

SPRING 2013 DHA NEWSLETTER

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
Penny L. Richards



WELCOME!

This issue is another grab bag, a diverse collection of notes and announcements that highlights the variety of our bustling field. I'm especially happy to have a conference report from one of our DHA travel awardees, Katie H. R. Healey, and the announcement of this year's travel scholarship; and another conference report by Heather Battles and Rebecca Gilmour, on bioarchaeology--a field which "has advanced from simple descriptions of skeletal attributes in isolated skeletons, to considering the actual lived experiences of people and populations in the past." And there's so much more.

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 autumn (probably early November).

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

Contributors to this section were Susan Burch, Cathy Kudlick, Karen Bourrier

Disability History Association Graduate Student Scholarship

As part of our commitment to promoting the work of disability historians, DHA is proud to announce this year's graduate student scholarship to attend professional academic conferences. This award is not restricted by the geographic location or type of professional academic conference. The fellowship committee will award either two applicants \$250US (or equivalent), or one applicant \$500US (or equivalent), depending on strength of proposals and need. The Association will cover expenses to convert currencies if necessary.

To apply for this scholarship, applicants should provide a one-page (roughly 250 words) cover letter outlining when, where, and what kind of conference will be attended.

Applicants should clearly explain their reason for wanting to attend the conference and what benefits are anticipated in this experience. For example, a candidate may have been accepted to present a paper or may want to interview for jobs at the conference; another may want to do both, or may want to learn more about subjects presented that relate to his/her own work.

This year's award covers Summer 2013 through Summer 2014; applications may be submitted beginning on May 4, 2013. The current scholarship review committee includes DHA members Phil Ferguson, Graham Warder, and Susan Burch. Awardees will be announced on the H-Disability listserv; in accepting the scholarship, winners commit to writing a brief article (500-750 words) about the conference for the next DHA Newsletter appearing after the event.

For more information on the scholarship, contact Susan Burch at
sburch@middlebury.edu

Longmore Panel/Reception

On April 12, 2013 in conjunction with the Organization of American Historians meeting in San Francisco, the Paul K. Longmore Institute on Disability at San Francisco State University hosted a panel and reception to honor Longmore's work. Scholars, activists, colleagues, and former students presented their perspectives that you can view at the Institute's website: <http://longmoreinstitute.sfsu.edu> and clicking on "Events." Be sure to check out our other exciting projects, and sign up to be on our emailing list by sending a request to: pklinst@sfsu.edu

New Website: *Nineteenth-Century Disability: A Digital Reader*

Nineteenth-Century Disability: A Digital Reader is an interdisciplinary collection of primary texts on physical and cognitive disability in the long nineteenth century. It is a

free scholarly resource, designed to help university level instructors and students incorporate a disability studies perspective into their classes and work. The reader brings together a wide range of original sources, from advertisements for wheel chairs, to Evangelical tracts written by invalids, to medical treatises on spinal curvature—in order to document the scope of thought on nineteenth-century disability. Each primary source has been selected and annotated by a scholar in the field, with a view to providing a critical introduction to some of the sources that have been found to be most important in analyzing the representation of disability in the nineteenth century.

The reader currently focuses on Victorian Britain, but we plan to expand to include more American sources and sources from earlier in the nineteenth century as the site progresses. We welcome suggestions and emails from potential contributors.

Contact: Karen Bourrier, kab233@bu.edu
URL: www.nineteenthcenturydisability.org

Perkins Archives eNewsletter

The Perkins School for the Blind Archives now has a quarterly eNewsletter, full of interesting updates about their doings. The February 2013 issue is now available, and you may also subscribe to receive future issues, at this page:
<http://www.perkinsarchives.org/enewsletter-archives.html>

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Contributors to this section were Chris Mounsey, Pieter Verstraete, Catherine Kudlick

26-30 June 2013

The History of Blindness and the Blind: Representations, Institutions, Archives, an International Perspective

Paris, France

Scholars from more than a dozen countries will be meeting to exchange work and ideas that cover everything from the Middle Ages to more recent history. There will be a conference website with complete information up soon. Meanwhile, for further information, contact Cathy Kudlick: kudlick@sfsu.edu

4-6 July 2013

VariAbilit(ies): A conference on the history and representation of the body in its diversity

