



ISLRR VIEW

Winter 2019

Editor's letter

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The first holiday I took without my parents was to Dublin. With my best friend, I took a long coach journey through England and Wales, and then the overnight ferry across the Irish Sea. Perhaps surprisingly we didn't spend all of our time in the fantastic pubs of Dublin: we also went to a couple of museums, went to the seaside at Howth, and to a talk and screening at the Irish Film Centre.

The holiday must have had a lasting effect on my best friend: years later he fell in love with an Irish woman and moved from London to Dublin to raise their family. I go and visit them every few months and still take the ferry, for old-time's sake. It's a great city – and the pubs are still fantastic. There's no better place to sit and talk than in a real Irish pub, with a beer (or soft drink).

So I'm looking forward to the ISLRR conference next year even more than usual. The preparations are going very well and it's shaping up to be a fantastic meeting – great science, great networking, great sightseeing, and, who knows, maybe a pub visit or two. I'll see you there!

Read more about Vision 2020 on page 6

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Note

You may well notice that this edition of the newsletter is less colourful and less well-designed than usual. This is as Dr Hilde van der Aa, who previously designed the newsletter, has stepped down. Thanks for all of your work, Hilde! If you have graphic design or desktop publishing skills and would like to contribute to ISLRR by helping with the newsletter, please contact me at mcrossland@nhs.net

MEET THE EXEC: BART MELIS-DANKERS

In the first of a new series, we will be finding out more about the committee members of ISLRR. First up is vice-president Bart Melis-Dankers. You may recognise Bart from low vision meetings and previous conferences: he's the one in the smart jackets!



ISLRR View: Hi Bart! What is your role on the ISLRR committee?

Bart: I'm vice-president of ISLRR and I was one of the main organisers of Vision2017 in The Hague, the Netherlands. It is hard to believe that that was already two years ago. Time flies! The next conference in Dublin is already next year. I really do hope that a lot of people come over to beautiful and hospitable Dublin to attend Vision2020!

ISLRR View: Outside ISLRR, what is your main job?

Bart: I'm working as a clinical physicist for Royal Dutch Visio, Centre of Expertise for blind and partially sighted people. Visio has 40 rehabilitation centres all over the country. As a physicist my role is threefold: (1) I initiate and coordinate scientific research to improve our rehabilitation

programs. My main topics are (a) motorised mobility (both fast and slow motorized traffic participation by people with a visual impairment) and (b) acquired brain damage; (2) I coordinate the visual function assessments of our clients in my region and (3) I give advice about inclusive accessibility of the build environment, indoor as well as outdoor. Light, contrast and colour are of course 'typical physics'. In that way we try to make the real world as visible as possible.

ISLRR View: What do you think is the most exciting change in low vision research and rehabilitation in the last 5 years?

Bart: In general, it is the fast growing group of clients with all kinds of non-specific visual complaints due to CVA, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinsons disease or dementia. 5 years ago the vast majority of our clients had an eye disease and bad eyes. At this moment about 1/3 of our clients have relatively good eyes, normal visual acuity and visual field but visual problems due to brain damage. Of course clients with homonymous hemianopia are part of this group, but we now see a lot of clients who read our letter charts as a normally sighted subject would, but they still complain about troubled, blurred vision, light adaptation problems, visual fatigue, distorted images, diplopia and so

on. In addition, some of them really do have problems with visual (and/or auditory) overstimulation. They are not able to filter the visual information in relevant and irrelevant parts. Walking in a crowded shopping street is a disaster for them, because all information come through without proper filtering.

For me personally the most exciting moment was the European allowance of bioptic driving. Visio started its driving research programme Auto&Mobility in 1998 together with the University of Groningen, The Ministry of Traffic & Infrastructure and the Dutch Driving License Authority CBR. In that time we were laughed at: Driving by people with low vision was considered a very, very, very bad idea. Due to our evidence-based research we managed to change the Dutch and finally the European legislation.

In the Netherlands we now have a driving rehabilitation program in which we can teach people with low visual acuity to drive with a bioptic telescope and in which we train people with visual field defects like hemianopia to make compensating eye and head movements.

After our training they follow driving lessons and they have to pass a practical fitness to drive test

by CBR of about 1 hour in busy traffic. If they pass the test they can get a valid driving license despite their visual impairment. This really improves quality of life for those people!

