

## **SPRING 2012 DHA NEWSLETTER**

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**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**  
**Penny L. Richards**



**WELCOME!**

My goodness, this issue of the newsletter is bursting with content! No wheedling required, either. Thanks to all the contributors for making this a truly fun and interesting issue to assemble. Within, you'll find reviews from SIX different conferences that at least touched on disability history in recent months; an open letter from Fred Pelka, about the urgent need to preserve materials related to the disability rights movement now, before it's too late; a blogger's reclaiming of her lost great-aunt; a history of the Calcutta Deaf and Dumb School; and some exciting announcements and links to upcoming conferences.

Would you like to report on a conference? We'd love to hear about disability history presentations at conferences big and small, whether you're an organizer, a presenter, or maybe just attending out of curiosity. Other essays and announcements are also welcome; next issue of the newsletter will post sometime in the spring (probably mid-May).

**Have you renewed your DHA membership for 2013? Please consider doing that right now, while you're enjoying the newsletter, it won't take but a moment:**

**<http://www.dishist.org/join.htm>**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **ANNOUNCING THE FIRST DHA PUBLICATION AWARD**

The Disability History Association is pleased to announce that the first DHA Publication Award winner for Outstanding New Book is David M. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England: Imagining Physical Impairment* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012).

The selection committee very much appreciated the book's wide scope, deep engagement with disability history and theory, and the ways Turner used archival sources both to make an overarching argument and reveal individual stories from both elites and the lower classes. *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England* weaved the ideas of popular culture and individual representation together in nuanced and often humorous, but always respectful, ways. Turner's witty and very readable prose combined with his thorough analysis of archival material make *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England* as a must-read for students and specialists. David M. Turner is Reader in History, Swansea University.

### **THE PAUL LONGMORE INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY**

San Francisco State University is pleased to announce the launch of the Paul K. Longmore Institute on Disability. Named to honor and continue the intertwined scholarship and activism of its founder, this part think-tank, part cultural center introduces fresh ideas about disability and disabled people through a series of exciting projects at the intersection of disability history, the arts, education, and policy. Professor Catherine Kudlick (formerly at University of California, Davis) has joined SF State's faculty as Professor of History and Director of the Institute, along with Emily Smith Beitiks (PhD University of Minnesota) who will serve as Assistant Director. To learn more, please visit the Institute's webpage and blog:

<http://longmoreinstitute.sfsu.edu/>

### **CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

*"Six Sorts of Sots": critical conceptual histories of "intellectual", "developmental" and "learning disability"*

This volume, which is already underway, will bring together original papers examining historical moments that have shaped and reshaped this inherently unstable construct of "intellectual," "developmental" or "learning disability" and its precursor and cognate concepts (e.g. folly, idiocy), from the classical to the modern era.

It will interrogate the history of these ideas from a variety of perspectives (perhaps even more than Robert Armin's "six"). Papers may be rooted in cultural or social history, medical history, the history of ideas, philosophy and/or literary criticism. However, what they will all have in common is a critical distance from and engagement with historical notions of intelligence (reason, wit), and a clear acknowledgement of the

differences and tensions between the current notion of “intellectual” or learning disability and what may or may not be its historical forebears. While we welcome proposals on any culture or period, we are particularly interested in hearing more about the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Volume editors are Chris Goodey, Patrick McDonagh, Lynn Rose and Tim Stainton. We are in an advanced stage of negotiations with a university press with a track record in disability history.

Proposals should be no more than 500 words, and should be submitted electronically, by attachment or in the body of a message, to [cgoodey@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cgoodey@yahoo.co.uk) by April 1, 2013.

### **NEW WEBSITE: Devon County Mental Hospital, 1845-1986**

The Exeter Centre for Medical History has created a website concerned with the history of mental health care in Devon. “Devon County Mental Hospital: Social attitudes and mental illness in Devon 1845-1986” takes you on a fascinating journey through the history of the Devon County Lunatic Asylum at Exminster. Based on archival case notes and supplemented by Medical Superintendents' and Commissioners of Lunacy's reports as well as interviews with former staff, the website tells the stories of real patients and their journey into, and life within, the asylum, hoping to highlight changes in the legislation and care of people suffering from mental health problems.

Contact: [n.baur@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:n.baur@exeter.ac.uk)

URL: <http://dcmh.exeter.ac.uk/>

### **LECTURE SERIES ON MEDIEVAL/RENAISSANCE DISABILITY TOPICS**

The Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Ohio State University is offering a series of ten free lectures on disability in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; the remaining five spring lectures are as follows (with links for further information).

Friday, 8 February 2013

James Clifton, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

**["Blindness, Desire, and Touch in Two French Paintings"](#)**

Thursday, 21 February 2013

Michael Thomsett, Independent Scholar, Author of *The Inquisition: A History*

**["Legal Disabilities of Inquisition Victims"](#)**

Friday, 8 March 2013

Encarnación Juárez-Almendros, Associate Professor of Spanish, University of Notre Dame

**["Teresa of Avila and her Neurological Condition"](#)**

Friday, 22 March 2013

Christopher Baswell, Ann Whitney Olin Professor of English, Barnard College/Columbia University

**"Three Medieval Cripples: The Performance of Authenticity"**

Friday, 12 April 2013

Ian Maclean, Professor of Renaissance Studies, All Souls College, Oxford

**"Renaissance Bodies and their Imperfections"**

### **ISABELLA GRANT COLLECTION IS NOW OPEN**

The Jacobus tenBroek Library at the National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute (NFBJI) in Baltimore is pleased to announce the opening of the Isabelle Grant Collection. The first blind person employed as a public school teacher in California and an early NFB leader, Dr. Grant (1896-1977) believed in the self-organization of the blind and the importance of schooling blind children with their sighted peers-ideas she promoted within the United States and around the world. Between 1960 and her death, Grant made several trips overseas, usually without a sighted companion. She twice won awards from the Fulbright-Hayes program, which she used for unaccompanied travel to developing countries in Africa and Asia. In her travels, Grant helped the blind create their own organizations, worked for the creation of libraries for the blind, and advised educators of the blind. She was honored for her work many times, including nomination for the 1972 Nobel Peace Prize.

Finding aids for the Isabelle Grant Collection and our other processed collections are available through our Archon database, The Cane Tip--named for the long white cane that serves the blind both as a tool for exploring the environment and a symbol of independence. We also plan to start soon in making The Cane Tip home to digitized and born-digital archival materials.