Atlanta GA

It is no longer useful to distinguish people by the binary opposition able-bodied/disabled. We now recognize people on a continuum of ability on which no-one is entirely able-bodied or entirely disabled. But was it always true? And if it is true now, does this require that we reconsider the use of binary oppositions when understanding people and their capabilities? VariAbilit(ies) is an interdisciplinary conference which will explore these questions. It will focus on the body and how it was treated and represented throughout history. Plenary Speakers: Rosemarie Garland-Thompson (Emory), Michael Davidson (UCSD), Helen Deutsch (UCLA)

For further information, please contact Stan Booth at:

stan.booth@winchester.ac.uk

8-9 July 2013

The Mutilated Body

Medieval and Early Modern Student Association (MEMSA) Seventh Annual Postgraduate Conference
Durham UK

This year Durham's MEMSA conference theme will focus on aspects of destruction, disability, and personhood in the medieval and early modern periods. Paper proposals may reflect the current trends in medical humanities and hagiography, but could also draw upon inventive interpretations of mutilated corporeality, typified by books, architecture, kingdoms and kingship, or Christendom. We welcome abstracts from postgraduates and early career researchers on all aspects of this topic in medieval and early modern archaeology, history, literature, theology, art, music, and culture. For more information:

<http://durhammemsa.wordpress.com>

19-20 July 2013

The Victorian Tactile Imagination

University of London (UK)

This conference will explore the various ways in which the Victorians conceptualised, represented, experienced, performed and problematized touch. What does touch signal in nineteenth-century art and literature, and how is it variously coded? How are hands and skin – tactile appendages and surfaces – imagined in the period? By focusing closely on touch and tactility, it aims to establish whether and in what terms we might talk about a Victorian ‘aesthetics of touch’, and to explore how touch constructs and disrupts, for example, class and gender identities. It will also consider the historical trajectories of touch, asking, for example, in what ways does touch mark or blur the divide between Victorianism and Modernism?

<http://victorianist.wordpress.com/2012/12/17/call-for-papers-the-victorian-tactile-imagination-conference-birkbeck-university-of-london-19-20-july-2013/>

3-4 September 2013

Precarious Positions: Encounters with Normalcy

Sheffield Hallam University, England

In 2010, the UK's Equality Act gave protection, under civic law, to nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex; sexual orientation). While the Act remains in place, in 2012, as part of the coalition government's Red Tape Challenge, it became the focus of a series of consultations and reviews which aim to 'simplify' the legislation. Whether you are on the sharp end of welfare reforms or face budgets cuts to your local services/provision, being (or at least, passing as) healthy, wealthy and wise seems to be your best bet to survive. However, how sure are we that 'normal' offers the protection it promises? This conference offers spaces to discuss and explore the precarious positions 'normal', and its operating system 'normalcy', create, present us with and, more often than not, force us into. Furthermore, it seeks to 'imagine otherwise' by learning from and through increasingly precarious positions of marginality and non-normativity.

5-7 September 2013

Imperfect Children

Centre for Medical Humanities, University of Leicester (UK)

The core focus of this conference will be the concept of 'imperfection' as it relates particularly to children. The word itself is contentious whether applied in a contemporary or historical sense. It assumes normative standards of behaviour, physical appearance, mental capacity or way of living, at the same time as it means very different things in particular ethnic, geographical or historical contexts. Applied to children who are constantly developing their intellectual and physical capacities, physical appearance and other attributes, it is particularly contentious. During the conference we wish to explore the concept and language of imperfection. This process might include discussion of mental or physical impairment; the 'look' of children; cosmetic surgery; biological or eugenic definitions of imperfection; community, familial and societal reactions to imperfection; childhood imperfection in literature and art; or the construction of feral youth in contemporary and historical populations. We also, however, want to look explicitly at some of the 'imperfections' themselves.

<http://medicalhumanities.wordpress.com/2013/04/10/imperfect-children-registrations-open-conference-centre-for-medical-humanities-university-of-leicester-september-2013/>

14 September 2013

Victorian Body Parts

St. Bartholomew's Pathology Museum, Clerkenwell UK

An interdisciplinary event for postgraduate and early career researchers, supported by the British Association for Victorian Studies and the Birkbeck Centre for 19th Century Studies, organized by Beatrice Bazell and Emma Curry. This conference seeks to explore, develop, and enrich perspectives on the numerous and varied ways in which the Victorians approached anatomy.

