



**FileMaker's visual user-interface
is harnessed to create a
breakthrough in Deaf Education...**



SignBank[®] 2002

The SignWriting[®] Online Dictionary Database
Designed in FileMaker 5.0 for Macintosh and Windows

SignBank and FileMaker: A natural partnership!

...FileMaker's visual user-interface benefits the visual world of the born-deaf...

SignBank 2002: Using FileMaker In Deaf Education

FileMaker is award-winning database software for Windows and the Macintosh, developed by FileMaker Corporation. As one of the world's most popular database programs, FileMaker is used by millions of small businesses to create databases that manage projects, assets, medical records, inventory, bookkeeping and payroll. But don't let the friendly visual user-interface fool you! FileMaker is exceptionally powerful, equaling, if not surpassing, the capabilities of competing database software.

Now in 2002, FileMaker will be used in Deaf Education and Sign Language Linguistic Research, because of an ingenious new database design called SignBank 2002. The brainchild of SignWriting inventor Valerie Sutton, SignBank brings literacy to born-deaf children and adults through SignWriting, a visual way to write the handshapes, movements and facial expressions of any Sign Language in the world.

Contrary to popular belief, Sign Languages are not international. They are rich languages with large vocabularies and unique grammar structures, that differ from culture to culture, just as spoken languages differ from country to country. SignWriting is becoming the written form for Sign Languages, and small pockets of educators and researchers in 27 countries are beginning to use SignWriting to improve Deaf Education.

Supplying born-deaf children with a written form for their native Sign Language, is believed by some educators, to be the key to literacy for some deaf children. And SignBank 2002, in FileMaker Pro 5.0, is a computer program tailored to test this educational theory, giving researchers study tools, and deaf people a dictionary that is easy to use.

In SignBank, written signs are stored and sorted by the visual handshapes, movement arrows and facial expressions of SignWriting. This sequence of symbols is called Sutton's Sign-Symbol-Sequence (SSS).

To program FileMaker to sort dictionaries by SSS was no easy task for FileMaker programmer Todd Duell, of Formulations Pro in San Diego. Todd succeeded in stretching FileMaker's capabilities, working side by side with Valerie Sutton to create a successful SSS lookup system.

SignWriting symbols are easy to read for those who use Sign Language. By providing a way to search for words with visual SignWriting symbols as the "search method", words can be found in the dictionary, listed, and printed. Illiteracy levels are high among the born-deaf. Reading spoken language is based on sounds the born-deaf have never heard. So for some, this will be the first time they have ever been able to look up a word in a dictionary.

SignWriting has been used in the Albuquerque Public Schools on an experimental basis since 1999, through the SignWriting Literacy Project. The teachers who use it feel strongly that literacy levels are improving in their students. The Albuquerque Public Schools will be the site for beta testing SignBank, which hopefully will make its official release to the general public in Fall, 2002.

So, from the perspective of FileMaker Corporation, the idea of deaf children age 6, using their business software, is a new one! But SignBank developers Valerie Sutton and Todd Duell feel that the year 2002 will prove that the visual nature of FileMaker will benefit the visual world of the born-deaf. A natural partnership! For more information, contact:

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SignBank 2002
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