The Jacobus tenBroek Library actively seeks collections that document the lives of blind people in any walk of life, as well as sighted people who have had significant impact on the lives of the blind. Our premiere collections are the papers of Jacobus tenBroek (1911-1968), blind constitutional scholar and founder of the NFB, and the Institutional Records of the NFB. We also preserve the papers of sighted high school biology teacher, Dorothy Elve Tombaugh (1917-2009), who became an expert in the area of accessible science education in the 1960s and '70s. Unprocessed holdings include several small collections, oral history interviews, and a sizable museum collection of electronic and mechanical devices developed for use by blind people.

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

17 April 2013

The **8th annual History of Women's Health Conference** will convene at the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia. The scheduled keynote speaker is Jacqueline H. Wolf, speaking on "Cutting Risk: Obstetricians' Evolving Views of Cesarean Sections, 1870-2010." The deadline for proposals has passed. For more information:

<http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/paharc/collections/events/>

19 April 2013

**Corpus: The Body in the Middle Ages and Renaissance** is an undergraduate conference to be held at the Marco Institute for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Abstracts are due by 4 February 2013. For more information:

<http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/node/48562>

29-30 April 2013

**29th Annual Pacific Rim Conference on Disability and Diversity** will be held in Honolulu, Hawaii. The theme for 2013 is "Being in Community"--and the call for proposals closes 14 December. For more information:

[www.pacrim.hawaii.edu](http://www.pacrim.hawaii.edu)

5-7 June 2013

**Disability @ the Edge: Canadian Disability Studies Association Annual Conference** will be held at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, in conjunction with the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The deadline for proposals is 14 December 2012. For more information:

<http://www.cdsa-acei.ca>

26-29 June 2013

The **Society for Disability Studies** will hold its annual conference at the Doubletree Hotel, Universal Studios, Orlando, Florida. (Note that the date has changed since the original announcement, and double check any nonrefundable arrangements.) The deadline for proposals was 21 November 2012. For more information:

<http://disstudies.org/annual-conference/2013-sds-call-for-proposals/>

4-7 July 2013

**VariAbilities**, a conference on the history and representation of the body in its diversity, will be held at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Helen Deutsch is the scheduled keynote speaker. The deadline for abstracts has passed. For more information:

<https://www.facebook.com/VariAbilities>

9-11 July 2013

**Melancholy Minds and Painful Bodies: Genealogy, Geography, Pathogeny** will be held at the University of Liverpool. The deadline for submissions is 1 March 2013. For more information:

<http://navsa.blogspot.com/2012/10/cfp-melancholy-minds-and-painful-bodies.html>

4-6 November 2013

**Commemorating the Disabled Soldier: Comparative Approaches to the History of War, Disability and Remembrance** will be an international conference held at Ypres, Belgium in anticipation of the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War. The deadline for abstracts was 1 December 2012. For more information:

<http://disstud.blogspot.com/2012/07/cfp-commemorating-disabled-soldier.html>

## **Forestalling Loss: An Open Letter to Disability Historians**

Fred Pelka

All historians are indebted to the past. Certainly, if no one in the past had made any effort to preserve their letters, journals, photographs, or other documents, or to record an account of their experience, contemporary historians would have so much less to study.

I bring up this obvious point because I fear that, unless we act now, those of us interested in disability history are in danger of losing important and irreplaceable materials, and that future scholars will come to regret our inaction.

I'll cite two examples to illustrate what I mean.

In the mid-1990s I spoke with Clarence Averill, former vice president of the American Federation of the Physically Handicapped, an advocacy group active in the 1940s and '50s. Mr. Averill was quite elderly when we spoke, and has since passed away. At the end of our talk I asked whether he had preserved any of the AFPH's records. He told me yes, he'd saved an almost complete collection of its newsletters and correspondence, as well as other materials, but most everything had been lost when his basement had flooded some years before our conversation.

In 2008, after doing an oral history with Dennis Haggerty, I asked whether he had saved materials related to his remarkable career as a disability rights advocate. Mr. Haggerty, an attorney active in Philadelphia during the 1960s and '70s, had been instrumental in bringing *PARC v. Pennsylvania* to the federal court. Yes, he replied, he had an entire garage filled with papers, but was just two weeks away from losing everything. He and his wife were on the point of leaving their condo for an assisted living facility, and unless they could find a home for their materials, all of it would end up in a dumpster. Luckily, we were able to work together and have all of the Haggerty papers deposited at Temple University, his alma mater.

All across the country those active in the disability rights movement of the 1950s, '60s and '70s are passing away, usually without making any arrangements for the disposition of their papers. We are losing, not only their memories and experience, which is tragic enough, but in many cases important collections of unique materials which might inform historians interested in studying this era of disability history. This would be an incalculable loss to future scholars, one which we should make every effort to forestall.

I want to urge, first, that all of us involved in disability history and disability studies be on the look-out for such collections. When they come to our attention, we should make every effort possible to preserve them. I personally would be more than happy to aid in any effort to get materials you discover evaluated and then deposited somewhere where they will be kept safe and made available to current and future scholars.

Second, I would like to propose that members of the Disability History Association form a committee to proactively seek out important disability history materials, and to identify and work with institutions willing to archive them. Again, I would be more than happy to assist in such an effort.

Those who have information about materials that need to be preserved, or are interested in forming such a committee, can please contact me at [fpelka@comcast.net](mailto:fpelka@comcast.net), or by phoning me at 413 586 2876, or writing to me at:

Fred Pelka  
54 Burncolt Road  
Florence, MA 01062.

We face a closing window of opportunity for this important historic preservation, and so the need to begin this effort is most urgent.

Thank you all for your time and careful consideration.

## **Reclaiming Memory: Searching for Great-Aunt Sarah**

Rachel Cohen-Rottenberg

[This essay appeared at the blog *Journeys with Autism* in January, 2011, and was reprinted at the blog *Disability and Representation: Changing the Cultural Conversation*, in October 2012.--Ed.]

In 2009, while searching Ancestry.com for new information to add to my family genealogy, I discovered the existence of a relative about whom no one in the family had ever spoken. She was my paternal grandfather's younger sister (my father's aunt), and her name was Sarah. During a search of census records, I learned that she had been a patient at the Massachusetts State Hospital in Canton, MA in 1920, when she was 11 years old, and at the Wrentham State School in 1930, when she was 21. In other words, she appeared to have resided in state institutions from the time she was a child.