<http://victorianbodyparts.wordpress.com/call-for-papers/>

31 October -1 November 2013

The Disability Experience: State of the Arts, Scholarship, and Research

Pittsburgh, PA

This first ever disability studies conference at the University of Pittsburgh will bring together a wide spectrum of faculty, students, and other individuals – especially those from the University and its communities – whose interests capture the experience of disability and who wish to advance disability-related fields and further their integration into the curricula and in community life. The conference will focus on panel presentations by students with faculty respondents. Panel presentations will draw from a variety of disciplines including: Assistive Technology across disability, Health & Wellness (disparities), Employment, Policy and Law, the Arts, Education, History, Philosophy, and English. A faculty-student round-table discussion is the final event of the conference with discourse concerning relationships between faculty and students with disabilities. Limited scholarships for travel may be available and food will be available free at the conference.

<http://www.herl.pitt.edu/pittsda/>

4-6 November 2013

Commemorating the Disabled Soldier

Ypres, Belgium

2014 will mark 100 years since the outbreak of the Great War. On the occasion of this important anniversary the Centre for the History of Education of the KU Leuven (Belgium), the Centre for War Studies of Trinity College Dublin (Ireland) and the Centre for the History of Medicine of the University of Kent (United Kingdom) have organized an international conference aimed at reflecting on the impact of that specific event on soldiers' bodies and minds. Millions of men all over the globe, in fact, returned home limbless, sightless, deaf, disfigured or mentally distressed. Information, including the list of participants and a preliminary program, are now available at the website:

<http://commemoratingthedisabledsoldier.wordpress.com/>

ADA LEGACY PROJECT

Kristen E. Vincent

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will turn twenty-five in 2015. As with any anniversary, this will cause many of us to reflect on our history, consider the present, and think ahead to the future. That is what the ADA Legacy Project is all about.

Founded in August 2012 by a group that included disability rights advocates, historians, museum curators, documentary filmmakers, government agency representatives, and others, The ADA Legacy Project is about three things:

- *Preserving* and promoting the history of the disability rights movement, by working to ensure that historical materials are being collected and preserved; connecting existing historical exhibits and programs; and developing partnerships - such as with the National Center for Civil and Human Rights - to ensure inclusion of the story of disability rights.
- *Celebrating* the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as other related disability rights legislation and accomplishments by creating a traveling road show for 2015; planning events for the ADA25 Celebration; and developing a toolkit to encourage local involvement in celebrating significant milestones in disability history.
- *Educating* and raising awareness to create a future filled with opportunities for inclusion, access, and equal rights, including connecting existing disability history and awareness curricula; identifying and filling any gaps; developing partnerships with the Society for Disability Studies (which will be developing a special journal for 2015) and others; and promoting advocacy and involvement in disability issues.

We welcome your input! We have a wide range of committees and teams working to develop these initiatives. We also need assistance with fundraising and marketing. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Kristen Vincent, Coordinator, at kristen@adalegacy.com.

You can also find us on
Facebook: ADALegacy
Twitter: @ADALegacy
and our blog: <http://theadalegacyproject.wordpress.com>

CONFERENCE REPORT:
Deaf World/Hearing World:
Spaces, Techniques, and Things in Culture and History
(Berlin, 10-11 December 2012)

Katie H. R. Healey

au·dism (ô'diz'əm)

n.

1. The belief that people with hearing are superior to those who are deaf or hard of hearing.
2. Discrimination or prejudice against people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

To a captivated audience at the “Deaf World/Hearing World: Spaces, Techniques, and Things in Culture and History” Conference at the Max Planck Institute in Berlin on December 10-11, 2012, Deaf studies scholar Tom Humphries traced the evolution of the term “audism,” a neologism he coined in 1975 to describe the discrimination against people who are deaf. He expounded on his efforts to add “audism” to mainstream English dictionaries, a goal that was finally realized in the American Heritage online dictionary in May 2012. This achievement did not come without struggle, however, as thorny debates with hearing (non-deaf) editors ensued.

