

Disability History Association News

Spring, 2020

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Editorial

Is the Disability History Association too young to aspire to have a history of its own? Only in its second decade of existence, you might not think so, but for any organisation to maintain momentum there has to be regular change, absorption of young blood, and receptiveness to new ideas and initiatives. Over the last couple of years, several of our long-standing board members, who have given unstintingly of the energy over long periods of time, have stood down and DHA has welcomed several new faces and energetic spirits. This is vital for taking DHA forward, but how quickly can the past be forgotten in that process. Therefore it is not only appropriate, but essential that we take stock of our initial history. Susan Burch and Dan Wilson kick off this issue of DHA News by recalling how it all began.

In the last issue of DHA News, we asked that disability historians give us a flavour of what they are doing. There is a whole world out there, and the history of disability is part of that wide world. So in this issue we are delighted to hear from Elsbeth Bösl of Bundeswehr University Munich about ongoing research into the lives of people with disabilities in the former German Democratic Republic. I'd really like to encourage readers to submit content on their own projects. Please don't be shy.

This issue also carries announcements for DHA's Journal Article/Book Chapter Award, and DHA Book Award for work published in 2019. Closing date for these is May 15, so don't delay!

Iain Hutchison

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A History of the Disability History Association

by Dan Wilson and Susan Burch

Perhaps the first discussions about establishing a disability history association occurred during a 'National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute on Disability Studies' (NEH) held in 2000 at San Francisco State University under the direction of Paul Longmore and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. Seven historians attended the Institute: Paul Longmore, Rebecca Edwards, Jerry Hirsch, Catherine Kudlick, Donna Ryan, Sandy Sufian, and Daniel Wilson.

In the course of the sessions, the historians became concerned about the cavalier attitude toward history expressed by some of the presenters. Theory seemed to take precedence over historical evidence and facts. During several extracurricular meetings, the historians expressed their frustration and explored how to better support the history of disability. Establishing a disability history listserv under the umbrella of H-Net emerged as a popular option for collaboration and change. H-Disability was established in March 2001 with Sandy Sufian and Penny Richards as the first editors. [1] The creation of H-Disability provided a vehicle to advance discussion on the possibility of launching a disability history association. It succeeded in expanding the conversation beyond the colleagues present at the NEH Institute in San Francisco, encouraging additional historians studying disability to become involved.

Engaged colleagues also sought the establishment of a scholarly organization dedicated to the history of disability. Their goal was to support historians working on the history of disability and the histories of individuals with disabilities. The result was the 2004 creation of the Disability History Association (DHA). The inaugural board meeting took place in December of that year. The initial leadership consisted of Kim Nielsen, chair, Audra Jennings, Brian Greenwald, Jessica Chupik, Laurie Block, Pat Reynolds, Susan Burch, and Penny Richards. They articulated the goals of the association that included promoting the study of the history of disabilities in all time periods and geographies, opening membership to scholars, institutions, and organizations working in and supporting disability history, and helping to integrate disability history into the broader historical profession.

Two early tasks facing the new board were drafting by-laws for the association and legally incorporating the Disability History Association. The by-laws were necessary in order to give the DHA a formal structure, to incorporate, and to secure scholarly affiliations. An initial draft of the by-laws was approved at the July 2005 board meeting. Discussions about incorporation occurred over several board meetings in 2005 and 2006. The board eventually decided to incorporate in California. A law student at Yale University—Emily Teplin—helped the DHA by reviewing the laws of incorporation. Additionally, board members Cathy Kudlick and Paul Longmore found a class at the University of California-Davis that provided advice and assistance in applying to incorporation as a non-profit organization. The DHA was formally incorporated in 2007.

A key early task was building infrastructure to support and sustain the group. Among the responsibilities that the board undertook during these initial years was establishing membership categories and a dues structure. The board wanted to establish a membership subscription structure that would finance the organization, but one that would not exclude any potential members from joining for financial reasons. The leadership also endorsed fund-raising through membership and organizational contributions to support and sustain DHA work. Drafting by-laws, securing incorporation, and drawing up membership categories and a dues structure were important steps in establishing the DHA as a functioning organization and establishing its future. Though not scholarly activity *per se*, they were essential if the DHA was to be able to support and encourage disability history and the scholars who researched and wrote it.