My father's family has a rather unusual last name, so when I came upon Sarah, I felt fairly certain that she was related to us. Because the state schools were often warehouses for people with physical and mental disabilities, I felt from the beginning that Sarah had been "disappeared" from the family because she had been disabled.

In the face of this attempt to erase her from memory, I began a quest to learn everything I could about Sarah and to bring her into the light of day.

I was saddened by everything I found.

Sarah's father, apparently, was known as "vigorous, gregarious, a hard drinker and a gambler, and inclined to shirk family responsibilities." Her mother, on the other hand, was described as "mentally incompetent, elusive, and uncooperative." I'm not sure that Sarah's mother was actually any of those things, since living with a hard drinker and gambler who chronically refused to take care of his family very likely explained how she presented to the rest of the world.

It's clear that the family was desperately poor, as evidenced by their contact with various social service agencies throughout the 1920s, and by the placement of two of Sarah's younger sisters with foster families during the 1930s. There were, in all, seven children who survived early childhood. Four others died very young. Sarah was the second eldest of the surviving children, having been born in 1908.

I soon found out that she was, indeed, physically disabled, and had been diagnosed with "congenital spastic paralysis," now known as cerebral palsy, when she was very young. But even more interesting are the possible markers of autism: she was a nervous baby, cried continually, tore at her hair, scratched her face unmercifully, and first talked at 4 years of age.

In 1915, at the age of 7, Sarah was placed in a family home with another disabled child. In September of that year, she began in the first grade at the local public school.

In 1916, she was placed in a state home—the Massachusetts Hospital School in Canton, MA—because her foster mother could no longer afford to take care of her. A teacher at this school considered her to be "of slow mind, lacking in concentration, and having problems with attention." (ADD, anyone?) In a painful example how easily disabled people are dismissed, it was suggested that Sarah be placed in a school for the feeble-minded when she was older.

By 1920, the people at the Massachusetts Hospital School said that they could do no more for her. She was judged "not mentally competent" to compete with the children in her grade. It appears that she was placed in another family home before a space opened up for her at the Wrentham State School.

She entered the Wrentham State School in 1921, at the age of 12, with the hideous diagnosis of “moron.” As I look at a photograph of her taken around that time, I find myself amazed that anyone could have missed the focused, sad intelligence in her eyes. In fact, when I first saw the photograph, I burst into tears. She was the only person in the family whose eyes, whose facial expression, and whose look of anger and sadness at the insanities of the world reminded me so thoroughly of my own.

About 10,000 people were institutionalized at Wrentham during its history. Despite Sarah’s diagnosis, she was described as adapting herself very quickly to her surroundings, expressing herself relatively well, and displaying a full range of emotions. Apparently, she always tried to do her best and took pride in neat work—words that would have perfectly described me as a child. She was also a good singer—another trait that we share in common.

Unfortunately, Sarah began to fall apart in the late 1920s. She began to behave and talk in “peculiar” ways, becoming depressed and unhappy. She felt teased by her peers. She lost her appetite for food, and her behavior became disruptive. One can only guess at what she was going through. Had she been assaulted? Had she collapsed under the weight of chronic institutionalization? Had her longing for friends, family, and home finally become more than she could bear? We will never know.

She showed no evidence of being delusional and yet, when she left Wrentham in 1930 and entered the Foxborough State Hospital, she was given a diagnosis of “dementia praecox,” the now-defunct term for schizophrenia. It was certainly not unusual for autistic people, especially women, to be misdiagnosed with schizophrenia and other mental disorders, especially when the process of institutionalization itself created mental and sensory breakdowns. As a state mental institution, Foxborough was a dumping ground not just for physically and mentally disabled people, but also for poor non-disabled children and recalcitrant wives. In those days, it was not unusual for poor children to be placed in institutions, and for rich people to take them out and hire them as maids.

Sarah, however, never had this dubious opportunity. Instead, she entered the Foxborough State Hospital at the age of 21 and never came out. She died of tuberculosis of the lungs in 1934, when she was 25 years old. When I received a copy of her death certificate, I was horrified to learn that she had been ill with tuberculosis for ten months before she died. Ten months, suffering in hell with a wasting disease. It makes me physically sick to think about it.

Under most circumstances, the indignities visited upon the patients at Foxborough followed them into death. In general, the inmates (for that is what they were) were buried on hospital grounds, their graves marked not with their names, but with their

patient numbers. As a result, if anyone in a later generation were to visit his or her deceased relative, it would be impossible to know where to look.

I was determined to honor Sarah by visiting her grave, and when I wrote to the state mental health agency to find out her patient number, I was surprised to learn that she had not been buried at Foxborough at all, but in the Arbeiter Ring (Workman's Circle) cemetery in Boston. I have no idea who got her out of Foxborough to bury her properly, but I hope that the person is reaping untold benefits in heaven for this act of humanity. There is a non-profit agency that oversees all the old Jewish cemeteries in Boston, so I wrote to them right away to see whether they would send me a photograph of Sarah's grave. To my dismay, I learned that there was no grave marker at all.

So Bob and I decided to get Sarah a proper grave marker, which was placed this past fall. On the marker appear her name, her date of birth, her date of death, and my favorite line from Psalms: Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy.

I hope that she has found joy in the next world.

I hope that she feels the peace of knowing that she has the dignity of a marked grave.

I hope she knows that her picture has taken its place on our wall, along with those of our other ancestors.

I hope it heals her that I am telling her story and making sure that people remember the shame and injustice of what happened to her.

My Hebrew name is now "Rachel Batya bat Sarah Channa"—Rachel Batya, daughter of Sarah Hannah. I have taken Sarah as my spiritual mother. Every Friday night at our Shabbos table, I receive a blessing, and her name is blessed with mine. She never had a chance to have a child of her own, but in some way that I don't entirely understand, I am her daughter. I am a disabled woman, born into the same family two generations later, and I have what she didn't have. I have the power to stand up and say, "No more."

No more dismissal. No more shame. No more isolation. No more disappearances. No more silence.

No more Aunt Sarahs.

Not now. Not ever.

