Issues of definition and diagnosis continue to challenge educators as ongoing research helps us continue to refine our definition(s) of dyslexia. In the 1995 *Annals of Dyslexia*, G. Reid Lyon discussed the “working” definition of dyslexia that is currently used by the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development, the National Center for Learning Disabilities, and the IDA Research Committee. Two articles in this year’s *Annals* provide further support for this working definition and highlight the need to change the nation’s current discrepancy-based definitions.

Virginia Berninger provides a concise review of definitional issues. She begins with an historical perspective on developmental dyslexia in the U.S. and examines research that supports IDA’s “working definition,” i.e., dyslexia as the dissociation between word reading skills and higher level processes. She then proposes that educators develop a Diagnostic and Treatment Manual for Educational Disorders, analogous to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in psychiatry which, in her view, does not address academic difficulties (such as poor reading) sufficiently. In her view, a manual of this kind would provide a much needed classification scheme for better understanding of developmental and learning differences.

D. Lynne Flowers and her colleagues conducted a longitudinal study on the use of the ability-achievement discrepancy formula. Their findings support those of other studies showing that IQ-achievement discrepancy is not an appropriate method of determining which children need help learning to read. Findings also support a “deficit” rather than “developmental lag” model of reading disability. In their conclusions, the authors make recommendations for changes in public policy.
The historical roots of the IQ-achievement discrepancy definition of learning disability are discussed as a reference point for explaining why this definition came into being and why it is inadequate for dealing with the variety of learning and developmental disabilities that present in school settings. A proposal is offered and justified for defining learning disabilities on the basis of profiles for multiple developmental domains that affect learning. In this proposal, developmental dyslexia is differentiated from other learning disabilities. Developmental dyslexia is defined as uneven development (dissociation) between word reading and higher-level processes in the functional reading system. Dyslexics may struggle with word reading because of deficits in phonological processes, orthographic-phonological connections, and/or fluency (rate, automaticity, or executive coordination). The need for both national and international classification schemes for defining specific learning and developmental disabilities for the purposes of educational services and research is emphasized.