

Letter from Steve Andreas to the NLP Community

Dear NLP Colleague:

This letter has several outcomes:

1. To announce the NLP Research and Recognition Project, describe what we hope it will accomplish, and what it is already doing.
2. To review some ecological concerns that some people have had about the project.
3. To ask for your help in spreading the word about the project.
4. To ask for your support, to whatever extent you feel comfortable.

The Project:

Anyone with even a little training in NLP knows from personal experience and client feedback how rapid and effective it can be. And we also know how often we are asked by skeptics, “What is the scientific evidence for NLP?” The simple answer is, “There isn’t any.” As a result, NLP is often dismissed as a “cult,” or another “pop psychology” or “new age scam,” particularly by many in the helping profession, and hundreds of thousands of clients who could have been helped have no opportunity to find out how effective NLP is. Moreover, because these techniques are not being fully investigated, the contributions that they might provide for practitioners in the fields of therapy, education, business, medicine, and other fields are not being realized.

The overall outcome of the NLP Research and Recognition Project is to support, coordinate, and fund rigorous scientific research in the field of NLP, in order to get wider recognition among therapy, education and health care professionals. To the extent that it is successful, the project should provide greater opportunities for all NLP practitioners, allowing us to help the multitudes of suffering clients who don’t presently have access to the effective methods and skills that we all use.

The Director:

The project is being spearheaded by Frank Bourke, PhD, a psychologist with excellent research and clinical credentials who has been using NLP in his practice for some 30 years. He is a licensed clinical psychologist who was trained in research at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, has lectured at Cornell University, and who built a psychiatric management business which grew to include twelve hospitals.

In 2001, Frank came out of semi-retirement to go to New York after 9/11 to work with eight hundred survivors of the WTC from the AON Corporation. Using NLP, he was able to change the symptoms of the PTSD survivors he was treating much faster and more effectively than the thirty or so other therapists with whom he was working.

Frank is also a cancer survivor who used NLP methods to deal with the pain, and optimize the healing process with his cancer. When he realized he had “survived” and did the kind of life reevaluation natural to those circumstances, he decided to commit himself to do what he could to get NLP researched and recognized.

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Frank presented his project proposal at the October 2006 conference of the Institute for the Advanced Studies of Health (IASH) in San Francisco. The project is planned to be a major effort, involving thousands of people, millions of dollars, and years of work. The project is further described at www.nlpRandR.net and this site will be updated periodically with new information.

Specific Outcomes:

The first program, already begun, is the development of a Hyperlink Library, referencing all the NLP publications and research work done to date in a searchable database.

The library is part of the supporting background documentation that is essential to establish that the kind of research projects we have planned are deserving of grants and foundation support.

We have submitted two proposals for presentations to the annual meeting of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies in November. One is on the Visual/Kinesthetic dissociation process, and another on Eye Movement Integration, NLP's version of EMDR. If accepted, we hope that they will establish credibility and interest researchers who already have grants in studying these and other NLP methods.

Faculty at Marshall University have already initiated research proposals.

The present list of outcomes is outlined in the Project Action Plan on the R & R web site www.nlpRandR.net and, of course, other specific plans will be formulated as the project responds to developments, and members step forward to formulate proposals and carry those plans into action.

Ecological Concerns:

When Frank made his proposal at the IASH conference, before members voted to approve taking on the project, a number of significant—and sometimes vehement—concerns about the project were expressed and discussed. I briefly summarize some of the most significant ones below. They are based on my recollections, and my best understanding of different aspects of the issues that were raised.

A discussion group has been established on the R & R site where all concerned can discuss any concerns further. (Register at www.nlpRandR.net and select the 'Discussion' menu option)

1. The first one that I had personally was, (with a 2005 AGI significantly below the poverty level!) “Where on earth are we going to find millions of dollars in funding!?”

Frank has both the professional credentials, and considerable experience in writing grants to philanthropic institutions for this kind of support (he is fluent in “academic”) and he is already connected to an extensive network of people who have participated in this kind of effort. The bulk of funding will not be coming out of our own pockets.

2. Another concern was, “IASH represents a relatively small segment of the NLP community. Is this project going to result in promoting their commercial success at the expense of the rest of us?”

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The membership of IASH voted to approve the project in order to provide the kind of non-profit sponsorship that is absolutely essential to create an “umbrella” for the kind of research grants that are needed in order to fund this kind of research. If anyone knows of other non-profit entities that might be willing to support some of the project’s goals, please let us know, so that the project can have as wide a base as possible.

The project’s current executive committee consists of Frank Bourke, Robert Dilts, Judith Delozier, Tim Hallbom, Dee Kinder, and Suzi Smith.

The project is expressly designed to be one that *all* in the field will benefit from—including those who choose not to actively participate at this time. It will favor none. We are writing to everyone in the NLP community that we can, and the mailing list developed by the R & R project will be used *only* for communication about the projects’ activities, and will not be used for any other purpose, commercial or otherwise.

3. A major concern raised by a number of people was the possible impact of a successful project on those of us who are unlicensed. “If we are successful in proving that NLP methods work, will they be appropriated by licensed professionals, making it illegal for the rest of us to use them?”

There are several aspects to this issue. Foremost is that licensure is a completely separate issue from the use of specific methods. The methods of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy—which are the most similar to NLP, and are some of the methods most validated by research—can be used by licensed professionals, and they can also be used by unlicensed people.

Licensure only specifies who can offer themselves to the public as having a particular professional title: psychologist, social worker, etc. I think it can be argued that if the R & R project is successful in proving that some NLP methods work, many clients might seek out NLPers rather than licensed professionals, in order to benefit from other NLP methods that have not yet been scientifically validated.

4. Some have explicitly declared that, “NLP is not a proper subject for rigorous research.” Personally, with a “hard science” background in chemistry, I think that *anything* worthwhile can be researched. Research in its broadest and fundamental sense is simply a way to separate imagination from reality. Furthermore, with NLP’s strong emphasis on sensory-based evidence procedures, detailed patterns of intervention, quick results, and rigorous behavioral testing of those results, I think NLP is *much* more easily researched than most other therapeutic approaches.

An Open Invitation:

We ask that you visit the web site www.nlpRandR.net where you can review a more detailed presentation of the project’s goals, and register to join us in supporting the goals of the project. A number of individuals and organizations who participated in the 2006 IASH Conference, including NLP Comprehensive, NLP-CA, NLP-UK, NLP NY, Canadian Association of NLP and NLP Midwest, have already agreed to support the R & R Project, and the list of our project sponsors—both individuals and organizations—is growing daily.

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Registering will give you timely access to the project's ongoing progress, as well as opportunities to take a direct part in one or more aspects of the effort. At the present time, we are all unpaid volunteers. If you decide not to join us now, please keep abreast of our progress, and consider joining in the future.

A Request:

If you support the overall goals of the project, we ask you to send this announcement to your own list of people interested in NLP, so they can visit the web site, and get involved if they wish. Feel free to add any concerns or reservations you may have about the project. We are hoping for membership and input from *all* sectors of the field, and also from allied fields as well.

Please help us to get started by getting the word out to anyone you know who might be interested.

Thank you for your time and attention and for doing the work that you do.

Steve Andreas

Acting Chair, Research Committee
The NLP Research and Recognition Project