## History of the Calcutta Deaf and Dumb School

Tanmoy Bhattacharya

An important event contributing to the beginnings of the disability studies discourse in India took place in an institute predominantly populated by economists, called the Institute of Development Studies Kolkata in Kolkata (Calcutta), India from 27th-29th September 2012. Organized by Nandini Ghosh, the conference entitled “Interrogating Disability: Theory and Practice” was only the 3rd such event after the National Conference on Disability organized by me at the University of Delhi and the one held in Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, organized by Nilika Mehrotra, both during March, 2010. A total of 24 papers were read, distributed over 8 sessions, including sessions on rights, representation and agency, everyday lives, education and work, disabled people’s movements, among others. The last day was devoted to a wide-ranging panel discussion on inclusive education.

Amidst the rhetoric of inclusive education to follow, in his presentation entitled “Mainstreaming Disability in West Bengal: An Alternative Perspective” on the 2nd day of the conference, Bubai Bag, a PhD research scholar of Jadavpur University, Kolkata, showed that it is special residential schools that have succeeded in bringing to light some achievements of persons with disability in the state of West Bengal in India. The paper, based on field survey and oral history, is a result of thirty-five interviews from March 2011 to August 2012, and on his experience as a resident of *Ananda Bhawan*, a centre for providing vocational training to persons with disability. However, the presentation itself is a historical overview of the five oldest schools for persons with disability, listed as follows along with their years of establishment:

- Calcutta Deaf & Dumb School (1893)
- Calcutta Blind School (1894)
- Light House for the Blind (1941)
- Ananda Bhawan Vocational training, Special Education & Rehabilitation Centre (1954)
- Ramakrishna Mission Blind Boys’ Academy (1957)

For this report, I will take up Bag’s description of the history of the Calcutta Deaf and Dumb School. This was the second institution for the deaf in the country, following the Bombay Institute for the Deaf and Mutes established in 1884 by the Christian missionaries, but one which was set up by persons belonging to the Bengali middle-class society. The story behind the establishment of the institution is significant. Local landlord Girinda Chandra Bose had four deaf children and Shreenath Sinha (who was one of the founders of this institution) had a hearing impaired brother. They took the initiative in founding a special school and approached Umesh Chandra Dutta, who was the Principal of City College.<sup>1</sup> In 1902, the school building was transferred to 123 Upper

Circular Road, now Acharya Prafulla Chandra Road. The School was run with the full cooperation of the Bengal provincial government, Calcutta Municipal Corporation, and nationalist leaders like Gurudas Banerjee, Bhupendranath Bose, Nabin Chandra Boral, Ananda Mohan Bose, Satyendranath Tagore and Bipin Chandra Paul. Bipin Chandra Paul's comments, on the occasion of the first prize distribution ceremony of the school, were indicative of the nationalist views on deaf education in Bengal: "I look upon this deaf and dumb school as one of the highest expressions of the truest civilization of our times." Like Bipin Chandra, Bag also quotes Satyendra Nath Tagore as being also extremely supportive, saying: "If the deaf and dumb can be made to speak, their life instead of being a perfect blank will be pleasant."<sup>2</sup> It's clear from this that early education for the deaf in Calcutta, as elsewhere in the world, seems to rely on Oralism.

The school achieved fame during the tenure of one Jamininath Banerjee. He was the first principal of the school, during 1896 - 1921. He belonged to a middle class family from Dhaka<sup>3</sup>(now in Bangladesh); coming to Calcutta in search of a job, he met his friend Mohini Mohan Mazumder (who was one of the founders of this institution). Mazumder encouraged Jamininath to join the institution, but Jamininath had no technical knowledge about teaching methods in deaf education. Since the authorities of the school considered it desirable to run the institution on scientific methods, Jamininath was sent to the Bombay Institution for the Deaf and Mutes. His experience there failed to satisfy him. He came back determined to go abroad to receive proper and effective training for teaching deaf people. The proposal to send him to England, which was considered to be a bold step at that time, was accepted by the committee. After completing the course and receiving diploma from The National College of Teachers of the Deaf, London, he went to the US to join the famous Gallaudet College. This was made possible through contacts Jamininath established during the International congress of Teachers of the Deaf held in Dublin in 1895, where he met several American teachers of the deaf to whom he expressed his desire to receive further training in the US. They arranged to receive him as a free student in Gallaudet College and a fund was raised to cover the cost of passage. After completing training he returned Calcutta on 2nd October in 1896.

As a Principal, Jamininath introduced various innovative practices in the school, like setting up of a teacher training department in 1896 to meet the demands for trained teachers for deaf students. In 1903, Mohini Mohan Majumder, his friend and a founder, published a book on education for the deaf entitled *Muk-shiksha* [Mute-education].<sup>4</sup> From early on, the school emphasized conventional education along with vocational education.

Bag here reports, based on an interview with the current Principal of the school, Samir Kumar Samanta, conducted on 24th July 2012, that the main purpose of the vocational

education like printing, carpentry, knitting, book binding, and operating lathe machine, etc., was to provide economic freedom to the deaf. It can be seen that these are skills for typically low level jobs that persons with disability are often forced to accept, economic freedom therefore is limited.

However, Bag shows that the school has played significant part in improving the conditions of deaf people in Bengal by setting up excellent examples. The tradition, he says, still continues and that the 120 years history of this school is littered with tales of success. He then provides a sketch of these tales. For example, one Mouli Bhusan Mukherjee won a special scholarship that was to count as the first instance of a deaf student appearing in a public examination. Rakhal Chandra Palit had a special interest in art, and painted the portraits of the Maharaja of Tripura and Maharaja Jatindranath Tagore. Few of the alumni were to become the new advocates of the deaf education. Bholanbath Ghatak, established a school for the deaf in Chittagong in Bangladesh in 1923 and another in Rajshahi, Bangladesh in 1931. This was very significant for the spread of education amongst deaf people of then, East Bengal, now Bangladesh. Further, Debendra Nath Bhowmick established 'Suri deaf and Dumb School.' Amulya Kumar Mukherjee, an employee of the Indian Press Limited from 1930 to 1960, also an alumnus of this school, wrote and published a book called *Muk Badhir sikhshar Prachin o Adhunik itihās* [The ancient and the Modern history of education for the deaf and mute] in Bengali. The most successful student of this school was Bipin Bihari Choudhury (1905-1987), who, after completing his schooling at the school, became a student of the Government School of Art in Calcutta. He also studied in the Royal College of Arts in London and was the first deaf associate of the Royal College of Art. He established the first Deaf and Dumb School in Orissa.<sup>5</sup> He was also member of the National Advisory Council for the Education of Handicapped from 1956 to 1961.

