Biographical Sketch: Valerie Sutton

a. Inventor, Sutton Movement Writing
including SignWriting, DanceWriting, MimeWriting, SportsWriting, and GestureWriting.

Sutton's invention of SignWriting is creating social change. For the first time, there are signers around the world, including young children, reading and writing their primary language, a signed language, on a daily basis. Complete novels, newspapers, children's literature and sections of the Bible and Koran are now written in the facial expressions, movements and handshapes of signed languages. Signers are writing their own Wikipedia-style articles, email and sign language literature, in SignWriting, directly on the web. On October 10, 2006, SignWriting was officially recognized as a world script by the ISO (International Organization for Standardization).

b. Founder, President & Executive Director
The Center for Sutton Movement Writing, Inc., an educational 501c3 non-profit organization founded in Southern California in 1974. The Center publishes SignWriting books and web sites, develops software, trains SignWriting specialists, and sponsors the Deaf Action Committee for SignWriting, hiring skilled Deaf signers to write their native signed languages.

c. Early Development
Professional Ballet Training, Southern California	1961-1970
Sutton DanceWriting was first invented and developed	1966-1970
Preserved Historic Danish Dances in DanceWriting in Copenhagen	1970-1972
Wrote first textbook on Sutton DanceWriting in California	1973-1974
Founded non-profit educational organization, Southern California	1974-present
Sutton SignWriting was first invented and developed in Copenhagen	1974-1975

d. Appointments
1. Royal Danish Ballet, Copenhagen, Teacher, Sutton DanceWriting   Fall, 1974

2. University of Copenhagen, Audiologopædisk Forskningsgruppe.   1974-1975
Transcribed the movements of Danish Sign Language and
Hearing Person's Gestures from video, for research by Jan Enggaard.

3. Boston Conservatory of Music, Faculty Member, Dance Department   1976-1980
Taught Sutton DanceWriting, which was a reqirement for graduation as
a Dance Major at the Boston Conservatory of Music, from 1976-1986.
Trained 86 teachers to teach Sutton DanceWriting around the world.

4. Walnut Hill School of Performing Arts, Faculty Member, Mass   1976-1980
Taught Sutton DanceWriting & the Danish Bournonville Ballet Training

5. National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), Consultant   1979-1980
Worked with Dr. Frank Caccamise, Communication Research Dept,
to develop the Technical Signs Manuals, still published by NTID. The manuals
use SignWriting movement symbols combined with life-like illustrations of signs.

e. Projects & Collaborations

2006-present
SignWriting Literature Project (www.SignWriting.org/literature)
Valerie Sutton, under the Center for Sutton Movement Writing, founded the SignWriting Literture Project in 2006, with the specific goal to write and publish literature in written signed languages. The project raises funds to hire skilled Deaf and hearing signers to write the world's literature in SignWriting. The initial funding for the project came from the Claire Giannini Fund. Current books being written are: The Gospel According to John in ASL (21 chapters); Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, Cat in the Hat, ASL Grammar Lessons written in ASL, an ASL Dictionary and an ASL Encyclopedia.

2004-present
SignPuddle Software Development (www.signbank.org/signpuddle)
SignPuddle Software is the world standard for creating dictionaries and documents in SignWriting. Documents are written in "vertical columns with lanes", directly on the web. The freedom of posting documents on the fly, in Wikipedia-like fashion, has resulted in the spreading of SignWriting all over the world. Thousands of people from some 40 countries use SignPuddle Online on a regular basis for their students and signing communties. SignPuddle Software is the creative genius of software designer Steve Slevinski, who collaborated with Valerie Sutton, starting in 2004. The Slevinski-Sutton collaboration is on-going. SignPuddle 2.0 will be released July 2008, which will include Sutton's International SignWriting Alphabet (ISWA 2008), and the new SignWriting MediaWiki Plugin, which will be used on the Wikipedia site in the future. The SignWriting Image Server (SWIS) will make it possible for programmers to place SignWriting on their own web sites. The source code for the software, and the complete ISWA symbols, can be downloaded on SourceForge, under the GPL and OFL licenses.