ISLRR View: What do you think is the biggest challenge in low vision research and rehabilitation?

Bart: Prevention of low vision. If we are able to prevent low vision we do not need rehabilitation any more. New techniques like gen therapy or life style and nutrition management might really prevent eye diseases.

ISLRR View: What are your hobbies outside work?

Bart: I love to play field hockey. I'm 51 and still enjoying the game. Although I'm not a technically gifted player, I still play at high level in the 35+ competition. I compensate for my lack of technique by running and moving a lot and by tactical insight. When we let 'the ball do the job' by quick passing our team of (very) old

guys is still going strong. My oldest team mate is 63, so I've still some years ahead to play this fantastic game.

ISLRR View: Tell us something people might not know about you...

Bart: If you google 'Bart Melis-Dankers' the first ten hits are all related to my professional life. That might give you the impression that I'm a workaholic. But, although I love my job, I'm also a family man. My wife Denise and I, have 3 kids: Joep (19), Ieke (17) and Loes (15). Our mutual hobby is hiking in the mountains. That does sound a bit strange for someone who lives in one of the most flat parts of the world. After the Seychelles, the Netherlands is the flattest and lowest country in the world. Our house is actually only 2 meters above sea level. Oh, by the way, me and the children love ice cream (Denise doesn't!).

Pssst -- Do you know your ISLRR membership number?

Dana Bakir & Gislin Dagnelie
Montreal, Canada & Batimore, Maryland, USA

If your reaction is "My What?" -- and this is almost certain for over 90% of the people reading this -- then you most likely have not yet submitted your membership renewal form for the next 3 years of ISLRR membership.

The bad news is that this makes you ineligible for the reduced registration

rate for the Vision 2020 meeting in Dublin, because that rate requires you to furnish your ISLRR membership number.

The good news is that you can fix the problem, quickly and conveniently:

- 1) From the ISLRR home page, <http://www.islrr.org>, click on Membership, and download the membership application (fillable PDF or Word)
- 2) Complete the requested information:
 - Check the membership category and applicable fee (3 years for one payment!)
 - If you qualify for the student rate, include the required certification of your status
 - For payment by Paypal (preferred), tick the box and we will bill you
 - for payment by credit card complete the information and sign the form
 - for payment by cheque (US \$ only!) enclose a cheque drawn on a US bank
- 3) Send a scan of the completed form as an email attachment, following the instructions on the form

You will receive a payment confirmation from ISLRR treasurer Gislin Dagnelie (for Paypal you will receive the invoice first, then a payment confirmation once you pay), followed by a membership confirmation email from Dana Bakir, ISLRR's administrative assistant.

Your long-awaited membership number will be in that last email!!!

We look forward to receiving a flood of forms. :-)



Vision 2020 Preview

The Vision 2020 Team, Dublin, Ireland

Vision2020 the 13th International Conference by the International Society for Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation will be held from Sunday 12th – Thursday 16th July 2020 in The Convention Centre Dublin (CCD), Ireland.

This is going to be a truly unique conference where the leading practitioners in Low Vision Research, Rehabilitation and Vision Impairment will meet to share current thinking and introduce future thinking in order to achieve the best practice for Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation throughout the world.

The theme for the conference is Imagining the Impossible. The conference programme will reflect and celebrate achievement; present what's possible now and explore the future and to make 'impossible' dreams a reality. Keynote presentations by an International panel of experts including Prof. Pearse Keane, Prof. Jane Farrar, Prof. Rupert Bourne and Prof. Joseph Rizzo and informed panel discussions will challenge and stimulate in a programme designed over 3 days culminating with optional site visits to the host associations NCBI, ChildVision, Fighting Blindness and Irish Guide Dogs on 16th July.

Complementing the Scientific programme will be an industry exhibition showcasing the latest products and services in the Low Vision sector. Vision 2020 also offers attendees a social and cultural opportunity to visit Dublin, a small capital city with a huge reputation for culture and always the warmest of welcomes!

So if you are Low Vision Team practitioners including ophthalmologists, optometrists, vision therapists, researchers, rehabilitation specialists, occupational therapists, teachers and individuals with a visual impairment don't miss Vision 2020 12th-16th July 2020 in Dublin
www.vision2020dublin.com