According to Bag, the tradition of success continued in the post-colonial era. The advocacy of the deaf movement and spread of deaf education in Bengal was run by the alumni of this school. Arun Kumar Bagchi founded 'Bijaygarh Muk-Badhir Vidyalaya', Makhanlal Mukherjee founded 'Shyambazar Deaf and Dumb School' which is now situated at Baranagar, Madan Paul was the founder of 'Jatiya Muk-Badhir Vidyalaya', Abanti Gupta and Sudhangshu Kumar Roy also set up 'Ideal School for the Deaf,' and Dilip Kumar Nandi, another ex-student of the school, started the advocacy of the Right based movement of the deaf in 1970s. He was awarded an honorary doctorate of law by the Gallaudet College in 1975. He was also the recipient of the N.D. Dewan Memorial Award by NASEOH, Bombay in 1981, and the National Award for the physically handicapped. He was a founder member of the Sports Council of the Deaf and an executive council member of All Yavar Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped -- the first national organization created by the government for improving the condition of the deaf in the country. He was the general secretary of All Indian

Federation of the Deaf and was twice elected as the Vice-President of the World Federation of the Deaf.

Among the shortcomings of the school, Bag points out that the school never paid any attention to education of deaf women. Amongst its female alumni, only Binapani Roy, achieved a modicum of success and became the matron of the girl's hostel in the same school. The institution also failed to be an advocate for the deaf community in the larger society.

It is to be noted that Bag's presentation of the success of a special school for the Deaf does not discuss anywhere the role of Sign Language in the education for the Deaf. It is not clear whether the school practices total communication methods or some recalcitrant form of oralism prevalent in many schools for the Deaf in India. The fact that the importance paid to education and communication through Sign Language is the true measure of success of a school for the Deaf, is not implied anywhere in the paper, may be considered a shortcoming of the paper in spite of the obvious richness of historical information that the paper contains.

#### NOTES:

1 *History of Calcutta Deaf and Dumb School and The Training College for the Deaf 1893 Centenary 1993*, Radhes Chandra Sen, Ex- Principal, Calcutta Deaf and Dumb School (Calcutta, 1993): 1.

2 *Ibid*, pp. 2-3.

3 "Pratisthata Adhyakkhya Late Jamininath Banerjee" (in Bengali) [Founding Principal Late Jamininath Bannerjee] By Narasinha Chatterjee, ex- teacher, Calcutta Deaf and Dumb School, *The Calcutta Deaf and Dumb School Souvenir Centenary Celebration, 1893-1993* (Calcutta, 1993): 5-6.

4 p4 of Sen, 1993 (as in Note 1); note also that the word *muk* in Bengali means 'speechless' or mute though it stands for deaf, since the earlier term for the deaf was deaf and mute as in other cultures/ languages of the world.

5 Nivedita Mohanti and Subhanjoy Mohanti : *The Eloquent Silence; The Life and Time of the Artist Bipin Behari Choudhury* (Orissa: Prafulla, 200): 7.

**CONFERENCE REPORTS:**  
**European Social Science History (ESSH) at Glasgow, April 2012, and  
Science Under the Asylum, at Wakefield, Yorkshire, October 2012**

Iain Hutchison

**Glasgow, Scotland.** The biannual European Social Science History Conference took place in Glasgow in April 2012. Based on the campus of the University of Glasgow, the four-day event attracted around 1,200 speakers.

For historians, the wider social sciences appeal of ESSH to other disciplines made for an interesting mix of panels and methodologies, such as demographers following a macro quantitative approach. The multi-disciplinary aspect of the program, couple with the sheer size of the event with up to thirty parallel panels per session throughout the schedule, created a bewildering array of choices which tested participants skills' in selecting panels most suited to their tastes in subject matter, theme and style.

There were two 'history of disability' panels. These had been initiated and organised by Lotta Vikström and Marie Nelson of Sweden and resulted in seventeen European scholars, playing various roles, presenting, hearing, and analyzing ten papers. Informal discussion among the group took place while enjoying Scottish cuisine in the intimate surroundings of the Pipers' Tryst restaurant.

In addition to the participants in the two disability sessions, it was possible to identify around thirty additional history of disability-related papers on panels following other themes, such as health, poverty and education, and these included some names well-known in DHA circles. So, disability history, it seems, was showcased well at this event.

The next ESSH Conference will take place in Vienna, Austria, in April 2014, and the Call for Papers deadline is 15 May 2013. See <http://esshc.socialhistory.org> for details.

**Wakefield, England.** A quite different event took place in Wakefield, Yorkshire, in October 2012 under the title of *Science in the Asylum*. The focus of the conference was on the workings of the West Riding Pauper Lunatic Asylum which opened in 1818 and evolved in its role over nearly two centuries until its closure in 1996. The surviving central buildings have been converted into apartments, but the basement seclusion cells, now sheltering residents' bicycles, still permit imaginative insight into the 'calming therapy' inflicted upon inmates during 'furious' moments.

Also surviving is the asylum dining hall and theater. It was designed to accommodate several hundred inmates so the forty conference delegates were dwarfed by these

voluminous surroundings. It was nonetheless a very fortuitous and appropriate setting for a program of papers focussed on this very institution.

After the last papers had been delivered and discussed, and as dusk descended, delegates completed the day with a walk to the Stanley Royd Museum. This exhibits artefacts, documents and images that depict themes from the Asylum's history, including a padded cell, attendant uniforms, a mortuary table, lockable shoes and restraints, and inmate handicrafts.

This conference was organised by Jennifer Wallis and Mike Finn and was supported by Queen Mary University of London, University of Leeds, and the British Association for Victorian Studies.

**CONFERENCE REPORT:  
The Imperfect Historian: Disability Histories in Europe  
August 2012, Cologne**

Sebastian Barsch

From 21st to 22nd of August University of Cologne's department of history hosted the international conference "The Imperfect Historian - Disability Histories in Europe." The conference – mainly funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) – focused on some methodological innovations related to the activity of doing and writing disability history in a European context. Twenty Scholars from eleven countries presented the results, theoretical backgrounds and methodological challenges of their current research.