Humphries’ campaign aptly symbolizes the efforts of Deaf communities around the world to legitimize their languages and cultures. These issues were explored in depth at the “Deaf World/Hearing World” Conference, which was sponsored by the Max Planck Institute and Project Biocultures of the University of Illinois at Chicago and organized by Sabine Arnaud and Lennard J. Davis. The two-day conference consisted of nine interdisciplinary panels, spanning such diverse fields as history and sociology to law and musicology. The eclectic topics were tied together by the theme of the intersections between the Deaf and hearing worlds. While I thoroughly enjoyed all of the presentations, my personal favorites included Mara Mills’ discussion of her ethnographic research on parents who elect to implant their children with cochlear devices, Sabine Arnaud’s exploration of the nineteenth-century medicalization of deafness, and Helmut Vogel’s presentation on the 1932 film *Verkannte Menschen* (*Misjudged People*).

The conference also included a visit to a local Deaf art exhibit entitled “Gesture Sign Art, Deaf Culture/Hearing Culture,” curated by Wolfgang Müller and An Paenhuyzen at the Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien. The exhibition combines gestures, signs, and sounds to represent the junctures between the Deaf and hearing worlds and was thus an apt artistic representation of the conference’s theme.

The “Deaf World/Hearing World” Conference was truly international in nature. Presenters from the United States, Canada, Australia, and from across Europe shared their most recent research in Deaf studies, and the trilingual interpretation of these presentations in American Sign Language, spoken English, and German Sign Language was a unique experience. A live Twitter feed documented participants’ responses to the presentations, which can be found at #DWHWBerlin.

It was thrilling to participate in such a groundbreaking conference and to finally meet the scholars who have profoundly shaped my own work. My paper, entitled “Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Deaf Employment in American Firestone and Goodyear Factories during the World Wars,” examines the temporary social and vocational privileges enjoyed by American Deaf workers during the World Wars; though the Deaf were barred from military service because of their “disability,” many war-production companies recognized their physical capabilities for factory work and actively recruited them. The paper complemented the conference theme by exploring how boundaries between deaf/disabled and hearing/able-bodied were blurred during wartime.

I am truly grateful to the Disability History Association for their generous support that allowed me to participate in the exciting “Deaf World/Hearing World” Conference in the beautiful, snow-covered city of Berlin.

CONFERENCE REPORT:
“The Bioarchaeology of Disease Ideologies,” session
at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Physical
Anthropologists (AAPA)
(Knoxville, 13 April 2013)
Heather Battles and Rebecca Gilmour

[A slightly different version of this report appeared at the blog Anthro, Etc. on 1 May 2013, with the title “BADD 2013: Disability in Bioarchaeology.”--Ed.]

Bioarchaeological (bioarch) investigations of past disability demonstrate that exclusion is not an inevitable consequence of impairment or ‘difference.’ Bioarchaeology is a sub-field of anthropology dedicated to understanding the lives of people in the past through analysis of human skeletal remains in their specific contexts. Over time, bioarch scholarship has advanced from simple descriptions of skeletal attributes in isolated skeletons, to considering the actual lived experiences of people and populations in the past. Bioarchaeologists now pursue questions that are inextricably socially connected,

including those relating to health and disability in the past. Unfortunately, as the main source of information here is physical (bones!), it can be difficult to really integrate socially-constructed concepts in our interpretations.

Palaeopathologists (people who study health and disease in the past) have been particularly interested in impairment, disability, and ‘difference’ in the past. However these investigations have traditionally been in the context of specific cases of skeletal remains with very obvious morphological differences, such as atrophied limbs (e.g., the Shanidar Neanderthal -- the model for Creb in J. M. Auel’s popular book *The Clan of the Cave Bear*), scoliosis (e.g., [Richard III](#)), advanced disease processes (e.g., the sunken noses and damaged extremities of individuals with [leprosy](#)). Frequently, this previous research goes too far in attributing specific interpretations of disability to individuals who may have not experienced social exclusion. One of the most influential critiques of this over-interpretation was [written by Dr. Kathy Dettwyler in 1991](#). Dettwyler’s caution about inferring how individuals saw themselves and/or were treated by others based solely on the analysis of bones has acted to essentially halt the development of disability research in bioarch. These critiques, although valid, leave little room for improving our understanding of the lived experiences of people in the past.

To initiate dialogue and help to breach the divide between social and physical interpretations, Dr. Carlina de la Cova and Mr. John Crandall organized and chaired a pivotal session at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (AAPA) in Knoxville, Tennessee on April 13, 2013. This invited poster symposium (in a unique format that also incorporated individual presentations), entitled “[The Bioarchaeology of Disease Ideologies](#)”, brought together a number of physical anthropologists dedicated to improving how we see and think about disease in the past.

