



Dyslexia International – Tools and Technologies ASBL

building learning abilities

a non-governmental organisation in operational relations with UNESCO

1 rue Defacqz
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel/fax: +32-2 537 70 66

Web site: www.ditt-online.org
E-mail: admin@ditt-online.org
Bank account: 310-158 1288-80

Patron: Her Royal Highness Princess Margaretha of Liechtenstein

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D-I-T-T at UNESCO



Pictured on the top floor at UNESCO, D-I-T-T's Allison Lech-Belinsky and *stagiaire* Jean-Paul Chami, peace education specialist, who represented the interests of people with dyslexia world-wide

In recent months, D-I-T-T representatives from Africa, India, the Arab States and Europe have participated at UNESCO conferences and meetings in Paris: the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), 27–28 September, the International Forum for Civil Society which took place on 25 October and the 34th General Conference, 20–27 October, when Jean-Paul Chami represented D-I-T-T throughout.

From 5–7 December, five D·I·T·T delegates including director of media and technologies Christopher James Ian and treasurer Peter Hankey attended the International Conference of NGOs, opened by the Director General, Mr Koichiro Matsuura, where D·I·T·T was invited to give a five-minute speech.

Executive Director Judith Sanson used the definition drawn up by the World Neurology Federation, an NGO in association status with World Health Organisation, as the reference point: ‘a disorder manifested by difficulty in learning to read, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence and social and cultural opportunity.’

She spoke of the high incidence of people with dyslexia – over five per-cent – who risk social exclusion and failure on all fronts unless taught in a way in which they can learn. She underlined the psychological damage to the individual; the need for ministries to work with academics to access latest research and to collaborate with parents in putting effective teaching methods and technologies in place, and teachers trained to recognise dyslexia and know how to respond.

She referred to the World Dyslexia Forum due to take place in 2009 which D·I·T·T is currently coordinating. A team of scientific advisors, consultants and all colleagues wanting to see a better opportunities for people with dyslexia enthusiastically welcome the Forum’s goals: agreement by teacher-training decision-makers world-wide on essential elements for basic online training, and open educational resources for teachers.

‘I promoted D·I·T·T’, says Jean-Paul, ‘by talking to many people about its activities. I made contact with UNESCO staff members from different levels and gathered material relevant to D·I·T·T’s work in inclusive education and ICT.’

‘I promoted D·I·T·T’, says Jean-Paul, ‘by talking to many people about its activities. I made contact with UNESCO staff members from different levels and gathered material relevant to D·I·T·T’s work in inclusive education and ICT.’

‘I visited the section on *Education for All* at the UNESCO external relations department and left my business card and our D·I·T·T brochure. I ensured that an invitation announcing the 2009 World Dyslexia Forum reached the ministry of education of every UNESCO member state. Enclosed with each invitation was a request to respond to a short five-question survey on how dyslexia is recognised and addressed in each country.’

Both at formal sessions and outside conference rooms and internet access rooms, Jean-Paul met members of the UNESCO delegations, representatives of other international NGOs in operational, consultative or

associative relations with UNESCO, and members of the UNESCO staff. He attended plenary sessions, meetings of the Commission for Education, and two receptions – one by the Bahraini delegation and the second by Oman.

‘I gained a deeper understanding of the importance of the role that NGOs can play in voicing unheard needs in an international arena,’ he says. ‘I had a meeting with a senior official of the education sector and learned about the Hamburg Institute for Lifelong Learning which is in charge of the Literacy Decade.’

Mireya Heuriet, in charge of the UNESCO library who has worked with children with special abilities and disabilities, especially young people with dyslexia, expressed her interest in D·I·T·T’s work. The Tintin CD-ROM, with its interior bookcase of 12 articles by distinguished experts, will be part of the UNESCO Library. She said she would be pleased to publicise the Forum at UNESCO in 2009 – venue yet to be announced.