Up till now the research undertaken by disability historians mainly has been inspired by an Anglo-Saxon social-constructivist tradition. Given the recent critiques that were formulated with regard to some of the presuppositions taken for granted by the social model and taking into account some of the theoretical developments coming from the discipline of history, philosophy and educational sciences, all of the scheduled presentations tried to lay bare some innovative and refreshing approaches to the history of disability. The leading thread of the conference "The Imperfect Historian: Disability Histories in Europe" therefore sought out how disability historians can keep pace with the critical reinterpretation of the relationship between history and (disability) theory.

All presentations were followed by fruitful and lively debates. It became clear that the still burgeoning field of disability history didn't lose any of its power. A collection of papers from the conference will be published in the beginning of 2013 by Peter Lang

under the title “The Imperfect Historian: Disability Histories in Europe.”

A complete overview on all presentations could be found here:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=4432>

**CONFERENCE REPORT:**  
***Disability & the Victorians: Confronting Legacies* Conference**  
**Leeds-Trinity University College, July 30-August 1, 2012**

Jaipreet Virdi

From July 30 to August 1, 2012, I had the pleasure to participate in the *Disability & the Victorians: Confronting Legacies* Conference, hosted at the Leeds Center for Victorian Studies at Leeds-Trinity University College. Over the course of three days, the conference brought together delegates from Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Uganda, Belgium, Australia, and many more, in hopes of integrating the disciplines of Victorian Studies and Disabilities Studies together. With three keynotes and sixteen sessions, as well as a visit to the Thackray Museum, and incredible evening entertainments, the conference presented an abundance of energetic discourse on the topic of disability.

As disability studies has emerged as a significant aspect for revealing key histories in Victorian culture (see: Martha Stoddard-Holmes, *Fictions of Affliction* (2006), Julia Miele Rodas, “Mainstreaming Disability Studies,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36.1 (2006), and the Special issue on “Victorian Disability” in the *Victorian Review* (2009)), one of the agenda of the conference was to uncover new avenues for a revisionist approach to disability studies, outside of the social construction model. Various speakers at the conference challenged traditional histories of disability that pinpointed the Industrial Revolution and nineteenth century social reforms as a period in which disability was conceptualized, classified, and marginalized; rather, as some of the presentations have revealed, disability has a rich history, and new creative disability narratives are revealed by seeking out non-traditional sources (e.g. police reports). In particular, the Plenary Roundtable session focused on how to offer new directions for scholarly discourse on disability studies, especially directions addressing the testimonies of the disabled themselves. Iain Hutchison (University of Glasgow), for instance, acknowledged the fact disability is important for understanding the landscape of nineteenth social history, for it overlaps important historical areas—economics, medicine, politics, society, etc—and a focus on cultural approaches can possibly challenge the (perhaps outdated?) social model of disability.

A key issue discussed during the Roundtable, which sought to integrate the dominant themes of the conference, was how to create an interdisciplinary perspective from multiple sources, an issue reflected in the three keynote presentations, which stressed the importance of looking at sensitive and neglected histories. Martha Stoddard-Holmes (California State University) presented “Desiring Cognitive Difference in the Victorian Novel: The Case of Anne Catherick,” discussing the eroticization of madness as presented in Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860). Can intellectual deficiency be sexually desirable? Stoddard-Holmes made a strong case for confronting critical discomfort, pushing towards challenging approaches for conceptualizing disability in relation to the history of mentality and moral management—particularly in the Victorian novel. David Wright (McGill University) also spoke of Victorians and mental disability, in “Did the Victorians Invent Disability? A Case Study of ‘Mongolism.’” Examining the emergence of “Mongolism” (taxonomy of mental illness grouping individuals with Down’s Syndrome), Wright argues that the Victorian preoccupation of taxonomy was not about the perseverance of the dominant cultural motif, but rather a devotion to the Enlightenment ideals of betterment of mankind. As certification of “idiots” were largely undertaken by non-medical persons, the presentation challenged the “invention” of disability by medical experts in the nineteenth century—showing that disability in fact, needs to be historically re-evaluated for its roots are far more diffusive and complex. The third keynote was presented by Vanessa Toulmin (University of Sheffield), founder & director of National Fairground Archives, Sheffield. In “‘To Show or Not to Show’ the Victorian Freak Show: Issues of Contextualization, Cataloguing and Interpreting for Modern Researchers,” which contained controversial material that was actually approved by an ethics committee, Toulmin discussed how forms of illegitimate entertainment actually became institutionalized over time—including exhibitions, museums, circuses, world fairs, and side-show traditions. The display of disability as entertainment was actually quite widespread, and far from being displayed in the margins of society, it was actually assimilated into culture and society.

Even though there were some amazing papers being presented at the conference, due to my own research interests, I stuck to the sessions on d/Deafness. Traditional histories on the deaf argue that until the 1860s, deafness was often described as an affliction that isolated the individual from the Christian community, the tragedy being that the affliction denied the deaf the reach of the gospel. After the 1860s, deafness was redefined as a condition that isolated the deaf from the national community; being cut off from communicating with others was a tragedy. The sessions on d/Deafness, however, argued that contextualization and deaf narratives actually revise this history, for different perceptions on deaf history concentrating on race/ethnicity, policies, or religion actually speak towards a performance of disability and emphasize the cultural construction of disability. Several papers discussed recurring themes of charitable benevolence humanitarianism, and performance all wrapped with social controls and

institutionalization, including the development and adoption of assistance and technology. The discussion of technology (e.g. hearing aids, artificial legs, companion dogs) also raised key questions of how versatile technology aimed to normalized disabilities, but yet contributed to stigmatization (e.g. concealing devices to hide disability and increase social participation), which suggests that the problem of disability is not so much about infirmity per se, but about ready access to technology.

This conference was simply wonderful. I truly enjoyed the many conversations with a wonderful group of scholars and I look forward to hearing more from the delegates as we take away some of the lessons of the conference. I would like to finish off my report with gratitude. Thank you to the organizers of *Disability and the Victorians*, especially Karen Sayer, for all their hard work in putting together a fantastic event, and for inviting me to participate. Thank you to the Review Committee and the Board of the Disability History Association for selecting me for the 2012 DHA Graduate Student Award and the Institution for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology at University of Toronto, for funding that made this trip possible.

