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Press release/invitation

Handwriting remains – even in the digital age. But...

DARMSTADT, 2 November 2017. “The media are changing, but handwriting remains.” And, “Education needs handwriting in a sensible digital context.” These are two working theses that scientists, teacher trainers, representatives of culture ministries as well as teachers and occupational therapists want to discuss at an international symposium held by the Schreibmotorik Institut in cooperation with the TU Darmstadt’s Institute for Ergonomics on 10 November in Darmstadt. The focus will be upon the opportunities and risks of handwriting in the context of digitalisation as well as upon addressing the fundamental issues of future educational practice.

Handwriting and digital technology are by no means mutually exclusive. This is shown by the latest technological developments, which use handwriting as an input medium, for example. “Writing by hand is one of the most user-friendly forms of interaction with human-machine interfaces – direct, flexible, intuitive and creative”, explains Dr. Marianela Diaz Meyer, ergonomics expert and director of the Schreibmotorik Institut, Heroldsberg, which will be holding the symposium in Darmstadt. Presentations will include recent studies on writing with digital and analogue media as well as proven practical approaches involving combinations of both worlds.

For several years, there have been international efforts aimed at increasingly replacing handwriting with typed letters in schools. The contributions at the symposium will reveal the various problems this causes in terms of educational attainment. After all, handwriting promotes cognitive development. “Only three fingers write, but the whole brain works.” This is the title of a lecture by Prof. Dr. Ruud van der Weel, professor of cognitive psychology, Norwegian University of Science & Technology.

Prof. Dr. Gerald Lembke, professor of digital media, DHBW Mannheim, will use his opening speech to discuss the opportunities and risks of digital education. The fundamental question of “How prepared are children for writing lessons?” will also be addressed during the symposium. To this end, Dr. Christian Marquardt, scientific advisor for the Schreibmotorik Institut, will be presenting a simple new writing motor skills test for those who are just learning to write, called the “SMI CompetenceWeb”. Alongside scientific findings,

experience from practice will also be presented. The reports by Djoke Mulder from the Netherlands and Ina Herklotz from Germany are based on various forms of teaching: one addresses a combination of handwriting and tablets in the classroom, while the other focuses exclusively on discovery and exploration using the hands. What are the important impulses that can be derived for educational practice? This will be discussed from an interdisciplinary perspective. The entire programme can be found at www.schreibmotorik-institut.com/index.php/en/programme.

The International Symposium is part of the Handwriting 2020 campaign, a joint initiative from the Schreibmotorik Institut and the Didacta Association of the German Education Industry.

2nd International Symposium on Handwriting Skills 2017

Friday, 10 November 2017, 9am to 5pm

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg-Haus
Dieburger Straße 241
64287 Darmstadt, Germany

Media representatives are warmly invited to report on the event.

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