The session opened with a contribution from [Dr. Charlotte Roberts](#), a prominent bioarchaeologist and palaeopathologist from Durham University in the UK, and the invited discussant for the session. Her poster “[Bioarchaeology and ‘Disability’: Using the Present to Inform Interpretations of Past Impairment](#)” echoed and built on concepts published in her 2000 paper “[Did They Take Sugar?](#)”. In this discussion, Roberts reminded attendees that impairment and disability are not the same, using examples from modern Paralympic athletes to demonstrate the distinction between impairment and disability. This insight is an important contribution as it reminds bioarch researchers that disability is a social construct, something that cannot be inferred directly from physical skeletal evidence.

Rebecca Gilmour (and co-authors), one of the authors of this blog post, presented on “[Functional Impairment and Physical Stress in the Past: How Physiotherapy Ideologies](#)

[Can Contribute to Bioarchaeological Interpretations](#)”, building on the impairment concepts introduced by Roberts. This presentation emphasized how disciplines outside anthropology (physiotherapy, in this instance) can help bioarchs to better understand impairment in the past. Gilmour et al. outlined [*The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health*](#), developed by the WHO, and discussed the bio-psycho-social nature of functional impairment after injury. They encouraged bioarchs to think about the various individual, biological, cultural, and environmental factors that influence the development and maintenance of dysfunction in their assessment of injury consequences.

Julie Peacock’s contribution “[Identifying Traumatically Induced Brain Injury \(TBI\) And Disability in Medieval England AD 1066-AD1600](#)” uses clinical data to inform her interpretations of impairment in the past. Peacock’s integrated approach addresses head injuries in non-battlefield contexts and discusses how this type of trauma can impact an individual’s function. Her research is particularly insightful as it reminds bioarchs to consider the long-term effects of traumatic head injuries, providing a possible way to infer not only impairment, but also speak to the possible need for care.

The session was more than just disability oriented; there were many other interesting and valuable contributions concerning construction of skeletal collections, identity, and treatment (see the full list of posters in the session [here](#)), which also have relevance for research on disability. More sessions on disability in bioarchaeology are currently being planned for future conferences, including one at the larger American Anthropological Association meetings in Fall 2013.

In addition to those mentioned above, there are many others beyond this conference also pursuing topics in the (bio)archaeology of disability. These include many students and those in the early stages of their careers, who are currently setting the stage for the growth and development of this field in the years ahead. For example, [William Southwell-Wright](#) (Durham University, UK), has organized a [session](#) on Disability and Archaeology at the Theoretical Archaeology Group meetings this past December. In addition to these conference papers, we are starting to see an increasing number of publications, including the soon-to-be-released volume [Disabilities in Roman Antiquity](#). While works on the history of disability are often based predominantly on texts and iconography, bioarchaeological materials (human remains and their mortuary contexts) seem to be gaining increased attention. This is important, because human remains are the most immediate and direct evidence of individuals’ lives. Including this source of information helps us to more fully understand impairment, disability, and ‘difference’ in the past.

Bioarchs continue to push the boundaries of the available evidence, but given limitations in interpreting past social contexts we are still finding it difficult to identify disabling circumstances in the past. We'd love to hear your thoughts about disability and bioarchaeology. Do you think bioarchaeological research is relevant for people dealing with disablism today? Can we even really see "disability" in the past? Leave a comment below, email us ([Rebecca Gilmour](#); [Heather Battles](#)), or tweet us at [@anthroetc](#).

Recommended reading:

- Battles, H. (2011) Toward Engagement: Exploring the Prospects for an Integrated Anthropology of Disability. *vis-à-vis: Explorations in Anthropology*, 11(1): 107-124. <http://vav.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/vav/article/view/14724/12756>
- Dettwyler, K. A. (1991) "Can paleopathology provide evidence for "compassion"?" *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 84(4):375–384.
- Finlay, N. (1999) Disabling Archaeology: An Introduction. *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 15(2):1-6. This entire issue is dedicated to the theme of the archaeology of disability.
- Hubert, J., Ed. (2000) *Madness, Disability and Social Exclusion: The Archaeology and Anthropology of 'Difference'*. London: Routledge.