



Radio for Deaf People



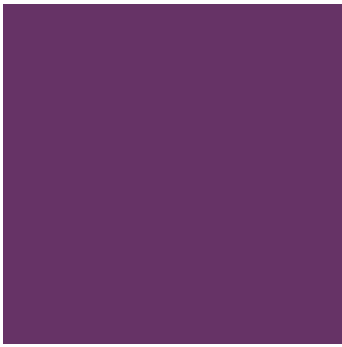
*Have you heard
about it?*



MEDIANE

**Fábio Ribeiro
Luis Pereira**

July 2014
www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/mars/mediane



MEDIANE – Media in Europe for Diversity Inclusiveness

Authors | Dr Fábio Ribeiro
Research Associate
Communication & Society Research Centre
University of Minho, Braga – Portugal
Email: fabiofonsecaribeiro@gmail.com

Dr Luis Pereira
Educational Technology Consultant; Visiting Scholar
Ravensbourne/Greenwich Digital Skills; University of
Reading
United Kingdom
Email: l.pereira@rave.ac.uk

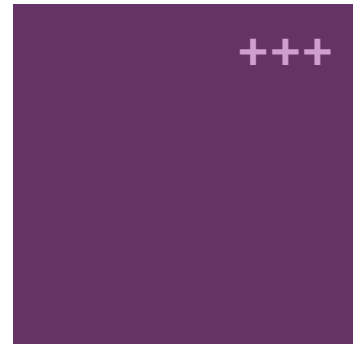
Website | www.radiofordeafpeople.wordpress.com

Support | NET Station: shaping radio for the web environment





Why Radio for Deaf People?



Radio's inaccessibility to deaf people is one of the basic facts of life. Nonetheless, it seems that there has been very little discussion of the potential for greater integration of the deaf and the hard of hearing into media audiences. As we turn our attention to radio as the main focus of this initiative, it is now known that some strategies have been tried to draw these communities into the media environment.

As an outcome of a MEDIANE European Exchange, we try to highlight some of those experiments, as well as considering current practice in Public Service Radio towards the deaf, especially in Portugal and in the UK, by interviewing some of the journalists of the BBC and RDP about future strategies, if any, that could be adopted. To this end, we questioned how radio could improve the access of deaf people, as well as demonstrating the potential of social media to promote their participation.

As an output of the project, this flier summarizes good practice and underlines recommendations to media broadcasters of appropriate software to reach deaf people more effectively. Based on an exploratory study with public radio in Portugal and in the UK, this handout should also be available for Journalism and Communication students, thus raising their awareness and providing them with information about this subject.

We also included students. So this flyer presents the views of a small group of Portuguese Media and Communication students on the subject of Media and Inclusion. At the same time this was the first step to raising some awareness of this subject. We hope this flyer can challenge these students, future journalists and communication professionals.

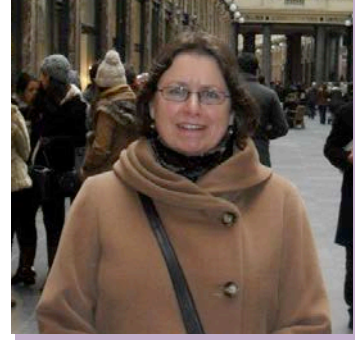
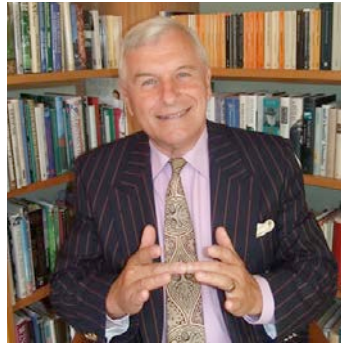
Furthermore, in this flyer there are other voices, experts and people, for instance the founder of Deafax, who have direct contact with deaf people. Created in 1985, Deafax is a charitable company with strong international links. Its main goal is to empower deaf people by offering them access to new and innovative technologies. It is based in Reading, in the United Kingdom.

While producing this outcome, besides the backing of MEDIANE, we received the support of a funded research project that is studying radio and the transformation the Web has been bringing to this medium.

