

2007 INTERNATIONAL VISUAL THINKING CONFERENCE



“Current developments in the understanding and use of visual thinking skills and strategies in education and business”

This one day conference will be hosted by **Oliver West**, director of Footnotes Visual Thinking Strategies for Learning and Personal Development. Oliver will be joined by two more keynote speakers who are renowned worldwide as experts in their fields. Below is a profile of each speaker and a summary of what they will be sharing at the conference.

Thomas G. West, Director of the Center for the Study of Dyslexia and Talent at George Mason University, U.S.A and author of the award-winning book “*In the Mind's Eye: Visual Thinkers, Gifted People With Dyslexia and Other Learning Difficulties, Computer Images and the Ironies of Creativity*”. Currently in its 14th printing, the book was recognized by American Library Association with a gold seal in 1997 as "an outstanding academic title" and, later, in 1998, as one of the "best of the best" for the year. The book was published in Japanese translation as *Geniuses Who Hated School*. A Chinese translation was published in 2004. West is also the author of: *Thinking Like Einstein--Returning to Our Visual Roots with the Emerging Revolution in Computer Information Visualization* published in 2004. According to one reviewer: "Every once in a while a book comes along that turns one's thinking upside down. *In the Mind's Eye* is just such a book."

In the Mind's Eye covers brain research, computer graphic technologies and profiles of 11 famous people who have shown evidence of great visual talents along with dyslexia or other learning difficulties. One of the main arguments of the book is that we need to better understand the great diversity of human brains--including the hidden learning difficulties that often come along with superior talents and capabilities--as well as the hidden talents that often coexist with various learning problems. The profiles include: Michael Faraday, James Clerk Maxwell, Albert Einstein, Rev. Charles L. Dodgson, Henri Poincaré, Thomas Alva Edison, Nikola Tesla, Leonardo da Vinci, Winston S. Churchill, Gen. George S. Patton and William Butler Yeats.

The book points out that major advances in computer information visualization technologies promise to transform education and the workplace--greatly increasing the perceived value of visual talents for understanding patterns in complex systems in business, the sciences and other fields. Many of those who rely heavily on visual thinking (sometimes with dyslexia or other language difficulties) are already leaders in areas of technological innovation as well as science and business--as technological change makes their distinctive visual strengths more and more valuable just as their academic and language weaknesses become less and less important.

Articles reviewing or citing *In the Mind's Eye* or *Thinking Like Einstein* have appeared in *The Financial Times*, *The Times Educational Supplement*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, *The Evening Standard*, *The Oxford Mail*, *The Australian*, *The New Zealand Herald*, *Kagaku Asahi Science Magazine*, *Nikkei Daily*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Washingtonian* magazine, *Computers in Physics*, *The American Bar Association Journal*, *The Roeper Review*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Los Angeles Times Book Review*. West has appeared in television and radio and programs broadcast by NPR and PBS affiliates in the US as well as New Zealand Radio and TV, the BBC and UK Channel 4, among others.

Mr. West has been invited to provide presentations and consult for business, educational, scientific, medical, art, design, and computer organizations in the U.S. and overseas, including groups in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Germany, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Sweden, The Netherlands, Hong Kong and Taiwan. These organizations include: the Confederation of British Industry in London, 50 Max Planck Institutes in Göttingen, GCHQ in Cheltenham, Green College at Oxford University, the US Library of Medicine in Bethesda, the Aspen Institute in Colorado, the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, the Netherlands Design Institute in Amsterdam, the Royal College of Art, Uppsala University, SRI International in San Francisco, a reunion of Markle Scholars in Medicine Prize Winners in Phoenix, Arizona, and a gathering of visualization artists, scientists and technologists sponsored by MIT at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

Please [click here](#) for three articles by Thomas G. West

Tom's contribution to the 2007 conference is entitled:

Medieval Clerk to Renaissance Visual Thinker

Morning talk: **Visual Thinkers Who Created the Modern World**

Afternoon talk: **Visual Technologies Transforming the Future**

In his books *In the Mind's Eye* and *Thinking Like Einstein*, Thomas G. West investigates the importance of visual thinking in entrepreneurial business, educational innovation and scientific discovery. He argues that visual thinking is often poorly understood in traditional academic settings. However, the ability to think visually has long been a major source of creative invention and discovery -- and may come to be seen as the single most important skill required to use the newest and most powerful information visualization technologies.

Just as traditional education is mainly based on the technology of the printing press, West argues that future education and business will be based on the sophisticated use of computer graphics and scientific information visualization technologies. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a complex visualization of information is worth a million words -- and will often lead to insights that can provide major competitive advantage in business and other fields. Visual thinkers often are able to have a "global view" and are said to "see what others do not see." Visual technologies can amplify this capability.

Although visual thinkers are often major innovators, many have had difficulties with words and some may be dyslexic. But the world is rapidly changing and time seems to be on their side. Those who have been at the bottom of the class in the old system based mainly on words are already emerging at the top of the class in a new system based mainly on the sophisticated use of images. However, few realize the deep significance of this shift.

For some four hundred or five hundred years our schools have been teaching the skills of a Medieval Clerk -- reading, writing, counting, memorizing texts. Now it seems we are on the verge of a new era that will require a very different set of skills -- those of a Renaissance visual thinker such as Leonardo da Vinci. With such a change, skills considered desirable today may very well be seen as obsolete and unwanted tomorrow. Traditional basic skills will always be needed, but will have low relative value in the global market place. Soon, machines will be the best clerks. Therefore, we must be able to do things that machines cannot do -- and these are likely to involve the insightful and integrative capacities associated with visual modes of thought.