Establishing a Scholarly Presence

During its first fifteen years, the DHA has pursued two interlocking public-facing goals: 1) to reduce barriers disabled people face when researching, studying, and teaching history; and, 2) to enhance the legibility and legitimacy of our field of study. Consequently, affiliations and coalitions with other scholarly organizations have been a mainstay of DHA's work. At its outset, DHA focused especially on establishing ties to prominent US-based associations, including, in 2003, the American Historical Association (AHA) and the Organization of American Historians (OAH). In 2006, the AHA formally included disability as a recognized interest category, and established, with members of DHA, an Advisory Committee on Disability, and a disability mentorship program (intended especially to support disabled graduate students navigate the profession) followed. In 2008, at the urging of the DHA, the American Historical Association launched a Task Force on Disability, facilitated by Mike Rembis and Sandy Sufian. The group was charged with promoting the field of disability history and with developing recommendations to enhance accessibility, inclusion, and full participation of disabled historians in the field of history. [2]



San Francisco delegates, 2008.

Joining with the Disability History Group UK & Europe and with San Francisco State University, in 2008, the DHA co-hosted an international disability history conference. Four years later, DHA leaders worked with colleagues in the Organization of American Historians to create a Committee on Disability and Disability History, establishing formal affiliation between the two groups. As in the AHA, the OAH's committee advises leadership on disability accessibility and full participation, sponsors conference sessions on disability history, and promotes the field through wide-ranging initiatives.

In response to feedback from the membership, Board members in 2010 began offering funding support and scholarly prizes for disability historians. A Graduate Student Travel Award supporting participation at conferences was launched in spring 2010. The Outstanding Publication Award, which covered periodicals and monographs, began in 2012; five years later, the DHA began offering both an Outstanding Book and an Outstanding Article/Book Chapter prize annually. An additional initiative was adopted in 2014 when the association established a mentorship program to encourage senior scholars in the field to support and encourage junior scholars. The latest innovation is the setting up of a Public History Award in 2019.

The growth of our field of disability history is evidenced in part by the many journal and book publications cited in regular updates on the H-disability listserv. Book reviews by DHA members, and overseen by Iain Hutchison, have been a staple of the listserv since 2009 with nearly 300 reviews published. Indeed, such has been the growth in disability history that publishers such as Manchester University Press, University of Illinois Press, and Routledge now have series dedicated to disability history. Our organization's membership has climbed as well, from 55 in September 2006 to 130 in 2019, but supplemented by a much larger number of supporters who we hope will eventually support DHA's work by also becoming members.

Looking Back and Looking Forward

Disability history continues to be broadly conceived, vigorously researched, and creatively interpreted by our members. Ongoing processes of critical self-reflection have sparked intentional efforts in recent years to better promote international, transnational, and global disability historical work, as well as to actively invite and support grassroots community and other underrepresented historians. Continuing to ask and address "who's not yet here and why" must remain core to the DHA's advocacy.

As colleagues who have been a part of DHA's early dreamscape, and who have observed with excitement its trajectory since, we invite others to add to this "history in progress" report. In our imagined futures for the DHA, we hope for increasing membership and resources to deepen the organization's sustainability and relevancy. Expanded support for community-anchored work in disability history, for non-US histories, and for disabled historians across all fields will benefit the field of disability history and the communities to whom we are accountable. Reflecting broader changes in historical research and teaching, intersectional work with disability studies, literature, critical race and ethnic studies, sociology, Indigenous

studies, material culture, and anthropology—to name just a few areas of study—offer valuable ways to reinterpret the past. Expanding access to disability history, including digital formats, inclusively designed museums and Open Access publications, aligns with DHA’s mission and would meaningfully “make history”.

Notes

1. For more on the history of H-disability, see “About this Network” <https://networks.h-net.org/ZZ-about-disability-ZZ>.
2. For more on the AHA Disability Task Force see Sandy Suffian, “Task Force on Disability 2011,” available online at < <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/annual-reports/annual-report-2011/task-force-on-disability-2011>>.

DisHist People with Disabilities in the GDR

Elsbeth Bösl reports on a new network: Research into the everyday history of people with disabilities in the German Democratic Republic

The German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) promotes historical research concerning the history of the GDR and the regime of the Social Unity Party, Die Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED). For this purpose, fourteen research groups were selected nationwide. From 2018 to 2021, historians at the University of Kiel and the Bundeswehr University, Munich, are in receipt of support for their joint project “DisHist People with Disabilities in the GDR”.