We expect this handout – that should be seen as a starting point rather than a finish line – to be spread through different channels. We hope to collect other initiatives, which is why we have created a website, so other people can share their initiatives and current ongoing efforts.

++ Aims of the output	++ Target audience
+ Finding innovative solutions to integrate deaf people into radio	+ Radio broadcasters in British and Portuguese Public Service Media (BBC and RDP)
+ Making deaf people feel they can participate	+ Deaf people
+ Raising students' awareness of diversity and inclusiveness	+ Media and Communication students
+ Contributing to the discussion about the potential of social media to enhance inclusive policies within media discourse	+ Researchers in Communication Sciences or Education





Living and working with deaf people

For this project, we met two people with some kind of relationship to deaf people to hear of their experience. This flyer reflects what we have learnt from them.

Ken Carter is a social entrepreneur. He is the founder of Deafax and Decibels, among other charities that have been developing technological solutions to improve the lives of deaf people. Ken's daughter is deaf.

Of this initiative, Radio for Deaf People, Ken said it is "breaking new ground". From Ken's point of view, small details can make all the difference. The quality of recording, for instance the correct pronunciation, plays an important role when it comes to improving the understanding of people with a low degree of deafness.

For radio builders, it is also important to consider these audiences and to test to provide the best solutions for them.

Ken thinks radio should be interested in these audiences. The population is growing older and when people age they tend to lose hearing. Furthermore, as a result of new habits such as the extensive use of phones,

young people may start to have hearing problems sooner than before. If radio stations do not want to reduce their audiences, it is important to find the best solutions to have these people onboard.

Karen Goulding, whose mother is deaf, is the Learning Hub Director at the University of Reading. Karen thinks her mother can 'understand' something because she likes it when a disc is playing.

Karen asked her mother whether she would like to have the possibility of somehow accessing the information radio is broadcasting. Her reaction showed incredulity, as if it were something she would never achieve.

At the moment, Ken and Karen are both involved in the creation of AVERIL - Academy for Virtual Education Research & Inclusive Learning. It is a social company that will develop innovative solutions to include people and help them to have a more powerful learning experience.



Did you know that?

- There are different levels of deafness: **Mild Deafness** (difficulty in following speech, mainly in noisy situations); **Moderate Deafness** (difficulty in following speech without a hearing aid); **Severe Deafness** (people who rely a lot on lip reading, even with a hearing aid; if they have been deaf from early in life, their preferred language may be sign language); **Profound Deafness** (people who are profoundly deaf lip read, and if they are deaf from early in life may use sign language).
- In the UK there are estimated to be about 8.7 million deaf and hard of hearing people. About 673,000 of these are severely or profoundly deaf; 420,000 of them cannot hear well enough to use a voice telephone, even with a device to make it louder.
- In Portugal, according the Portuguese Federal Association of the Deaf, there are around 150,000 severely or profoundly deaf.
- The numbers are rising as the number of people over 60 increases.



Sources:

<http://www.deafsign.com/ds/index.cfm?scn=article&articleid=30>

<http://libguides.gallaudet.edu/content.php?pid=119476&sid=1061103>

The journalists' perspective

The following ideas were collected between March and June 2014 through a survey sent by email or available online, to some journalists from the BBC and RDP, the national public radio in the UK and Portugal. They do not necessarily represent the corporate perspective, but only the point of view of the journalists who completed this survey.

BBC Radio Berkshire

John Baish, Assistant Editor at BBC Radio Berkshire, considers that this radio station has some particular initiatives focusing on people with special needs, such as deaf or blind people. For instance, they “have run programmes over the years featuring people who have overcome the challenges of deafness, and also the excellent work of the Mary Hare School for the deaf in West Berkshire”.

From Baish's perspective, BBC Radio has been making a “considerable effort” to improve the inclusion of disadvantaged people.

Concerning the subject “Radio for Deaf People”, “interesting” is the word John Baish picked as the one that would best convey his thoughts on that idea. He was not aware of any initiative, from this radio station or any other, specifically related to people with hearing disabilities. However, looking further to which strategies or solutions in the near future could include audiences with some kind of disability, in radio, John Baish states:

“Like the challenges facing all minorities, producers need to continue to be on the lookout for personal stories of success and challenge in this area, and cover them on air”.