It is a helpless feeling to look out
of my cell window
Watching the cars pass by on the
highway
Wondering where the lives of
people are headed
And knowing mine is limited
physically
To this cage.
One day when my own son or
daughter turn 21
I will reflect upon this time
And do everything within my
power
To ensure they never experience
such pain.
For better or worse
I’ve reached a point
Where my mind is affected
By almost nothing.
And hope that won’t endanger
My chances of resuming
A normal life
Who is to say what is normal?

Extract from a poem presented to
D·I·T·T in 2000 by a young offender
with dyslexia, writing from a US prison.

The prison- face of dyslexia

How dyslexia is recognised in a UK prison

Offending, e-learning and dyslexia: a step backwards

Melanie Jameson has both taught in prisons and trained prison staff. She outlines some of the issues that arise in encouraging offenders with dyslexia to engage with e-learning.

Preparing offenders for useful lives back in the community is the most important challenge facing European prison services. In recent years the role of technology has become increasingly important in engaging prisoners with learning and in up-skilling them for the world of work. Recent figures in the UK suggest that 90% of all jobs now require ICT skills.

The introduction of e-learning into prisons was initially delayed by a number of factors, including lack of equipment and insufficient power sockets, especially in the cell blocks (but the latter has been largely overcome by the use of laptops). Security concerns, especially relating to Internet access, are being resolved by surf control software and the careful installation of only the required programs into each individual learning account.

As a result, e-learning has expanded significantly in English prisons over the last year with the launch of an offender learning website, www.offenderlearning.net, as a key online resource and the creation of offender National Learning Network materials. The London-wide pilot of POLARIS (Prison Offender Learning and Resettlement Information System) has now taken place. It is ironic that, despite the technology drive, the computer system for the electronic transfer of learning records has again been found unworkable and been delayed!

The adult ICT Curriculum document says: 'One of the attractions of ICT is that it can be an enabling technology; it can remove barriers and allow learners, who might otherwise be excluded, to access Skills for Life'. These excluded learners may well be those with dyslexia and related specific learning difficulties, thought to account for one fifth of the offending population (Editor: though much higher percentages are reported).

Due to negative experiences of schooling, they often stay clear of all class-based activities, they are more likely to be found in the gym, in workshops, or on the wings doing jobs such as cleaning. Opportunities for flexible and individual learning, via technology, are particularly appropriate to these potential learners who often say they 'cannot handle a group' and prefer to study on their own.

It is assumed that people with special learning difficulties take naturally to ICT, but this is not always the case. This huge cohort is unlikely to gain skills and qualifications unless provision is made for their difficulties and learning differences. Some learners may suffer from visual stress and find the glare from the computer monitor brings on headaches: others find tracking text across the page is problematic. Dyspraxic learners may require ergonomic keyboards or a roller ball mouse. Unfortunately such equipment is unlikely to be available.

Part of the solution to these issues is staff training and ring-fenced funding. Informed staff can make necessary adaptations, such as slowing down mouse speed and changing background colours on monitors. They may need to print out certain pages so learners are not repeatedly scrolling backwards and forwards to locate information/instructions they cannot retain. An excellent book on dealing with these issues has been produced in the NIACE e-guidelines series: *Supporting adult learners with dyslexia: Harnessing the power of technology* (2006).

Unfortunately, England has recently taken a step backwards with regards to dyslexia. Screening has largely been suspended, in adult prisons at least, for two reasons: fear of falling foul of disability legislation; and the terms of education contracts, which require the assessment and support of those with identified learning needs.

Despite requests for training from prison tutors, I have been told there is no call for dyslexia-awareness sessions in any local prisons and that the word *dyslexia* should be removed from my Visual Stress checklist.

This is a short-sighted and self-defeating move: if we fail to transmit useful skills to dyslexic prisoners, their chances of resettlement are seriously undermined. Since e-learning is on the agenda to stay, it is vital to ensure that dyslexia awareness is integrated into delivery in prisons.