So far, the everyday lives of people with disabilities in the GDR, ranging from family life to the possibilities for taking advantage of technical assistance in everyday activities, have received little attention by scholars of GDR history. This research network intends to close this gap.

Discrepancies between integrative claims and the at least partially discriminatory GDR reality were central to the existence of people with disabilities. They were of low priority within the wider objectives of the GDR regime. They also posed particular challenges to the political system as, in a way, their existence impeded the ideals of

the construction of socialism as decided at the second party conference of the SED in July 1952.

At Kiel University, Gabriele Lingelbach and Pia Schmüser focus on families with children with disabilities. We want to shed light on their everyday lives and circumstances, focusing on how family members assigned different roles and tasks among themselves, dealt with internal hierarchies and power dynamics, communicated and negotiated with each other, and constructed identities for themselves and one another. At the same time, the project analyzes how families dealt with external factors such as medical or pedagogical care opportunities or everyday discrimination. We also highlight broader political, social and cultural developments in the GDR as regards people with disabilities and their interplay with family realities and agencies.

Likewise at Kiel University, Sebastian Barsch and Sebastian Balling are analyzing media representations of disability within their research group. It is largely unknown how disability was portrayed in the press, in literary and audiovisual East German media, and how these representations affected the lives of those marked as disabled. In reviewing GDR-television, radio, newspapers and magazines as well as media productions by amateurs, the project aims to paint a broad picture of disability representations in the GDR. The second focus of the research group lies on the actors behind the representations and how they embedded into the GDR media system. By asking who produced different media about and for people with disabilities and under what circumstances, we try to connect the media discourse on disability with its producers and changing production environments.

Elsbeth Bösl and Ulrike Winkler from Bundeswehr University, Munich, are investigating technologies of transport and housing as well as on planning and architecture as related aspects of inclusion and exclusion. The aim is also to review state plans and announcements for the social integration of disabled people in terms of their actual implementation in everyday life. To this end, people from various social spheres of the former GDR are being interviewed in guideline-based interviews. These include city architects and manufacturers of aids, those involved in disability policy, and disabled people affected by the decisions of these groups.

In cooperation with the project historians, the Kiel Drachensee Foundation and the Kiel Institute for Inclusive Education are developing a digital exhibition and Open Educational Resources (OER). Through the joint work of researchers and people with so-called intellectual disabilities, the project is guided by the motto "Nothing about us, without us".

Newly recorded sources and research results are to be deposited in an existing resource platform (<http://qgmb.histosem.uni-kiel.de>) for the history of people with disabilities and prepared for different target groups. It is also planned to make the research results available through conferences and publications to both the science community and the public.

The joint project is designed to take place over a period of four years. Work began in November 2018. At the moment, archival research and oral testimony interviews with

witnesses are in full swing. Results will be published from late 2020 onwards. The digital exhibition will go online in 2022.

The research group is looking forward to establishing contacts with anyone interested in the history of people with disabilities in the GDR.

Website (in German): <https://www.histories.uni-kiel.de/dishist/>

Contact *DisHist People with Disabilities in the GDR*

Project Director: Elsbeth Bösl DPhil

Institute of History

Faculty of Social Sciences

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Announcing the Disability History Association's First Public History Award

Nicole Belolan

The Disability History Association (DHA) is pleased to announce the first winner of the biennial Public Disability History Award: Sari Altschuler and David Weimer's ***Touch This Page! Making Sense of the Ways We Read*** - which you can learn more about here: <https://touchthispage.com>. The award committee was pleased to receive six submissions, all of which point to the truly meaningful work we are doing in this field in the United States and abroad. Thank you. You can peruse our resources at the intersection of public history and disability history on our web site: http://dishist.org/?page_id=1104. We look forward to learning about and sharing news of all your work--public history and otherwise--through the DHA's many venues (our new blog, our podcast, our newsletter, social media, and more).

Charlotte Schreyer, DHA Intern

DHA's intern program provides practical skill and career development opportunities for undergrad students, while the interns provide a valued contribution to DHA's limited manpower resources. Here, recent DHA intern Charlotte Schreyer shares her first-hand experiences, her impressions, her ambitions and her dreams. Charlotte is now embarking on a Masters program with the sincere well-wishes of DHA.



I've always had a passing interest in disability studies: as someone with autism, how disability is seen by larger society is a matter of personal importance. I had a close relationship with the Disability Support Services office at my college, Loyola University Maryland, and especially with their director Marcia Wiedefeld. It was through her that I first learned about the DHA and its work.