2002-present
SignBank Database Software Development (www.signbank.org/signbank.html)
SignBank Software is specially-designed database software for SignWriting, programmed in FileMaker Pro by Todd Duell. Valerie Sutton created the design of the database, and Todd Duell programs the design in a uniquely visual way. The result of the Sutton-Duell collaboration is a modern database that coordinates with SignPuddle software. SignBank includes the following sub-databases: SymbolBank, for finding and learning all symbols in SignWriting, the SignBank Editor and Portal, making it possible to search, sort and publish dictionaries sorted by Sign-Symbol-Sequence, and DocumentMaker, a publishing tool for printing books in SignWriting.

1999-present
SignWriting Literacy Project (www.SignWriting.org/forums/teachers)
Valerie Sutton, under the Center for Sutton Movement Writing, founded the SignWriting Literacy Project in 1999, developing four "SignWriting Learning Levels" for teaching children. Valerie then created the Goldilocks series of books in these four Learning Levels, printed them and donated the books to teachers in the Albuquerque Public Schools. Dr. Cecilia Flood, at the University of New Mexico, wrote her disseration on the experience of teaching Deaf children using Sutton's books in the four Learning Levels. Five teachers at the Hodgin Elementary School in Albuquerque documented positive experiences. Children gained pride in learning both ASL

and English because now there was a way to write both languages. The result of this Sutton-Flood collaboration was that other schools requested the same materials. SignWriting spread to schools in Germany, Belgium, Nicaragua, Canada, Georgia, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia etc. Teachers can apply online to receive free donations of SignWriting books and software.

1997-present
SignWriting Internet List (www.SignWriting.org/forums/swlist)
Valerie Sutton began and moderates the SignWriting List, an active internet list of SignWriting users with members around the world. Discussions include technical support on writing signs and symbols, how to use SignWriting software, and techniques in teaching Deaf children. Researchers also join the List to share their research. The SignWriting List Archives provide historic records of SignWriting events, and are open for searching on the web.

1996-present
SignWriting Web Sites
Valerie Sutton is the web designer of the following web sites:

1. SignWriting Site
Read & Write Sign Languages
http://www.SignWriting.org

2. SignPuddle Online
Create SignWriting Documents Online
http://www.SignBank.org/signpuddle

3. SignBank Site
SignWriting Desktop Databases
http://www.SignBank.org

4. DanceWriting Site
Read & Write Dance Choreography
http://www.DanceWriting.org

5. MovementWriting Site
Read & Write All Body Movement
http://www.MovementWriting.org

6. Sutton's SymbolBank
International SignWriting Alphabet (ISWA)
http://www.MovementWriting.org/symbolbank

7. A Global Writing System for A Global Age
Valerie Sutton Autobiography
http://www.ValerieSutton.org

1988-present
Deaf Action Committee for SignWriting (the DAC) (www.SignWriting.org/deaf)
Lucinda O'Grady Batch and Valerie Sutton co-founded the Deaf Action Committee for
SignWriting in La Jolla, California, in 1988, under the umbrella of the non-profit Center for
Sutton Movement Writing. Lucinda invited Deaf ASL signers to join her in learning and using
SignWriting. The informal group met in Valerie Sutton's home in La Jolla every Wednesday
night after work, for seven years, discussing how to write signs, creating dictionaries and
learning SignWriting software. These were important meetings of the "early writers" of ASL.
The work culminated in 1994- 1995 with a series of videos, including the Lessons in
SignWriting Video Series and the Deaf Perspectives on SignWriting Video Series. The DAC
now works together on the internet, and is still active, with new members, in 2008.

1986-1996
SignWriter Computer Program Development (www.SignWriting.org/forums/software)
Software designer and programmer Richard Gleaves collaborated with Valerie Sutton, from
1986-1996, to create the world's first sign language processing program. The SignWriter
Computer Program is an ingenious typing program for writing signed language documents and
dictionaries. The Gleaves-Sutton collaboration laid the foundation for future software
development for SignWriting, and is still used to this day. Valerie Sutton designed the typing
keyboards for SignWriting symbols, and Gleaves programmed the design, making it possible to
"keyboard" the visual symbols of SignWriting on standard keyboards.

f. Dissertations and Studies on SignWriting (by Others)

2002-2007
Dissertation, Jordan University, Ahman, Jordan
by Dr. Mohammed Mahmod Abushaira (www.signwriting.org/arabia)

Two research studies using SignWriting in Deaf education:

Research Study, Jordan 2007
Jordan University, Al-Amal School for the Deaf

Research Study, Saudi Arabia 2002
Alqasseem-Boraydah Deaf Children Institute

Signing Deaf children at the Al-Amal School for the Deaf, in Jordan in 2006-2007, and in the
Alqasseem-Boraydah Deaf Children Institute in Saudi Arabia in 2002, were placed in two
control groups. One group learned science without a written form for their signed language, and
the other group studied science with the aid of written signs in SignWriting. The group that used
SignWriting had improved test scores by a wide margin in both studies. Dr. Abushaira is now
Assistant Professor, Special Education, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and is
writing portions of the Koran in Saudi Arabian Sign Language in SignWriting.

December, 2002
Dissertation, University of New Mexico
by Dr. Cecilia Flood (www.signwriting.org/arabia)

"How Do Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Experience Learning to Write Using SignWriting, A Way To Read and Write Signs?"
Research study conducted for several years with Deaf children in three Elementary Schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Deaf children used the four Learning Levels of SignWriting in a series of children's books developed by Valerie Sutton and the SignWriting Literacy Project. Five classrooms of Deaf children participated, and several teachers learned SignWriting well. Dr. Flood videotaped the children learning and using SignWriting and determined that the children who used SignWriting had a sense of pride in their own language, increased self-esteem and improved communication skills in both written sign language and written spoken language. Download 300 Page Dissertation
http://www.signwriting.org/archive/docs5/sw0476-CeciliaFlood-Dissertation2002.pdf

1999
Master's Thesis, University of Kansas Department of Linguistics
by Amy Rosenberg, (signwriting.org/forums/research/rese010.html)
Writing Signed Languages: In Support of Adopting an ASL Writing System

1997
Master's Thesis, California State University Dominguez Hills
by Janice Gangel-Vasquez (signwriting.org/forums/research/rese003.html)
Literacy In Nicaraguan Sign Language: Assessing "Written Sign" Recognition Skills

1985
Copenhagen Public Schools Research Project
Instruction In SignWriting/Sign Language
by Bentzen, Glebke, Kjaer, Sparrevohn, at the Randersgade Deaf School in Copenhagen

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g. SignWriting Workshops, Presentations & Symposiums

There is a long list of workshops and presentations presented by others, but here is a short list of some of Valerie Sutton's presentations. Not all are included.

Summer, 2005
The First European SignWriting Symposium (www.SignWriting.org/europe)
Brussels, Belgium, hosted by the Kasterlinden School for the Deaf. Over 50 European teachers and researchers came together for two days to discuss and learn SignWriting. Valerie Sutton discussed SignWriting with group participants through videophone.

Spring, 1984
SignWriting Workshop at Gallaudet University
Valerie Sutton taught a SignWriting Workshop, held on the campus at Gallaudet University.

1982 - 1988
SignWriting Used in Deaf Schools in Denmark
Valerie Sutton taught a series of workshops on SignWriting to 30 teachers of Deaf children in the Danish School System, in 1982-1983, in Copenhagen, at the Deaf Center for Total Communication (KC), under the direction of Britta Hansen. The workshops were held at the Kastelsvej School for Deaf Children in Copenhagen. SignWriting was also used at Randersgade School in Copenhagen, and at the Aalborg School for Deaf Children on Jutland in the city of Aalborg. Children as young as 6 years old were learning to read and write Danish Sign Language and spoken Danish side by side, using SignWriting to write Danish Sign Language, so they had two written languages to refer to…SignWriting was used until 1988, when the Bi-Lingual programs were no longer continued in the same way. But the research was documented by a team of teachers. Beautiful books on SignWriting in Danish Sign Language were published by the Danish School system from 1982-1988.

1981 - 1984
SignWriting Workshops at Los Angeles Pierce College & Other Colleges
Valerie Sutton taught an extended series of workshops on SignWriting in Woodland Hills, California at LA Pierce College, under the direction of Darlene Allen and Cynthia Herbst. A group of teachers learned to teach SignWriting, through the "SignWriting Certification Program". Other SignWriting workshops were presented at Golden West College, Saddleback Community College, CSUN in Northridge, and El Camino College in Torrance.