The good practice guide on offending, e-learning & dyslexia (2007) and *Offenders dyslexia checklists* (1998) are available from M. Jameson: dyslexia.mj@dsl.pipex.com

Profiles

Here is the first part of our listing of the D·I·T·T Dyslexia consultancy e-team profiles. Throughout 2007 the following experts have signed up to act as consultants for D·I·T·T – primarily in putting agreed position papers to UNESCO and also being available individually for consultation.



Gabriel Bara has an advanced studies degree in Phonetics and a Masters in Software Engineering. His experience includes language teaching, IT training and e-Learning consultancy, with areas of special interest in language acquisition, cognitive sciences and multimedia.



Dr Steve Chinn (D·I·T·T Honorary Board Member) founded, and for 19 years ran, an award-winning school for dyslexic boys. An independent consultant on maths learning difficulties, he has written several books and articles on dyslexia, learning difficulties in maths, and dyscalculia. Dr Chinn lectures worldwide and trains teachers and teacher trainers on how to assess and teach children and adults presenting these deficits.

His book, *The trouble with maths* (Routledge Falmer, 2004), won the learning and teaching award from the National Association for Special Needs Education and the *Times Education Supplement*.



Pauline Cogan is interested in formative assessment and is currently devising a test to identify early school-age children who are at risk of dyslexia, as part of her doctoral research in the School of Psychology at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. She has an MSc, three degrees and three post-graduate diplomas.



Anny Cooreman is an independent consultant and expert in the field of severe learning disorders and gifted children. She created a school for gifted pupils with dyslexia and dyscalculia and has published several books as well as developing a new method for remediation of maths problems. Anny also manages the *Die-'s-lekti-kus* support group. See also www.eurekaonderwijs.be and www.letop.be.



Dr Lisa Dummer-Smoch (D·I·T·T Honorary Board Member) was a teacher at several schools, including special schools for children with handicaps in speech development and children showing a general pattern of being unable to learn. Her areas of interest are school psychology, diagnostics, learning to read and dyslexia, and the development of special methods for training dyslexic children. She was a lecturer at a Pädagogische Hochschule for teacher training and senior lecturer after retiring. Dr Dummer-Smoch is the author of *Kieler Leseaufbau*, a neuropsychologically based, multi-sensory training program for dyslexics. She received an Austrian award for her PhD dissertation in 1979 and the award of the German Parents Association for Dyslexics in 1995.



Professor Pol Ghesquière, PhD is professor at the Centre for Parenting, Child Welfare and Disabilities of the faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium). He has a bachelor's degree in philosophy, a bachelor's and master's degree in educational sciences, postgraduate training in systemic and family therapy and a doctorate, from the same university.

Pol Ghesquière is an Academic Fellow of the International Academy for Research on Learning Disabilities (IARLD). He is also a member of the group of experts of the Dutch Dyslexia Association, president of the Flemish Learning Disabilities Society and editor of several journals on special needs education. His scientific areas of interest include the cognitive aspects of dyslexia and dyscalculia and their neurobiological basis, the assessment of specific learning disabilities, effective instruction, and remedial teaching of children with learning problems.



Michael Kalmár, SR Sonderschuloberlehrer Dipl-Päd, is Board Director of the Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Sprachheilpädagogik (Austrian Association of Educational Speech Pathologists), Board Director of the Österreichischen Bundesverbandes Legasthenie (Federal Dyslexia Association of Austria) and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the European Dyslexia Association, which is the voice of the people with dyslexia in Europe, representing 41 national and regional associations in 24 European countries. Michael is an experienced speech pathologist at the Vienna Language Therapy School and a lecturer and teacher at the Pedagogical High Schools in Vienna and Baden. He is a senior lecturer at the academy of the Federal Dyslexia Association and is also involved in EU and UN projects.