Marcia was a close friend of Dr. Sara Scalenghe, who is both a professor of history at Loyola and the current Director of the DHA. Dr. Scalenghe, in the fall of 2017, was planning the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute on Global Histories of Disability at Gallaudet University, to take place during the coming summer, and she was looking for interested students to help her gather materials. Dr. Scalenghe reached out to Marcia, who then reached out to me: she thought my research skills and interest in disability made me a good match.

I contacted Dr. Scalenghe as soon as Marcia told me about the opportunity, and the way she outlined the project was compelling. I eagerly decided to start working with her and, by proxy, the DHA, as part of a work study. After a year working with Dr. Scalenghe and the DHA, I knew I wanted to dedicate more time to the organization.

So, through Loyola's internship program, I spent 10 hours a week during the spring of 2019 as Dr. Scalenghe's assistant for the DHA.

My first assignment with Dr. Scalenghe was a continuation of the work I was doing in my work study: archiving documents. While it sounds - and indeed is - tedious, handling and transposing primary source materials is key to the process of history. How can you discuss and reference historical sources if you don't have access to them? I was given two large boxes full of printed-out emails, draft bylaws, and other documents from the founding years of the DHA, spanning from 2004 to 2013. Working through them, page by page, folder by folder, I scanned the files and uploaded them to the Board of Directors' Google Drive for easy access and long-term preservation.

I also did a lot of work on the Disability History Society's website. I used Wordpress to create and edit pages of the website, providing more resources about specific disability history and the field in general. These resources weren't simply given to me: I created them by scouring the internet for disability history syllabi and poring through the back archives of H-Disability to find every publication discussed in the group from 2015 to 2018. I also contributed to current scholarship on the network by copyediting a handful of disability literature reviews commissioned by Iain Hutchison for publication on H-Disability.

My favorite task with the DHA was grant writing. Dr. Scalenghe wanted to apply for a NEH grant to support a Disability Studies major program at Loyola. I became heavily involved with the process, researching the requirements for the grant proposal, looking for faculty who would sponsor the proposal, and even writing some draft sections of the proposal itself. I have never felt more included in a process than when I was taking notes at a lunch meeting for Dr. Scalenghe about the grant.

I learned a lot about the DHA, disability studies scholarship, and disability in general during my internship. Firstly, I learned about how much scholarship and research was being done about disability. In 2018 alone, 39 articles and 12 books were published about disability history, which is only the portion covered by H-Disability. I'm also impressed by the international scope and wide range of topics covered in this corpus, showing how disability is in some way universal.

I also learned how disability history and academic study of disability informs current disability activism. Growing up in a specific time and place colors your view of the world, and sometimes makes it difficult to imagine any other way of being. Learning about history, especially the history of those considered marginalized today, helps you understand that perceptions and beliefs can change, shows how the truisms and assumptions of today came into being, and gives context to the new ideas you want to bring into the world. After working with the DHA, my interest in disability and disability activism grew into a passion. If it wasn't for my time during this internship, I doubt I would now be heading to law school and down the path towards disability advocacy.

Disability History Association - Outstanding Article or Book Chapter Award, 2020

The Disability History Association (DHA) promotes the relevance of disability to broader historical enquiry and facilitates research, conference travel, and publication for scholars engaged in any field of disability history.

The Disability History Association takes pleasure in inviting entries for the Article / Book Chapter Award, part of its 9th Annual Outstanding Publication Award that also includes a separate Book Award.

In calling for article and edited collection book chapter submissions for the 2020 award, the award committee welcomes entries that feature new and original history of disability scholarship. To be considered, submissions **MUST** have significant historical content.

The award is open to authors writing across all geographic areas and time periods. The publication must be in English, and with first publication taking place between January 1 and December 31, 2019. We are conscious that some journals publish an electronic advance copy of articles that can appear a considerable time before the print copy is published; we also recognize that some journals are running behind schedule so that, for example, an article published in October 2019 might actually appear in a 2018 edition. First publication is the key criteria, but we will endeavor to be sympathetic in cases of “behind schedule” publication. If you feel that your proposed submission should be considered, but might be at risk of disqualification by definitions of “first publication,” please email for adjudication by the Awards Committee.

The amount of the award is \$200 for first place and \$100 for honorable mention.

