, by Dr Sylvia Moody, published by Vermilion, 2006, has been commended in the Popular Medicine category of the British Medical Association (BMA) Medical Book Awards 2007.

■ Just when young dyslexic and dyspraxic learners start up the slippery slope at college, and begin to realise that college presents a real challenge, Sylvia Moody's book, *Dyslexia: surviving and succeeding at college*, comes to the rescue.

The author builds self-confidence in the reader by using case studies: first Clare, dyslexic, who plumbs the despair of the dyslexic college entrant, losing the thread in lectures, feeling lost, isolated, stressed and depressed; then Jim, who has dyspraxia, which leads to panic and subsequently anti-social behaviour.

By meticulous step-by-step self-help guidance, Sylvia Moody thoroughly covers the ground in clearly divided sections of her book, using plain language and easily accessible text layout. She shows the continuum that links facets of dyslexia and dyspraxia and where they meet. Her checklists, ICT pointers and addresses at the end of the book are useful too, besides her information on statutory rights in the UK system.





■ *Overcoming Dyslexia – a new and complete science-based programme for reading problems at any level* by Sally Shaywitz, MD, neuroscientist and professor of paediatrics at Yale, is described by Charles R. Schwab as ‘the book we have been waiting for’ and elsewhere as ‘combining cutting-edge science, practicality and common sense’.

Senco Forum

D·I·T·T once again strongly advocates the SENCO Forum as a source of ideas and inspiration.

To quote one example, on putting ideas together for reports or writing a thesis, a writer to the Forum suggests ‘writing in outline mode in Word to focus on the structural ideas and relationships first and to separate the wood from the trees’.

Alternatively mind-mapping is proposed: ‘Inspiration or Mindmanager will allow you to construct the relationships with whatever level of detail you want, then seamlessly convert it into a structured document. TextHelp Read and Write Gold has a good knowledge organiser working in a similar way.’

Announcements

Book now for D·I·T·T’s Annual Open Forum!

‘Dyslexia discovered – dyslexia ignored: two sides of the coin’

There will be two speakers:

Dr Michael Thomson, leading expert on dyslexia and author of *Dyslexia – a handbook for teachers*, will speak on ‘The successful dyslexic child’. His talk will enlighten all those who wish to see dyslexic young people succeed at school and will benefit parents of dyslexic children looking for solutions.

For teachers of English or any language, Alan Clarke, lecturer in drama, arts and media, should not be missed. He will speak on his current work in prisons and promoting language abilities through drama and Shakespeare. Alan Clarke is currently working with the European Prison Education Association. His talk will be on ‘Students’ learning needs – good practice in intercultural education and language learning’.

See 'Events' at www.ditt-online.org for booking form.

The pre-booking fee for the event is €55. All proceeds go towards costs/projects in favour of increasing understanding of dyslexia and how it may be best addressed with properly trained teachers.

Art auction at the American Women's Club

In co-operation with the American Women's Club, D·I·T·T is organising an art auction in the spring of 2008. Proceeds will go to support D·I·T·T's activities as part of the UN Decade of Literacy. See announcement in our next *Newsletter*, Winter 2008.



Money matters

■ Partnership packages in support of D·I·T·T's 'Dyslexia in the UNLD United Nations Literacy Decade', a three-year programme to include the first World Dyslexia Forum 2009 at UNESCO are available on request from the D·I·T·T office in a well-designed brochure. If you know of likely supporters of seeing dyslexia addressed in the education systems and who might care to support our programme, please do contact D·I·T·T office.

■ *The Mystery of the Lost Letters – Tintin helps dyslexic learners* – a CD-ROM produced by the BBC for D·I·T·T

Further to Joe Hirsch's work in making copies available to diagnostic centres across Belgium, and free copies to remedial teachers, D·I·T·T is now rounding up its work on distributor contact. This is the Hergé Centenary Year, and the much-anticipated Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson Tintin films appear ever closer to becoming a reality. Do please remind your friends and contacts to visit www.ditt-online.org about obtaining a copy. Proceeds go to help D·I·T·T recover costs.

For bulk orders of more than 50 copies, the reduced price will be \$10/€7 per copy plus postage (e.g. the postage for 50 copies is \$55/€40).

Please kindly pass this message on to all your colleagues and associates.

Reflections

Our two young stagiaires from Kent this summer highly recommend their teacher, 'Andy'. We invited him to comment on what makes a good teacher.

- Honesty and fairness. Always listen to what people say and don't judge. Teachers are not there to point the finger; they're there to solve problems for people who have them and help if they can.
- Treat all people the same.
- Never try to be anyone that you're not.
- If you say that you're going to do something, whether it's big or small, do it, otherwise people don't trust or respect you.
- Have no shame! Teachers need to install confidence in people, therefore need to appear to be confident themselves, otherwise it's just an act.
- Teaching isn't a job; it's a lifestyle! It doesn't finish at 3.10. A teacher needs to be there for pupils, parents and staff when they're needed and show an interest in their life, not just their school work, even if it's just to say hello in Tesco's.
- Always look for good qualities in people. Even the most badly behaved and unsociable pupil has good qualities. Find them and build them and use their strengths to develop their weaknesses.
- Have fun! If you enjoy your work and are looking to further yourself and try new things, then this will be apparent to pupils and will enthuse them to learn.
- Always be looking to try something new and just enjoy talking and working with staff and pupils.
- Never demand respect. Respect needs to be earned and will only be earned through hard work and good manners.
- Be individual and entertain as well as teach. We all like to be entertained and do something fun, so why not try to incorporate that into teaching.
- Have a good work/life balance. Always have a way to relax and people to talk to, even if it's having a quick beer or a night in front of the TV with friends.

D·I·T·T thanks Andy – who modestly declined to be further identified.

Mystery genes

Research advances in Germany were announced last year in the German magazine, Der Spiegel:

...The origins of dyslexia are not greatly understood, and there are different approaches to the condition: psychological, pedagogic or neurophysiological.

Scientists agree that various strategies designed to cope with the problems of dyslexia (spelling, computer programs to train the reading rate or learn how to fix a word in a text) do not work as efficiently as expected.

But there is general agreement that children can be helped if their dyslexia is diagnosed at an early age – not at the end of the primary school. Hence researchers are developing methods that help recognise dyslexia earlier.

Dr Schulte Körner (Marburg, Germany) is analysing the origins of dyslexia from a genetic and neurobiological point of view. He is playing a lead part in the EU-funded dyslexia research project 'Neurodys' in which 13 research groups from 10 European countries investigate the biological basis of dyslexia.

Dr Körner concludes that dyslexia probably results from a genetic disorder. While a genetic diagnosis for dyslexia does not solve the difficulties associated with the condition, it will at least make it possible for remedial education to start earlier.

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