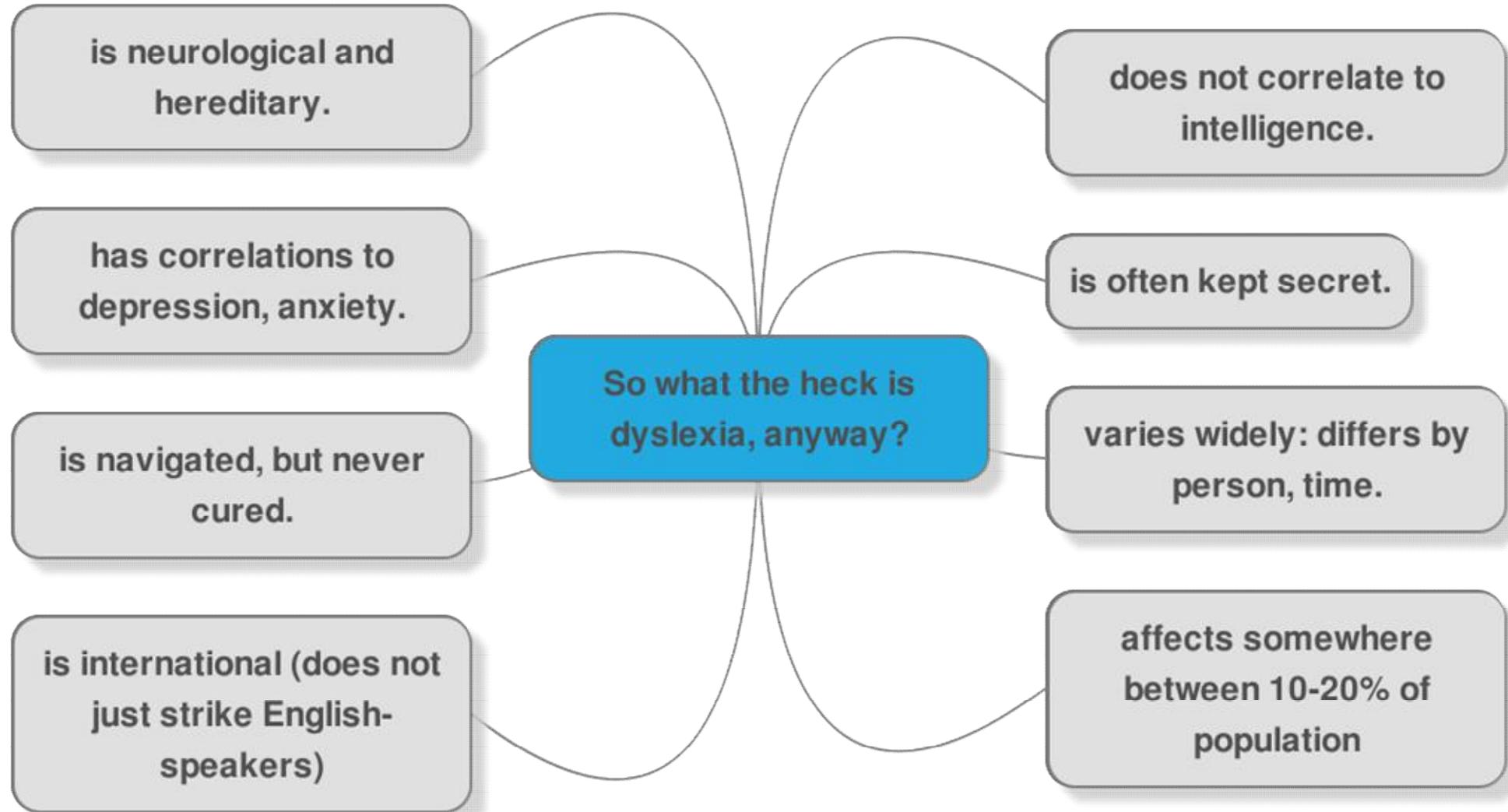# Putting learning disabilities into library school

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What is dyslexia?

is neurological and hereditary.

does not correlate to intelligence.

has correlations to depression, anxiety.

is often kept secret.

So what the heck is dyslexia, anyway?

is navigated, but never cured.

varies widely: differs by person, time.

is international (does not just strike English-speakers)

affects somewhere between 10-20% of population

For more…

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Why dyslexia?

- **Dyslexia**
  - We're everywhere...but we're barely present in library and information science curricula. Let's change this, and work towards representation of people with learning disabilities in LIS education so we can better serve tomorrow's patrons at tomorrow's libraries.

- **Why Dyslexia?**
  - It is relatively common, meaning that dyslexics are everywhere. A body of scientific research is focused on better understanding it, yet very little is written in library and information science journals about serving patrons with dyslexia.

Why Should I Care?

- Not so long ago, people with learning disabilities, including dyslexia, were classified as stupid or difficult. By educating ourselves so we can better understand and support dyslexics, we can work to prevent a return to this sort of thinking, as well as ensure that dyslexic students feel less out of place in LIS classrooms—and that our patrons receive a higher standard of service.

- Since dyslexia can affect dyslexics' mental health, ensuring that they feel accepted and safe in their environments—whether they be school or professional—is even more important.

- Luckily, many accommodations are easy to make.

Bringing Dyslexia into the Classroom

Bringing It In (To the classroom)

- Consider universal design.

- Talk about both differences and similarities.

- Think of your fonts: avoid italics, seek clarity.

- Be open to assisstive technology (computers, e-readers, etc.)

- Remember the secretive: not every dyslexic will admit to it.

- Talk about the ADA.

Be aware of the ADA: dyslexics are covered

Remember that there's no cure: it's part of who we are.

Be discreet and understanding if approached for help.

Remember the quiet zones: many dyslexics need them to concentrate.

Teaching Tomorrow's Librarians About Serving Dyslexics

Keep up with research and guidlines (IFLA, others)

Font, font, font: always seek clarity over style.

Think of the dyslexic as individual: we're all different; dyslexia manifests in many ways.

Keep up with universal design.

Commonalities

What do these measures have in common? They will be helpful for lots of people, not just patrons and students with dyslexia.

Working Together

Dyslexia is never going anywhere ever, but we can work together to ensure that our dyslexic peers feel less alone (and alien) in their LIS classes, and that tomorrow's librarians are prepared to serve tomorrow's dyslexic patrons.

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Acknowledgments

I would never have gotten here without parents who didn't give up on me and a huge extended family at my back—so this is for them.

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