All submissions should be sent to the award committee, via Iain Hutchison, no later than May 15, 2020. One electronic (.pdf or .doc) copy of the article or book chapter to be sent to: Dr Iain Hutchison, Centre for the History of Medicine, University of Glasgow; iain.hutchison@glasgow.ac.uk.

In the interest of modeling best practice in the field of disability history, we require that the publisher/author provide an electronic copy in text-based .pdf or .doc file compatible with screen reading software for the review committee. We understand that copyright rules apply, and we will only use the electronic copy for the purposes of the DHA Outstanding Publication Award. Manuscripts not provided in accessible electronic formats for screen reading software in a timely manner cannot be considered for the prize.

Please include the full bibliographic citation of your submission in the Chicago Manual of Style format.

The Disability History Association Board plans to announce the recipients of the DHA Outstanding Publication Award in September 2020.

Members of the DHA Board are not eligible for the award.

Disability History Association - Outstanding Book Award, 2020

The Disability History Association (DHA) promotes the relevance of disability to broader historical enquiry and facilitates research, conference travel, and publication for scholars engaged in any field of disability history.

The Disability History Association takes pleasure in inviting entries for its Book Award, part of its 9th Annual Outstanding Publication Award.

In calling for book submissions for the 2020 award, the award committee welcomes monographs and edited collections, provided they are new original scholarship and published in English. The award is open to authors writing across all geographic areas and time periods.

The first publication of the book should have taken place between January 1 and December 31, 2019.

The amount of the award is \$300 for first place and \$100 for honorable mention.

Please send four copies of your book to the Chair of the Award Committee, Sara Scalenghe, Department of History, Loyola University Maryland, 4501 N Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21210, Buffalo. The deadline is May 15, 2020.

In the interest of modeling best practices in the field of disability studies, we ask that the publisher/author send an electronic copy in text-based .pdf or .doc file format compatible with screen reading software for the review committee to sscalenghe@loyola.edu. We understand that copyright rules apply, and we will only use the electronic copy for the purposes of the DHA Outstanding Publication Award. Books not provided in accessible electronic formats for screen reading software in a timely manner will not be considered for the prize.

Please include the full bibliographic citation of your submission in the Chicago Manual of Style format.

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Manchester University Press

Manchester University Press has a growing portfolio in its Disability History Series.

Recent titles include:

Disability in Industrial Britain: A cultural and literary history of impairment in the coal industry, 1880-1948

by Kirsti Bohata, Alexandra Jones, Maike Mantin and Steven Thompson.

Coalmining was a notoriously dangerous industry and many of its workers experienced injury and disease. However, the experiences of the many disabled people within Britain's most dangerous industry have gone largely unrecognised by historians. This book looks at British coal through the lens of disability, using an interdisciplinary approach to examine the lives of disabled miners and their families.

A diverse range of sources are used to examine the economic, social, political and cultural impact of disability in the coal industry, looking beyond formal coal company and union records to include autobiographies, novels and existing oral testimony. It argues that, far from being excluded entirely from British industry, disability and disabled people were central to its development.

Eradicating Deafness? Genetics, pathology, and diversity in twentieth-century America

By Marion Andrew Schmidt

Is deafness a disability to be prevented or the uniting trait of a cultural community to be preserved? Combining the history of eugenics and genetics with deaf and disability history, this book traces how American heredity researchers moved from trying to eradicate deafness to embracing it as a valuable cultural diversity. It looks at how deafness came to be seen as a hereditary phenomenon at all, how eugenics became part of progressive reform at schools for the deaf, and how, from the 1950s on, more sociocultural approaches to disability and minority led to new cooperative projects between professionals and local signing deaf communities. Analysing the transformative effects of exchange between researchers and objects of research, this book offers new insight to changing ideas about medical ethics, reproductive rights, the meaning of scientific progress and cultural diversity.

Disability and the Victorians: Attitudes, interventions, legacies

Edited by Iain Hutchison, Martin Atherton and Jaipreet Virdi

Disability and the Victorians brings together in one collection a range of topics, perspectives and experiences from the Victorian era that present a unique overview of the development and impact of attitudes and interventions towards those with impairments during this time. The collection also considers how the legacies of these actions can be seen to have continued throughout the twentieth century right up to the present day. Subjects addressed include deafness, blindness, language delay, substance dependency, imperialism and the representation of disabled characters in popular fiction. These varied topics illustrate how common themes can be found in how Victorian philanthropists and administrators responded to those under their care. Often character, morality and the chance to be restored to productivity and usefulness overrode medical need and this both influenced and reflected wider societal views of impairment and inability.