Antena 1

Five journalists completed our survey, and four of them recalled some initiative of RDP that included special audiences (blind, hard of hearing, deaf people). In 2013, Antena 1 ran a special feature for Portuguese Sign Language Day, on 15th November. One programme was translated online into Portuguese Sign Language. In 'Portugal em Directo', there was once an interview with a deaf person, simultaneously translated by an interpreter for those who could hear. These are the examples provided by the journalists. Accordingly, these journalists consider that public radio shows some concern or a high level of concern for deaf people.

Specifically on the subject of radio and deaf people, “necessary” (3), “interesting” (1) and “surprising” (1) are the words they picked when they considered this idea.

Concerning the kind of initiatives that radio could implement to integrate deaf audiences in their regular broadcastings, two journalists do not have any ideas. The others suggested, “connecting radio and Internet will be inevitable and that's the strategy”. There is also the wish that “radio should be able to integrate more sign language translators in their programmes”. Finally, another journalist said:

“It is mandatory in the next digital scenario for radio. I am not sure what kind of strategies should be taken, but I would like to see this subject as a top priority for civil society, media, and politics. I guess that the presence of interpreters should be the priority in journalism formats.”

The students' perspective

How Communication students perceive/see this idea

Thoughts on Inclusive Policies and Media

As part of this MEDIANE Exchange Programme, we involved a group of 38 Communication and Media students (average age: 21 years), from the University of Minho (Portugal). On 20th February 2014, students were asked to complete a survey in order to observe what kind of social representation they share about inclusive policies in the media.

Asked whether they had ever noticed any kind of initiative that media intended to include special audiences, only seven said "yes". "Sign language" and "audio description" were the examples given.

Students showed some concerns about inclusive policies in the media. Of these future Communication and Media professionals, the majority considered themselves to be very concerned (12) or moderately concerned (23). Only one student was permanently concerned and two showed little concern.

Representations on 'Radio' and 'Deaf People'

Questioned if they have ever seen some sort of initiative in radio that included deaf people, none of the students had a suitable example to give.

Students were surprised by the juxtaposition of this idea of radio and the deaf. They show mainly surprise at this idea. That is what twelve students mentioned ("surprising"). For others, it is something "impossible to achieve" (1), but "necessary" (1), even though if it sounds "weird" (2).

For a good number of the students, either the idea had never been encountered ("I have never thought about it until now" - 10), or simply, "I don't know what to think" (1).

The table below shows the future strategies these students foresaw as ways to include deaf people in radio audiences.

A Possible interpretation of the Results

These results can be the starting point of wider research, which integrates a deeper analysis of social representations of inclusive policies in the media, with these groups. By collecting certain data from Media and Communication students, it provides helpful aspects for some kind of discussion.

Contacting young students enabled us to observe that apparently they share little information about inclusive policies in the media. Regarding deaf people, students have not seen many initiatives in this regard, as well as most of them believing that technology, enhanced by Internet and digital devices, can be decisive in reaching these audiences.

We can confirm that there is some kind of techno-enthusiasm, with social media interpreters to develop a key role in this context, which most of the students argued for. As the students see themselves somehow concerned (23 of 38), they appeared to be very 'surprised' to connect 'radio' and 'deaf' (12/38). Ten of them had not thought about it until that very moment.

Futures Strategies to Include Deaf People	Frequency
Online broadcasting with sign language	7
Creating a web radio	5
Online strategies for deaf audiences	4
I would need wider research on this topic	3
Promoting frequent visits from deaf people to radio studios	3
Online strategies for deaf audiences: videos and subtitles, games, info graphic, interactive apps, song lyrics, sensorial experiences	2
Using social media in radio programmes	1
Translating radio contents on a radio's website	1
Online videos	1
Creating a smartphone app	1
After broadcasting a programme, posting it online with subtitles	1
Invalid answer	2
I don't know	6



Good practices and technological solutions

BBC (UK) and RDP (Portugal) experiences and other initiatives around the world...