Summer, 1977
"Sutton Movement Shorthand; Writing Tool For Research."
First paper on SignWriting presented in the USA by Valerie Sutton, in Chicago, Illinois at the National Symposium on Sign Language Research & Teaching. Published in: Stokoe, William C. (ed): "Proceedings of the First National Symposium on Sign Language Research and Teaching." Chicago,Ill (1977) - pp. 267-296

Summer, 1977
SignWriting Workshop, National Theatre of the Deaf
Troupe of Deaf actors learned to read and write signs for one week with Valerie Sutton in Connecticut. This was the first time the system was introduced to Deaf adults in the USA.

Spring, 1977
First SignWriting Workshop in USA, at MIT in Boston.
A group of Sign Language linguists from the New England Sign Language Society learned SignWriting. The workshop was held at MIT, arranged by Dr. Judy Shepard-Kegl, then a linguistics graduate student at MIT. (Years later, Judy and her husband James, established schools for the Deaf in Nicaragua, using SignWriting to teach deaf children to read and write.)

h. SignWriting Publications

There are hundreds of SignWriting textbooks and Sign Language Literature written by writers all over the world. For a complete list, contact: Valerie Sutton, Sutton@SignWriting.org

Here are some of the early publications….

Fall, 1975
"**Examples of Notation of a South Pacific Sign Language**"
ISBN: 0-914336-32-0. This booklet recorded mime-like gestures and home signs of a lone Deaf man, based on research by Rolf Kuschel. It included pictures with SignWriting illustrations.

Fall, 1976
"**Examples of Notation of Danish Deaf Sign Language**"
ISBN: 0-914336-03-7 This booklet showed Sutton's first attempts at recording Danish Sign Language in 1974, 1975 and 1976.

Spring, 1978
"**Hørende Danskeres Gestus-Repertoire (Hearing Danes' Gesture-Repertoire)**"
by Jan Enggaard. This published research used SignWriting to record hearing person's gestures, with contributions by Valerie Sutton. The research was conducted at the Audiologopædisk Forskningsgruppe, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

July, 1978
"**SignWriting, Sutton Movement Shorthand**" by Valerie Sutton.
Textbook: ISBN: 0-914336-06-1; Audio & Videotapes: ISBN: 0-914336-07-X First SignWriting textbook, with 8-hours of video and audio instruction. No longer in print.

Fall, 1979
"**NTID Technical Signs Manuals**"
SignWriting symbols are used in a series of Technical Signs Manuals, produced at NTID in Rochester, New York, under the direction of Dr. Frank Caccamise. In 1979, Valerie Sutton was a full-time consultant to the project for six months, and is the author of the second manual, which teaches the SignWriting symbols. Over 10 manuals have since been published. The movement symbols of SignWriting are blended with life-like illustrations, showing technical signs used in different professions.

Fall, 1979
"**Sutton SpeechWriting**"
This booklet described and illustrated Sutton's attempts at writing the detailed movements of the mouth, jaw and tongue while speaking. It was written while Sutton was a consultant at NTID. Audiologists and speech pathologists at NTID stimulated the project. Sutton analyzed detailed videos of speech production, and developed a system for notating the mouth and tongue movements. Indirectly this was an influence on SignWriting, since some movements of the mouth are recorded when writing signed languages.

October 26, 1980
"A Way To Analyze American Sign Language & Any Other Sign Language Without Translation Into Any Spoken Language" by Valerie Sutton presented at the National Symposium on Sign Language Research and Teaching in Boston, Massachusetts.

Spring, 1981
SignWriting For EveryDay Use
This was the main reference textbook for serious students of SignWriting during the 1980's. Author: Valerie Sutton. Illustrations by Jayne Gunderson, Amy Blake and Ken Merchant. 450 pages. Spiral bind. Out-of-date. No longer in print. This book was replaced by a new textbook, called **Lessons In SignWriting**.