**CONFERENCE REPORT:  
Internationalization in Education, Geneva, June 2012**

Catherine Kudlick

In late June 2012 I represented the DHA on the organizing committee for an international conference in Geneva, Switzerland that brought together the histories of education, youth, and disability. I write to share the fruits of this endeavor, which proved to be one of the most difficult experiences of my career. The two years leading up to the event and the event itself raised productive questions for our field. They underscored the challenges not just for getting our work out there, but also for raising awareness even -- and perhaps especially -- for academics who pride themselves in being harbingers of progressive change. The experiences also forced me to confront the conference theme, "Internationalization in Education," in ways that reached well beyond intellectual content.

I embarked on this project with Paul Longmore just before he passed away two years ago, the idea being to raise the profile of DHA and to introduce the two other sponsoring organizations - ISCHE (International Standing Conference for the History of Education) and SHCY (Society for the History of Children and Youth) - to work in our field. Speaking with representatives of the other groups at our initial meeting, we shared dreams that our organizations would collaborate in creating a new kind of conference

that would showcase exciting scholarship while modeling disability access and inclusion as we wove together our three areas of intellectual expertise. Having been invited to give the keynote in 2007, I was delighted to have found many kindred spirits in ISCHE, a friendly group about the size of the Society for Disability Studies. Since they had active subgroups exploring gender and colonialism, disability seemed like a natural fit for this organization that would take the lead in planning the Geneva conference. Like SDS, they even had a dance. Their president from 2009-2012, Kate Rousmaniere (University of Miami, Ohio), had been especially zealous in making the organization welcoming to young scholars and new scholarship from around the world; this year in Geneva there were approximately four hundred attendees representing nearly fifty countries. The North American leadership of ISCHE was genuinely committed and excited about working together.

DHA got some great visibility. Our name was on everything, including all conference booklets, badges, bags, and even pens and notepads distributed to attendees. I provided handouts about our organization, the website, and how to join that were included in the conference materials. We were publicly acknowledged at each major event. I venture to say the conference gave us an international presence and stature that not only enhanced our profile but also gave a greater sense of legitimacy; the name is out there in print and was literally brought home to the four corners of the world.

Thanks in part to the efforts of Kate Rousmaniere, disability history had greater presence than ever before in discussions of history of education. Sure, I cringed listening to some work that clung to older models of disability, particularly in the area of special education where paternalism largely seemed to live on, but work expanding these ideas could be found on several panels, many of which attracted younger scholars. One took up “The Internationalization of Blindness in 19th and 20th Century Europe,” with papers by doctoral and post-doctoral students from Belgium, the Netherlands, and Portugal. In another panel scholars from the USA, Mexico, and Australia grappled with schoolteachers and disabilities in the 19th century. Individual papers explored physical education, children, examination practices, polio, the role of medicine and medicalization. Conversations around disability proved lively and intense. I loved watching lightbulbs go off as people realized - sometimes in the process of asking a question - that their own work had a direct relationship to the field. Such was the case with one beginning researcher who delivered an entire paper on intelligence testing initially without realizing its implications. Others were missed opportunities that a few astute observers commented on later, such as one of the plenary papers that discussed sex education, venereal disease, and forced sterilization.

But truth be told, disability history remains a tough sell, particularly in an international context where it's easy for skeptics to dismiss it as an aggressive form of North American political correctness. Even in the United States and Canada, the topic itself still

challenges academics in ways we aren't ready to be challenged, whether because of discomfort, prejudice, ignorance, or some combination of these things. For people who haven't thought about it, disability seems marginal and irrelevant to "real" history, in much the same ways that gender and race were considered insignificant a generation ago.

Thus, while seemingly ubiquitous on all the badges and pens, disability was strikingly absent from most aspects of the conference. My push to invite a promising scholar with a disability working squarely at the intersection of the three conference themes as one of the keynote speakers was rebuffed in favor of a more senior person who ignored disability completely. To be fair, a few of the plenary presenters nodded to the third conference theme, but for the most part this felt hastily added in and not thought through, more in the spirit of fulfilling an obligation than a genuine attempt to stretch intellectual boundaries. One plenary presenter believed it sufficient to mention that a leading educator of the early twentieth century had "eye problems."

Kate Rousmaniere and I found it even more difficult to convince scholars to rethink the conference milieu, a key element that would make it possible for some people with disabilities to attend at all. The physical setting of a modern university building with ramps, elevators, toilets with wheelchair symbols on the doors appeared to meet Swiss standards of physical access. I suspected that some of this was more decoration, the physical equivalent of conference presenters mentioning disability without really engaging with it in a substantive way. But not being familiar with the fine points of local regulations, we had to cede to the standards of the place where we were foreign visitors and accept the word of our hosts. Months before, I had contacted a local disability rights group that offered guarded reassurances that the venue was in the words of one informant "adequate despite some problems that probably aren't worth mentioning." We breathed a sigh of relief: at least we didn't have to worry about the physical environment.

But what of other disability-inspired innovations that would enhance the conference experience for all attendees? Perhaps because of how physical access has dominated conversations about disability rights in the United States as well as in western Europe, most people outside the disability world get a false sense that the Problem is addressed once they see a wheelchair logo or get a whiff of Braille in an elevator. In the spirit of our initial conversations about rethinking the conference environment, I struggled with how best to convince organizers and participants to take their thinking to the next level, somehow without being seen as imposing ideas that would be misunderstood as inappropriate or ridiculous. I was, after all, an outsider in more than one sense.

At the same time, my experiences with organizing other events revealed the incredible value for all participants of introducing a broader sense of conference accessibility, even

if just to get people to think about what academics take for granted in these settings. I was forged in the crucible of the Society for Disability Studies board and mentored by Paul Longmore who organized various conferences. We engaged in endless conversations about creating accessible environments that involved a dizzying array of details: guidelines for presenters, establishing a policy for captioning and interpreters, provisions for audio description, recommending multiple formats for conference materials, making sure all venues were accessible for a variety of speakers, establishing a quiet space, and working with major chain hotels to remove scented products that triggered chemical sensitivities. No matter how many contingencies we planned for, someone would always complain, but the wiser veterans, who understood access as an imperfect work in progress, largely accepted that people complained because they actually could - where else might an academic organization make even the most remote gesture in acknowledging them? From having taught a course in a French university that compared US and French ideas regarding disability, I suspected that for a variety of political, cultural, and economic reasons, such expectations were largely unique to North Americans.