My web my way home

United Kingdom
www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility

This site provides accessibility help, enabling computer users to make the most of the Internet whatever their

ability or disability. It helps on how to get the most of the accessibility features and assistive technologies.



Accessibilities

Portugal
www.rtp.pt/wpportal/acessibilidades

This section of the RTP, the public service of TV and radio, presents the several services they have available

by which they intend to provide easier access to multimedia content for citizens with disabilities.



DEAFRADIO

Deafradio Project

New Zealand
www.deafradio.co.nz | www.facebook.com/deafradioHQ | @deafradioHQ

Deafradio is a Deaf-led creative hub, and a Deaf-run company with the motto "Innovation is our frequency, creativity is our pulse, sign language is our heartbeat".

Working with Diversityworks Trust, Deafradio is currently developing an online archive as a repository of this recorded visual history, to preserve it on behalf of the Deaf community in

New Zealand, and to make it widely available via an online interface.

They are using SeeFlow, an innovative online translation service, making information accessible in New Zealand Sign Language and English.

According their website, by accessing information in NZSL, local Deaf people "can be more independent".



Sign Language Ring

Red Hot / Asia University

Sign Language Ring is a translation device in the form of a bracelet with detachable rings. When worn on the fingers of the person using sign language, the rings detect and track the signing motions. These are

translated to voice, which is emitted by the bracelet. The user can pre-record their signing movements and assign the appropriate words, which allows the system to be customised to the user's particular gestures.

Recommendations

New media policies for new technological contexts: a possible path for inclusiveness

Social media as a key to enhance wider integration

According to Pieter Verdegem (2011), “social media are open, web-based and user-friendly applications that provide new possibilities when it comes to the co-creation of content, social networking, the sharing of taste and relevance, connectivity and collective intelligence”.

Considering the relevance of social media, it might be thought necessary for there to be some training for (future) journalists in all kinds of social networks, in order to understand them as part of a whole online environment which serves different kinds of needs.

Moreover, other technological solutions can be created. They may vary from cheap to more expensive ones. For instance, displaying simultaneous online translation of newscasts of several programmes, which means that an interpreter could translate the actual speech at the very same time that deaf people could follow the programme, as it happens in some TV formats. We are in an experimental field and all the support and partnerships are welcome.

Involving deaf people in radio broadcasting

This does not necessarily mean that deaf people would actually produce content for radio broadcasters, but assumes that the deaf should not be immediately disregarded as potential audiences. Hence, we might suggest:

- Raising more awareness of these communities and their daily routines and struggles in terms of listening to radio;
- Establishing privileged partnerships with deaf associations local, regional and nationwide in order to create initiatives, events with the deaf and civil society;
- Create a regular programme with sign language or social media translation, trying to get people used to some routine;
- Visits from deaf communities to the studios making them learn how radio is produced;
- As said before, after broadcasting a programme, posting it online with subtitles.

A message to civil society and social entrepreneurs

In 1941, Paul Lazarsfeld pointed out that our society deals with desirable and undesirable effects of communication. As technologies emerge as an undeniable element in several aspects of our lives, we should take advantage of those tools to facilitate (informal) learning practices.

As Anne Taylor (2011) acknowledged, following her research into establishing inclusive social strategies in Canada, if new social experiments are taken to include all kinds of physically limited individuals, the sense of isolation and stigma tends to shrink. So:

- For the industry: creating more effective and innovative technological tools for a possible simultaneous translation, maybe a deaf-app to listen and follow radio;
- For researchers and universities: more studies, questioning how the deaf and hard of hearing can be integrated in the sound media landscape.



References

Taylor, A. (2011). Social Media as a Tool for Inclusion, Final Research Report, Ottawa: Stiles Associates Inc.

Lazarsfeld, P.F. (1941). Remarks on Administrative and Critical Communication Research. *Studies in Philosophy and Science*, 9, 3-16.

Verdegem, P. (2011). Social Media for Digital and Social Inclusion: Challenges for Information Society 2.0 Research & Policies - Triple C, vol. 9, no. 1 - <http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/225>.



We want to hear about other initiatives on Radio for Deaf People

Follow us on this website and let us know about your project:
www.radiofordeafpeople.wordpress.com