

Tactile Communication Network

Bernadette van den Tillaart reports about the Joint Network Meeting held in Lille during the Dbl European Conference

At the Dbl European conference in Lille, August 2013, the Tactile Communication Network and the Communication Network joined forces to deliver a joint network session. It was kicked off by Paul Hart, representing the Tactile Communication Network, who first gave an overview of the members and the work of the Tactile Communication group in recent years. He then invited the large group of participants to take part in a guided imagery, designed to move people from inhabiting a world where vision and / or hearing might dominate, to a world where touch was their primary source of contact with the external environment.

The long-promised and now recently published film, the Landscape of Touch¹ was presented. This film follows the experience of people - both deafblind and seeing/hearing, as they explore, interact and communicate with each other in the tactile world. The film offers specific images that show the shift in perspective that is required to enter the rich unique world of tactile experience that is inhabited by congenitally deafblind people. It is hoped that the film will lead to enhanced shared understanding between seeing/hearing persons and deafblind persons, and to an increased joyfulness in our mutual exploration of the tactile world in which we all live.

The guided imagery is one of the exercises outlined in the companion guide booklet. This booklet is included in the DVD box of 'Landscape of Touch'. There are also other examples of exercises, a few of which were outlined during the discussion that followed the showing of the film. Participants engaged in a lively debate about the learning they could take from the film but also around the power of tactile communication. References were made also to other publications around tactile communication, including the film 'Traces'², the series of booklets entitled 'Communication and Congenital Deafblindness'³ and a new book and DVD (in press) from Norway called 'Feel My Language'⁴.

¹ Van den Tillaart, B., Vege, G., Miles, B. & Hart, P. (2012). Signo Dovblindesenter (Norway), Perkins International (USA), Sense Scotland

² Vege, G., Bjartvik, R.F. & Nafstad, A. (2007). Signo Dovblindesenter, Andebu Norway (www.signodovblindesenter.no)

³ Souriau, J., Rodbroe, I. & Janssen, M. (2006-2009) (www.deafblindinternational.org/network_communication.html)

⁴ Lundqvist, E.K. & Klefstad, L. (In Press). Universitetssykehuset Nord-Norge - Regionsenteret for døvblinde, Tromsø (www.unn.no)

Copies of the Landscape of Touch are available via Sense Scotland's online shop (<http://shop.sensescotland.org.uk/category/67-landscape-of-touch-dvd.aspx>) or Perkins website in their Perkins Products section (<http://www.perkins.org/>).

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