Shell-shocked British Army veterans in Ireland, 1918-39: A difficult homecoming

By Michael Robinson

With a focus on mental illness, Shell-shocked British Army veterans in Ireland provides the first in-depth investigation of disabled Great War veterans in Ireland. The book is a result of five years of researching previously untouched archival sources including psychiatric records of former patients otherwise closed to the public. The remit of the work contributes to various historiographical fields including disability history, the social history of medicine, the cultural history of modern war, the history of psychiatry and Irish studies. It also seeks to extend the scope of the First World War with an emphasis on how war-induced disability and trauma continued to affect large numbers of ex-servicemen beyond the official cessation of the conflict.

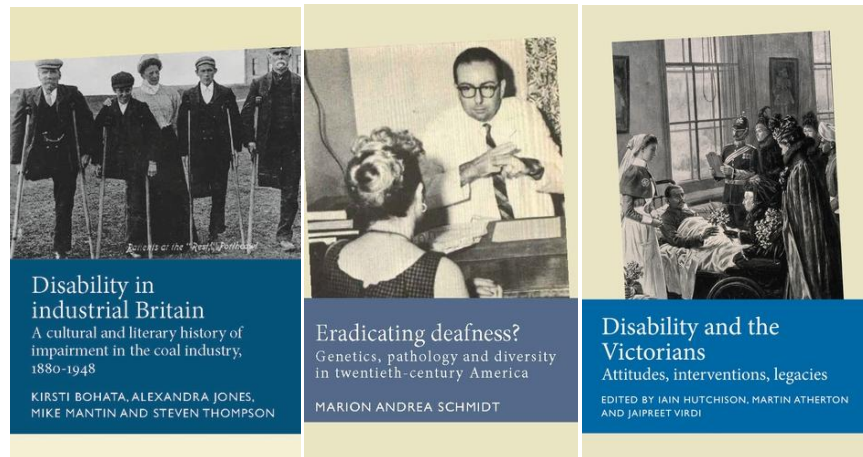
And due out later this year:

Measuring difference, numbering normal: Setting the standards for disability in the interwar period

By Coreen McGuire

Measurements, and their manipulation, have been underestimated as crucial historical forces motivating and guiding the way we think about disability. Using measurement technology as a lens, this book draws together several existing discussions on disability, phenomenology, healthcare, medical practice, big data, embodiment, and emerging medical and scientific technologies around the turn of the twentieth century. These are popular topics of scholarly attention but have not, until now, been considered as interconnected topics within a single book. As such, this work connects several important, and usually separate academic subject areas

and historical specialisms. The standards embedded in instrumentation created strict, but, ultimately arbitrary thresholds of normalcy and abnormalcy. Considering these standards from a long historical perspective reveals how these dividing lines shifted when pushed.



The full Disability History catalogue can be found at:
<https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/series/disability-history/>

DHA Membership

Membership dues support the organization's activities and goal of promoting the study of the history of disability.

A one-year (January 1 to December 31) individual membership in the Disability History Association is thirty (\$30 U.S.) dollars. We offer a student/low or fixed income membership of fifteen (\$15 U.S.) dollars per year. The DHA also offers institutional memberships at the rate of one hundred (\$100 U.S.) dollars per year (see below), and lifetime memberships for five hundred (\$500) dollars. If you are a U.S. citizen, your dues are tax deductible.

To join the Disability History Association, please fill out the form under Membership on the website. Dues may be paid through PayPal.com, or you may send a check or money order (made payable to the Disability History Association) to the address below. When you submit the form you will be transferred to <http://www.paypal.com> where you can pay online. If you would prefer, you can simply submit your information and send a check or money order to our Treasurer, Kathleen Brian:

Kathleen Brian
22809 Lakeview Dr. #E406
Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043

We respect your privacy and will keep the information you provide confidential.

For questions about membership and dues, please contact Kathleen Brian, DHA Treasurer, at disability.history@gmail.com.

DHA News

We hope that you have enjoyed reading this newsletter. How about writing for the next one? Short articles or story pieces. New research projects. Letters to the Editor. Finds in the Archive, such as unusual pieces of disability history that you have discovered in unusual places. Photos and other visual material – with the usual permissions and credits where applicable.

Or just drop an email to say 'Hi!' – to Iain: iain.hutchison@glasgow.ac.uk