Author and editor of a specialised textbook, he is also an international speaker in speech pathology and dyslexia. His interests include expressive speech pathology, developmental language diagnostics of Turkish-speaking children, phonetics, phonotactics, phonology and the metaphonology of the German language.



Dr Duncan Milne (D·I·T·T Director of Tools for Literacy – Honorary Board Member) studied for his doctorate in Psychology and Education at the Centre for Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Auckland, New Zealand. Currently he is a research fellow of the Centre for Cognitive Neuroscience of the Mediterranean, CNRS, France, where he is investigating reading across five European languages which vary in their degree of orthographic depth/transparency. Duncan's areas of interest include dyslexia, theoretical models of reading, phonology and phonemic awareness, reading acquisition, and cross-language studies of reading.



Gunilla Löfgren Nisser (D·I·T·T Honorary Board Member) has a master's degree in Communicative Disorders from The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA, and is currently in private practice in Stockholm, Sweden. Her areas of professional activities are: educational evaluations and diagnosis of reading and learning disabilities in children, university students and adults, the teaching of reading, study skills and English language to students at all levels. Gunilla is also a consultant to a Swedish publishing company and contributes expert advice on English for a textbook for dyslexic students. A teachers' guide in how to teach English to people with dyslexia will follow. She has carried out three years of research on dyslexia at the Karolinska Institute.



Jennifer Owen Adams is Education Director of the British Dyslexia Association. Her areas of interest include: dyslexia-related educational policy of national governments; the role which the early identification of dyslexia plays in securing the educational success of children; the quality assurance of dyslexia-friendly good practice; the role an early years physical education programme can play in alleviating some of the difficulties experienced by young children with dyslexia; the feasibility of adopting a pan-disability approach to addressing the needs of young people and adults with dyslexia; dyslexia, adults and the workplace; the incidence of dyslexia amongst disadvantaged groups; and dyslexia and school exclusion.



Dr Gavin Reid is an experienced teacher, author, lecturer and educational psychologist. He was senior lecturer in Educational Studies at Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh from 1991-2007. He is now consultant at the Centre for Child Evaluation and Teaching (CCET) in Kuwait and consultant psychologist at the Reach Learning Center in Vancouver, Canada. He is also a director of the Red Rose School in Lancashire, UK, and trainer and educational consultant for Learning Works International. Dr Reid has written 21 books on literacy, learning and dyslexia and lectured to professionals and parents in more than 45 countries. He is the winner of many educational awards and an advisor to the board of the Canadian Academy of Therapeutic Tutors (CATT). He also sits on two editorial boards for international journals on dyslexia and reading.



Johan Schepens has been a teacher of French and English and the coordinator of the support team for pupils with learning disabilities since 1976. He has a keen interest in children with learning disabilities. Concerned by the lack of help for these children in the secondary school system, he initiated a strategy to help such children, emphasising the aspect of giftedness to whom he gives special attention because intelligent dyslexics have skills of adaptation which can compensate for a long time but can therefore go undetected for a long time. As well as being a full-time teacher, he is currently in charge of some 20 pupils with learning disabilities aged between 12 and 17. THE strategies he has devised are currently used in many schools and include early detection, addressing behavioural aspects, and involving parents.



Donald Schloss is the founder and chief executive of The Adult Dyslexia Organisation (ADO), UK. He focuses on disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed, ethnic minorities, the homeless and offenders.

He sits on a range of national committees and government steering groups.



Professor Linda Siegel specializes in the early identification of dyslexia, intervention for dyslexia, children learning English as a second language, assessment, definition of dyslexia and other learning disabilities, cognitive aspects of dyslexia and cognitive aspects of learning disabilities in mathematics, for all of which she is internationally acclaimed.

Professor Siegel is the official rapporteur between the D·I·T·T e-Consultancy Team and the panel of international experts that make up the D·I·T·T Scientific Advisory Committee.



