

## The Deaf Action Committee For Sign Writing® (DAC)

### 1989 Year-End Report

1989 has been a tremendous year. New projects were completed, and old projects renewed.

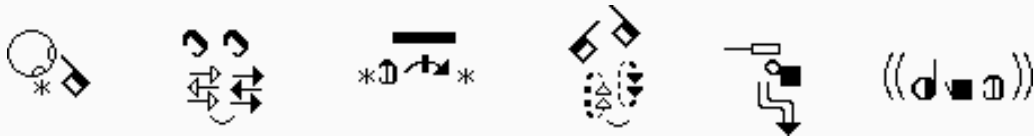
#### 1. The Deaf Action Committee For Sign Writing

Many thanks are extended to the members of the Deaf Action Committee (the DAC) for an outstanding job in 1989! Coordinated by Lucinda O'Grady Batch, members Petra Horn, Freda Norman, Paulette Sottak, Valerie Sutton, Karen van Hoek and Nancy Ellen Woo wrote and edited *the SignWriter Newsletter*, presented Sign Writing at four conventions, enlarged our English/American Sign Language dictionary, began a new Idioms dictionary, lectured for the Southern California Association (SCRAD)--- at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) and gave private lessons to a special guest, Deaf researcher Lorna Allsop, from the University of Bristol in England.

In regards to the four conventions: **1. Gallaudet University in Washington DC.** Karen van Hoek traveled to Washington DC in June to present Sign Writing at the National Literacy Conference held at Gallaudet University. While at Gallaudet, Karen also taught a workshop on our Sign Writing computer programs to the----- **2. CAID Conference in San Diego.** Held at the Princess Resort Hotel in San Diego, members of the DAC presented Sign Writing at a special computer booth at the conference, meeting many educators interested in Sign Writing. **3. Conference for Deaf Researchers in Hamburg, Germany.** Lucinda O'Grady Batch traveled to the Netherlands to present Sign Writing to Deaf people there, and then traveled onward to Hamburg, Germany, to attend the international conference for Deaf Researchers. Lucinda discussed the merits of Sign Writing with participants on a private basis and made many good contacts in the European Deaf Community. **4. The California**

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**Association of the Deaf (CAD) in San Diego.** Held at the Town & Country Hotel in San Diego, the DAC once again had a Sign Writing computer booth and met many California Deaf people.

### 2. *the Sign Writer Newsletter*

**The SignWriter** originally began as a newspaper, not a newsletter. The newspaper's founder, Nancy Ellen Woo, wrote the first issue by hand in 1981. **The Sign Writer** Newspaper was distributed quarterly to 41 countries from 1981 to 1984. All issues were written by hand. Publication was temporarily halted to develop computer programs to type Sign Writing.

In 1989 **the Sign Writer** was reborn! Now published twice a year as an educational newsletter, both Spring, 1989 and Fall, 1989 issues were sent to 41 countries this year. This was a landmark year because never before has **the Sign Writer** been typed by computer! All layout was done with PageMaker on the Macintosh, and the five specially-designed computer programs for Sign Writing (see no. 3 below) typed the Sign Writing articles. We hope to continue to send **the Sign Writer** to approximately 2,500 people semi-annually.

Another reason that the resumption of the Sign Writer is historic is that Sign Writing has evolved with use and is now written without stick figures, in visual units. It is a very exciting development. Sign Writing looks and feels more like a "written language" but it has kept the visual, which is so important to signed languages. The stick figure is still used for beginners and for detailed research. These first two new issues of the SignWriter also broke new ground in writing the grammar of American Sign Language (ASL). Although much is still to be learned about writing grammar, the Deaf Action Committee should be commended for their outstanding pioneering effort.

### 3. Sign Writing Software

In 1989 we continued to improve and further develop our Sign Writing computer programs:

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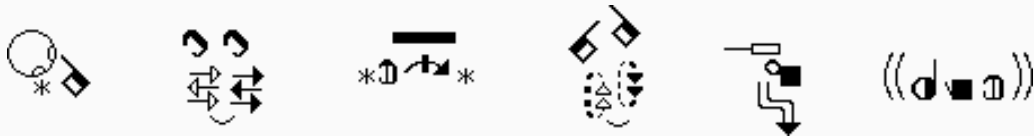
1. **Sign Writing Fingerspelling Font** for the Macintosh types fingerspelling by simply typing English.
2. **SignWriter //** for the Apple //e, //c and //GS is a fully developed sign/word processor for signs, fingerspelling and words.
3. **SignWriter PC**, like the SignWriter // above, is a sign/word processor for the IBM PC and compatibles. In addition, it offers international keyboards for signed communication between countries.
4. **SignBank I** is a word-sign dictionary on the Macintosh. Type an English word and the program immediately finds the sign. The signs are already written for you in Sign Writing. Great for beginners.
5. **SignBank II** is a sign-word dictionary on the Macintosh. Look up a sign with a special Sign-Symbol-Sequence and the program finds the corresponding word.

SignWriter PC is, at present, the most widely used of our five programs, for several reasons. First, many people already own IBM computers. Second, the program is designed for international use between countries. And third, SignWriter PC was the first of our programs to be completed enough for others to use. Actually, anyone who knows about computer programming knows that no computer program is ever complete! There is always something else one can improve or add. And there are always bugs that have to be eliminated! In 1989 bugs were fixed and users made suggestions. It was an exciting, pioneering year.

SignWriter PC is now being used in five countries: USA, Denmark, Norway, England and Nicaragua. In the USA, some of the users are Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, Gallaudet University in Washington DC, and El Camino College in Los Angeles. In England, linguist Bencie Woll at the University of Bristol is using the program for a research program on British Sign Language, along with Lorna Allsop, who traveled specifically to California to learn Sign Writing this December. In Denmark,

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Jems Weber at Aalborgskolen is testing the program, and in Norway, Ingvild Roald at the Bjørkåsen Skole in Nesttun, Norway is using SignWriter PC for the first there. We have specially developed british and Norwegian keyboards for these countries, and are still developing and improving the British and Norwegian versions. Ingvild Roald is translating our SignWriter PC manual into Norwegian!

Pur long -time members at Bjørkåsen Skole in Nesttun, Norway are now using SignWriter PC. In 1989 we added Norwegian and British keyboards to the program, and have been in close touch by mail and telephone with both countries in the development process.

#### **4. A Special Tribute To A Special Friend...**

Where would Sign Writing be without the late Mrs. Valerie Scudder? Not nearly as far as it is today! It is with great love, affection, and gratitude that we remember our beautiful sponsor - her generosity made so many things possible - but most of all, her loving concern and support can never be forgotten. In 1989, Valerie Scudder passed on - but we will always remember her!

#### **5. Plans For 1990...**

1990 already holds great promise and a busy schedule. If funding can be found, the Spring, 1990 issue of *the Sign Writer Newsletter* will be written in January by the DAC and distributed to 41 countries in February & March, 1990.

Lucinda O'Grady Batch and Valerie Sutton are tentatively scheduled to travel to Copenhagen, Denmark at the end of March to teach Sign Writing and our computer programs to a group from Norway, Denmark and possibly Finland. At present the teaching schedule is the first week in April. Anyone intrested should either contact us, here in the US, or contact the Deaf Center For Total Communication, Kastelsvej 58A, 2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark. Telephone: (01)22 28 38.

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