Fall, 1981 - Summer, 1984
SignWriter Newspaper written in American Sign Language
Publisher: Valerie Sutton, Founding Editor: Nancy Romero
First Deaf Reporter: Lucinda O'Grady Batch

The SignWriter Newspaper was a 12 to 24 page newspaper, tabloid size, published quarterly, written in SignWriting by hand, slowly and carefully with ink pens, before the advent of the personal computer. It was the first newspaper in history to be written in the movements of signed languages. Most articles were written in two languages: English and American Sign Language. Some articles were also in Danish and Danish Sign Language. 11,000 copies quarterly were distributed freely to Deaf people in 41 countries. Lucinda O'Grady Batch was the first Deaf reporter hired to write articles in her native American Sign Language. Ten Deaf ASL signers wrote articles in ASL, learning to write ASL for the first time. Managing Editor was CODA Susan Diamond Bucher. The SignWriter Newspaper stimulated important research on how Deaf people perceive their own native signed language. Through the newspaper work, Deaf writers Lucinda Batch and Meriam Ina Schroeder informed the hearing people on the staff, that it feels more natural to write their language down in vertical columns, and from the Expressive View instead of the Receptive View. Writing articles gave them experience to realize that they were not just watching other people sign, and then writing how the signs look, but instead, they were writing from their own thinking, seeing their own hands, and feeling their own facial expressions, when they wrote ASL from their own thoughts. They were not "transcribing" another person signing, but instead expressing their own feeling. In an important meeting of Deaf and hearing newspaper staff members in 1984, Lucinda and Meriam Ina convinced Valerie Sutton to officially change SignWriting to write down in vertical columns, and from the Expressive View, which is the world standard for writing all signed languages in 2008.

1982
SignWriting For Research Use
Tesxtbook by Valerie Sutton teaching the way SignWriting first developed at the University of Copenhagen in the 1970's. The writing is "very detailed", geared to researchers. Actually, SignWriting has improved so much since then, that today's writing is just as detailed without all of the complication.

1982

SignWriting Shorthand For Sign Language Stenography

Textbook by Valerie Sutton teaching Shorthand. At that time, a new profession called "Sign Language Stenography" was "under development". Experiments were made with recording signs at speed in classrooms. Stenographers learned how to write without looking at their hands. Since then, the Shorthand has been adapted for use as a daily handwriting.

1982

SignWriting Basic Teacher's Certification Manual

This was a training manual for educators to become qualified SignWriting Instructors. From 1981-1984, teachers received certificates after completing training. There were 31 instructors who received certification in the 1980's. Teacher Certification ceased in 1984.

1986-1988

SignWriter Computer Program for Apple //

For The Apple //e and //c computers. This was an historic little program, because it was the first time in history that SignWriting could be typed. It was a true "word processor" for signs, including automatic word wrap, Find and Replace, and other features. Considering the small amount of memory used in those days, it typed signs surprisingly well. This can be attributed to the excellent and clean design by programmer Richard Gleaves. The keyboard design and packaging design was by Valerie Sutton. Richard Gleaves wrote the Reference Manual that came with the program, which was packaged in a royal blue folder with disks and keyboard cards. This was the forerunner to the SignWriter Computer Program used today.

May, 1988

SignBank I Desk Accessory for the Macintosh for "Word-Sign" Dictionaries

programmed by Michael Ogawa, this Desk Accessory, which is a small "mini" program on the Macintosh, inlcuded a wonderful storage system for signs in a dictionary, plus specially designed SignWriting Fonts, designed by Valerie Sutton. SignBank I created "word-sign" dictionaries. However, it was not a true typing program like the SignWriter Computer Program. In SignBank, the fonts did not rotate or flop the symbols. To use the fonts, you had to type a symbol in a Paint Program and then change it manually, dot by dot, and then copy the whole sign and paste it into the SignBank dictionary. Once it was pasted in, then you could print the dictionary which looked quite nice. But SignWriter, the "sign processor" ended up being used more, because the symbols are manipulated for you. And SignWriter has the same, if not better, dictionary capabilities.

November, 1988

SignBank II Desk Accessory for the Macintosh for "Sign-Word" Dictionaries

programmed by Michael Ogawa, designed by Valerie Sutton. This was an "experiment" to see how the computer could "look-up" signs by the Sign-Symbol-Sequence, instead of looking signs up by English words. The user had to know what they were doing. Each symbol category was represented in a box. Before the sign was pasted into the dictionary, the user had to "establish" what sequence of symbols he wanted to use, when looking the sign up in the dictionary. He would click on the symbols in the boxes, to establish the "Sequence" and then paste the sign into the dictionary. SignBank II would then print the dictionary in Sign-Symbol-Sequence. This was an important program, since it help everyone think through different issues.