Dr Chris Singleton is a chartered psychologist, senior lecturer in educational psychology, and director of the Psychological Assessment Unit at the University of Hull, UK. He lectures in educational psychology, cognition and learning, and child development. In 2006, he was one of the presenters at the D·I·T·T annual open forum held at the European Parliament. Dr Singleton's main research and professional interests are in the development of literacy and the identification and education of children and adults with dyslexia or other learning problems. He is member of many national committees on computers and education, and lectures widely at international conferences.



Dr Ian Smythe is a dyslexia consultant working on specific learning attributes in different language and cultural environments. His international work developed out of his PhD research into cognitive differences in dyslexics in different languages. This included dyslexia projects funded by the European Union, UK trusts and the Welsh Assembly. His papers and seminars address assessment, multilingual aspects and policy developments. His research complements a sound practical base as he works closely with national bodies and local networks in different parts of the world.

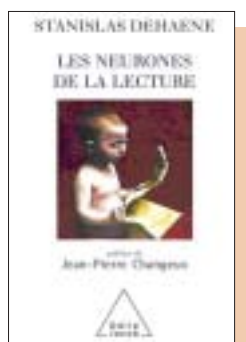
Eiko Todo is the mother of a Japanese dyslexic child, and has devoted her energies to setting up the first Japanese dyslexia support group.

For further detail please refer to Annex 4 of 'Dyslexia and the right to read' at <http://www.ditt-online.org/Archives/Unesco-report.pdf>



Susan van Alsenoy is an international learning support consultant. Her major contribution to teacher training is learning disabilities' Support for Mainstream Teachers. This project has been translated into 24 languages and is referred to under the good practice and principles

section on D·I·T·T's website. Her areas of specialisation include educational research and learning differences in other cultures. Susan will be running her workshop: 'We All Learn Differently, Some More Than Others' in Seoul, Korea, this March.



What works

Marianne Klees, member of D·I·T·T Scientific Advisory Committee, highly recommends *Les Neurones de la Lecture* by psychologist Stanislas Dehaene, who describes latest research into the neurological basis for the complex processes of reading – to be reviewed in the next issue of this *Newsletter*.

Announcements

★ The Belgian French-speaking ministry of education has agreed to assist in piloting a simple basic online training programme for all new trainee teachers under the supervision of members of D·I·T·T's Scientific Advisory Committee. The outline for the programme is in the three parts – awareness, identification and teaching methods & technologies – originally agreed by the D·I·T·T e-Consultancy Team.

★ Reports from D·I·T·T's regional ambassadors representing D·I·T·T are gratefully acknowledged and are available from the D·I·T·T office:

- Cecilia Gonzalez at the Berlin Educa Online conference
- Larry Moffett at the Microsoft Innovation Day 'Living and Building the Digital Future', Brussels, 4 December.

★ D·I·T·T's annual open forum: this year online, is scheduled for the autumn. See next issue.

★ Meetings: members of D·I·T·T wishing to attend UNESCO forthcoming events as part of our representation should please contact us at admin@ditt-online.org.

Money matters

Peter Hankey, D·I·T·T Treasurer, wrote to the Friends of D·I·T·T on 14 December 2007:

Firstly, let me assure you that your moral support to our projects over the years has been greatly appreciated.

As you know from our newsletters, D·I·T·T goes from strength to strength in coordinating and making known technical expertise on dyslexia, and sensitising the public through our films, DVDs and forums.

We are now undertaking our most ambitious project yet: a 3-year programme, 'Dyslexia in the UN Decade of Literacy', which will include senior educators, combining ideas for an expanded website service and a new film.

All this requires a new need for volunteers to search for sponsors, leaving few resources for the duties of covering our day-to-day expenses which even without any paid employees amount to an absolute minimum of € 2 000 per month, or € 24 000 per year.

This sum represents approximately € 60 per Friend to enable our counselling and help-line service and other vital work of D·I·T·T to continue.