Professor John Stein, Professor of Physiology, Sensorimotor Control Lab and Dyslexia Unit, Oxford University, U.K. Prof. John Stein studied Medicine and Neurology at University and then was appointed tutor in Medicine at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1970. Since then in addition to teaching medical students he has been studying how impaired development of magnocellular neurones in the brain may explain many of the attentional, memory, auditory and visual problems of dyslexics. This has enabled him to develop simple treatments, such as coloured filters and omega-3 fish oils to improve their function and thus greatly improve dyslexics' reading, without endangering their artistic talents. His daughter, Lucy, is a synaesthetic painter. He doesn't cook fish and his brother, TV fish chef, Rick Stein, does not do neuroscience! The basic cause of dyslexics' temporal processing impairments is probably a congenital mild impairment of the development of magnocellular neurones. Stein is collaborating with Prof. Tony Monaco (Wellcome Inst. of Human Genetics) to find out whether they are linked with genes known to be associated with neurodevelopmental problems. With Prof. Angela Vincent (Inst. Mol. Medicine) he is also attempting to find out whether antibodies may attack magnocellular neurones during foetal development.

John's contribution to the 2007 conference is entitled:

Visual dyslexia – a source of artistic talent?

Dyslexics are bad at reading because they inherit a vulnerability of 'magnocellular' nerve cells in the brain. These are responsible for rapid analysis of letters and their order and rapid translation of the letters into the sounds they stand for. Dyslexics are therefore poor at the linear, fine grained, visual and auditory sequencing that is required for reading. However during development different kinds of nerve cells compete with each other for survival; and so dyslexic brains may often develop stronger long range 'holistic', as opposed to linear logic, connections. These may explain why dyslexics often develop unusual visuospatial talents and why they are so good at seeing unusual associations, which is one of the essential ingredients of creativity. A disproportionate number of creative artists, architects and engineers are dyslexic. Therefore we must not subordinate the whole educational system to literacy and linear logic. We must create space for arts, fantasy and imagination and be prepared to forgive some literacy weaknesses in their honour. Our future may depend on it.

Oliver West, Director of Footnotes Visual Thinking Strategies for Learning and Personal Development and lecturer at University College Falmouth, U.K. West is a landscape artist and visual thinking specialist, based in Cornwall. Over the last ten years he has developed 'Footnotes', a portfolio of visual thinking strategies, which he teaches in schools, colleges and universities throughout the U.K., and in several international schools in Europe. He has worked with over 60 schools in Cornwall, supported by Cornwall County Council and the Arts Council, and he is currently contracted by University College Falmouth to deliver visual thinking workshops to students and staff. Oliver's wide experience within education has enabled him to establish a unique understanding of the needs of those individuals like himself who think predominantly in visual and holistic terms (rather than lexical and linear terms), many of whom would traditionally be classed as dyslexic. With strong dyslexic tendencies of his own, Oliver is uniquely qualified to help understand this learning difference and embrace its potential. The main aim of his visual thinking workshops and tutorials is to raise awareness of the needs of visual thinkers and enable them to develop their own personal strategies for learning and personal development. Oliver says,

"Many non-linear thinkers are highly creative people; their originality and imagination are valued in the world of employment, but we spend their formative years trying to make them conform. We should help them to make their mark by being different. Artists, almost by definition, see things holistically: they see connections that other people don't, and they may experience them in many different ways – perhaps as relationships of colour, space, shape or time. But in order to develop as an individual, it is not enough just to do: you need to share, test, analyse and reflect on what you do, and that means coming to terms with words. My visual thinking techniques help non-linear thinkers to translate their thoughts, and they help linear thinkers to unlock more creative forms of tapping their creative potential."

Oliver's workshops start with the basic principles of visual thinking and how to recognise it, followed by practical strategies for harnessing visual creativity. He teaches methods for note taking, presentation and essay preparation, research and project planning, memory recall and personal management and organisation. These methods are not highly prescriptive, but are intended to enable each individual to tap into their own unique learning style.

During this conference Oliver will be focussing on practical ideas about how to tap into the creative potential of visual thinkers. His background as an artist has led to the development of strategies that use drawn images and annotations to create holistic image maps for organising and processing information; these can be applied in personal management, memory recall, information sequencing and project planning, and in many other educational tasks such as spelling, revising, essay writing and presentation. Oliver will introduce some of these strategies and discuss how they can be used to meet the needs of visual thinkers in education and business.

Please [follow this link](#) for directions to the conference venue,
Chateau Bossey, Celigny, Geneva, Switzerland

2007 INTERNATIONAL VISUAL THINKING CONFERENCE



BOOKING FORM

I would like to attend the
2007 INTERNATIONAL VISUAL THINKING CONFERENCE
in Celigny, Geneva ([directions here](#)) on Friday September 28th 2007
Registration 09.15 End of programme 17.30

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:

.....

PLACE OF WORK & ROLE:

CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS:

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER:

ANY SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS?

COST: £110 including lunch and two coffee breaks.

U.K. payment: by cheque please, payable to Oliver West.

Switzerland and all International payment: by PayPal please, to fees@oliverwestfootnotes.com
(It is free and simple to set up a Paypal account. You can use a debit or credit card to make payments, and there is no charge to send money in £Sterling. Go to <https://www.paypal.com> and follow the link at the bottom of the page to your country)

Accommodation is not included in this fee, and must be booked by each delegate. The Chateau itself is a beautiful place to stay, with a choice of rooms. Please click this link for [details & prices](#). Please email us if you would like details of other local accommodation.

SIGNED:

DATE:

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM BY September 17th 2007 TO ONE OF THE ADDRESSES BELOW.
THANK YOU.**

In the U.K.:
Jeremy Barham
27 Hamilton Road
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EX3 0LP, U.K.

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Questions? Please email us! bookings@oliverwestfootnotes.com