Realizing that these ideals were culturally specific and wanting to be pragmatic, I focused on disability issues that I believed would introduce productive new ways for all participants to experience the conference. From the outset, I urged organizers to develop a webpage that would be accessible to screen-reading software which if taken seriously could have unintended benefits well beyond a seemingly limited group. Chairing a university committee on electronic accessibility taught me two important lessons that I repeatedly tried to share with the organizers: 1) just like with physical architecture, if you build-in accessibility features from the outset, it's far easier and cheaper than adding it in later, and 2) my eagle-eyed colleagues reap numerous benefits from websites designed with accessibility in mind, such as easily-searchable documents and streamlined information, as well as the ability to customize documents for one's own use. Despite two years where I gradually went through all the stages of suggesting, reasoning, informing, educating, nagging, insisting, shaming, and cajoling, the website remained impenetrable to screen readers until barely a month before the event itself. This meant that the submission process and most conference materials weren't available to people with print-reading disabilities, unless I asked for them, which meant that despite Kate Rousmaniere's steadfast support, it quickly became "Catherine's Issue" as opposed to something that needed to be done in the spirit of inclusion. After I threatened to have the DHA publicly withdraw from the event, they appointed an enthusiastic liaison who, despite her own lack of expertise, worked tirelessly to push the right people to get it up to speed. It was heart-breaking that after all of this effort, I felt I'd made more enemies than friends, that for the hardworking conference organizers in Geneva, I would always be viewed as a complainer who made things difficult in the name of some abstract minority that remained largely invisible. And to think that all of this could have been avoided if they had heeded my initial advice back in 2010!

In addition to insisting on an accessible web presence, Kate and I championed better communications. When Paul Longmore and I signed on two years before, we seized on the idea of a bilingual conference offering a wedge into allowing participants to appreciate what it's like to be excluded. We pointed out then - as I would continue to do at every opportunity, including my brief public remarks at the conference - that a bilingual French and English event presented communication challenges not unlike those for incorporating deaf participants. Though problematic for various reasons, such an analogy at least prompted nods of recognition and expressions of empathy; this was the one place where I sensed an admission that environments could indeed be reimaged, that it was time to question the standard ways of doing things.

Thus, early on, I argued for creating an expectation that because of the disability component, we needed to model new ways of conveying information in order to reach a greater variety of people. More than once, I suggested we try raising funds to hire real-time captioners for the major sessions, pointing out that having someone's talk transcribed on a screen would make it easier for non-native speakers who could read a language better than hear it. I advocated a concerted campaign to have presenters speak slowly and distinctly. How is it, I still wonder, that academics spend so much time worrying about what people will think of our work but with so little consideration for our audience? Sitting through person after person race through their text at lightening speed, I imagined they assumed a room full of super-listeners with total fluency in every language, concept, and proper name in multiple disciplines, not to mention with the ability to focus completely and continuously on what was being said. If academics stopped for one moment to think about it, we would realize just how ableist and exclusive most delivery styles are, and how limited and limiting our conference environments are as a result.

I'd hoped that disability might offer an opportunity to rethink some of these assumptions, if only to underscore the lesson that often less can be more for everyone. Saying fewer words but taking the time to say them clearly and offering explanations for outsiders would offer greater intellectual access to a larger number of people. My own experiences in the classroom have taught me how it can be useful to dwell on particular images and their significance rather than race through so many so fast; lingering over fewer might offer a new perspective on them for everyone in the room, not just those who couldn't see them. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry when the plenary talk delivered immediately after my pleas for clarity proceeded to demonstrate exactly the problems I had described.

In retrospect, I realize that, much as I constantly drove home the idea that disability offered an opportunity for rethinking access for everyone, I underestimated the persistence of older ideas about people with disabilities. It was still too easy for most

organizers and attendees to believe that we were dealing with unfortunate individuals rather than people who challenged basic assumptions about physical and intellectual environments. They operated in a mode of catering to the needs of a single person rather than believing that they too had something to learn. Thus, when it turned out that I was one of a tiny handful of the attendees who were visibly identifiable as being disabled, it made depressing sense that they could easily conclude that my mission had been self-serving or for a virtually non-existent minority. Above all, they could convince themselves that all I asked for had been a complete waste of time and valuable resources; look at all we did for you, and still nobody came.

Why weren't more disabled people there? I'm partly responsible. In the beginning I pushed for colleagues to go. But as things dragged on, and it became ever-clearer that disability was being marginalized by the organizers in Geneva, I lost heart. Given the incredible expense of getting to Europe and of being in Geneva, I couldn't make a convincing pitch. The experiences with the website were especially disheartening, to the point that when people contacted me about applying, I was candid that I couldn't guarantee a truly accessible intellectual or even physical experience. There's also the reality that there aren't yet that many academics with disabilities who have navigated the formidable barriers to full employment. As my struggles with the Geneva organizers made clear, the university environment remains inhospitable to those who don't adhere to the usual ways of doing things; it's no irony that so many scholars speak endlessly about standards in the very act of decrying standardization. This helps explain why too many of us go to considerable lengths - sometimes at tremendous personal cost - to hide any forms of physical, intellectual, or emotional disability. I'm guessing that for every one visibly disabled person, there are at least five others grappling with it.

For this reason, I'd like to think that my efforts were not in vain. Among the four hundred participants, I imagine twenty or thirty who were secretly grateful that someone pushed for broader forms of access. Just knowing that these ideas are on the radar somewhere has to be a little bit encouraging, and even empowering. I imagine another thirty to forty who walked away scratching their heads, unsure for now, but that somewhere deep down a little spark was lit that will make them more open the next time one of these ideas comes their way; they might even think of their own frustrations as they tried to listen to yet another rambling talk, and take a brief look in the mirror. Finally, I don't have to dream about the handful of scholars I met in Geneva who are already engaged in this work because I saw first hand that they had already understood that they'd discovered something very new and exciting; email traffic reveals a new cadre eager to create disability-themed panels for next year's ISCHE conference in Riga, Latvia. From the younger scholars to the organization's outgoing president, these people will carry the torch to the next conferences where they will help to bring about lasting change for all.