Whilst we appreciate that there is no financial commitment required of the Friends, we would deeply appreciate any financial assistance you can give to help D·I·T·T fulfil its responsibilities to learners with dyslexia. Contributions can be tax-deductible. Please contact D·I·T·T for details.

We are grateful to those Friends of D·I·T·T who have generously sponsored boxes of Tintin CD-ROMs for specific projects such as the UK organization for Families of Prisoners, thereby helping D·I·T·T and at the same time benefiting people with dyslexia in need of encouragement and practical help.

Our thanks go to the *Oeuvres Reine Fabiola* for the startup funding for the film *Dyslexia – on the right track*. With three further partnership packages of € 25 000 in place, production can begin.

The broad strands of funding are outlined in the brochure at our Web site.

But this does not exclude specific giving for tailor-made partnership. Please contact the D·I·T·T Treasurer with your ideas for sponsorship.

Reflections

From Bianca – an 'I am' poem

I am a girl that is dyslexic
I hear other things that other people don't pay attention to
I see pictures in my mind for a lot of words
I want to get better in math
I am a girl that is dyslexic
I wonder what I will achieve
I pretend I'm not dyslexic some times
I feel scared about math tests
I touch different fabrics and some give my back shivers
I worry that others will laugh at me
I cried when I found out I was dyslexic
I understand that dyslexia is a gift
I say 'I don't get it'
I dream I can do my multiplication without mistakes
I try to do my best
I hope I can share how I feel with others
I am a girl that is dyslexic.

Bianca Winston – age 11

(D·I·T·T member Dr Vincent Goetry is currently giving Bianca one-to-one tuition within a scholarship scheme promoted by D·I·T·T)

What makes the Finnish system top of the league?

Reformed in 1970 – the Finnish education system is a system based on equality

- where neighbourhoods are mixed to allow for integration of immigrant families
- where all children are included – including those with special needs
- where those children in need of special help are granted this by specialists in their local community free of charge, alongside mainstream class learning
- where drop-out does not feature
- where 'doubling/repeating the year' is disallowed
- where there are the fewest teacher contact hours
- where there are no school inspectorates
- where teachers are fully in charge of their classes and stay with their pupils more – providing continuity and fullest possible understanding.

Thinking Jean-Paul – Jean-Paul thinking

Jean-Paul is our first peace education specialist stagiaire. We thank him for the major contribution he made to the life of D·I·T·T – his professionalism, his enlightening thoughts and for writing this Newsletter before his recent return to the Lebanon.

He writes:

‘... Since wars begin in the minds of men... it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace should be constructed.’ (UNESCO constitution)

My aim is to help towards transforming war and hatred mentalities into tolerance and peace mentalities through an education that gives the new generations the opportunity to learn about their world and develop peaceful worldviews in order to live together with ‘The other’.

Before joining D·I·T·T I completed a degree in Peace and Conflict studies at the European Peace University in Austria. This followed my involvement in developing and conducting workshops on peaceful pedagogy in my country, Lebanon, for training trainers for peace teachers at school and university levels, scout leaders and summer camp trainers.

My interests match D·I·T·T’s aims in advocating for inclusive and compassionate education that takes into account every single child, listens to, respects and adapts to each one’s individual needs.

D·I·T·T’s initiatives are in line with UN Literacy Decade and are vital in an era when the UN is calling for inclusive education and for developing policies and tools to prepare teachers to work with students with special needs.

At D·I·T·T members and volunteers work together in a family spirit. Their dedication and motivation is inspiring as they go forward on a journey full of challenges, growth, and opportunities to make a useful contribution to society.’

Not to be missed

Jean-Paul referred us on his last day to Sir Ken Robinson: ‘Do schools kill creativity?’

www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbtY

Quotes from Leonardo da Vinci

- If you do not value life, all of life, you do not deserve it.
- To know how to listen to others is to enter into the mind-set of others – beyond your own way of thinking.
- Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.
- When looking, take everything in scrupulously, because what you are about to see is no longer the same as what you have just seen.

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