



Donna Nicholson Arnott Is a Student Who Uses MindMeister to Process Large Amounts of Information Despite Her Dyslexia.

“Mind mapping records the interconnections and structures of complex texts for me and takes the pressure off me holding them in my head.”

Donna Nicholson Arnott, Dyslexic student in higher education

At a Glance...

- ★ Processing big amounts of information
- ★ Planning and targeting revision and scheduling writing
- ★ More efficient reading and studying

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Donna Nicholson Arnott is an MSc Information and Library Studies Student at Strathclyde University. Though she’s always been a visual learner, Donna didn’t come to mind mapping until she got diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of 27. “I was struggling to organize my thoughts around my undergraduate dissertation. That’s how I found out,” Donna says. “As soon as they diagnose you dyslexic, they start recommending mind mapping to you. At first I was intrigued and tried hand-drawing mind maps, but I quickly grew frustrated by the inflexibility and difficulty of developing complex ideas on paper. Then I was introduced to MindMeister, which, being digital and cloud-based, let me rejig layout, swap ideas around and develop areas as I went along.”

But Donna still didn’t fully embrace mind mapping until she started her MSc. “It’s the increase in content that’s the killer for dyslexics like me. So much of it is in words, and the volume of it is dismal. It can take me a while to unpack content wrapped up like this – looking at the words, digging out their meaning and connecting each word to the next. I can get text to sit still most of the time, I just get really tired processing.”

Uses and benefits

“When I decided to attempt the MSc, I heavily invested in identifying efficient study methods. I got myself an iPad and tried out text editing apps that would be compatible with Microsoft Word. I got a Dropbox account and synced everything up so I could take notes on the move and further edit them on the laptop when I got a chance. One of the things that suddenly seemed to work well for digesting and processing content was mind mapping with MindMeister. It has facilitated research, reading and planning with great efficiency.” Donna finally became a really committed mind mapper when she used the tool to prepare for a series of exams. “The map I created for the exams was huge and it helped me tremendously in planning and targeting revision as well as scheduling writing,” Donna says.

The result

“Mind mapping has been such a great way to unpack a paper and it’s meant that I haven’t generally needed to reread so much,” Donna says. “Coupled with digitally annotated PDFs using the Adobe Reader app, recovering lost references has been so much easier too.”

Mind mapping with MindMeister is an important part of Donna’s learning strategy. It hasn’t cured her dyslexia, but it has allowed her to continue climbing up the academic tree to a level that many dyslexics never reach.