

Disability History Association News

Spring, 2021

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Editorial

Our last DHA News focused on the intersection between disability and the Covid19 pandemic. Even with gradual access to vaccination programmes, Covid19 is still very much with us and you will see that it only arises in the passing in this edition. There is undoubtedly more to be said about Covid19, its impact on disability experience, research and teaching. But in this edition, we look at our discipline through a variety of approaches.

Firstly, we welcome DHA's new president, Kathleen Brian. Katie presents her vision for DHA and disability history. Do take up her offer to engage with her, and share your ideas with her.

Then we have a variety of contributions. Lynn Rose, a DHA life member, describes her work in Kurdistan-Iraq. And Chiara Bombardieri, who I met at a conference in

Germany a few years ago, describes a case from her conversatory work at the Biblioteca Scientifica "Carlo Livi" in Reggio Emilia, Italy. I have a conversation with DHA board member Jaipreet Virdee about her career and about her recently published book, *Hearing Happiness*. And Dawn Kaczmer gives us a taster-insight to Alexander Street's *Disability in the Modern World*.

Awards feature strongly in this edition. The winner and honourable mention of the 2020 book award are announced – congratulations to Sarah and Jason. And we announce four 2021 awards which disability historians might like to consider: DHA's book award, DHA's conference award, and DHA's journal article/book chapter award. Additionally, we share details of the Tobin Siebers prize for disability studies.

If you enjoy this edition, or even if you don't, please consider writing something for the Autumn 2021 issue – we would really like to know what you are all researching, discovering, writing, publishing, presenting ...

Iain Hutchison

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A Three-Year Invitation

Kathleen Brian



Consider the staggering convergences of the last twelve months: a dismally-managed global pandemic and the inevitable resurgence of eugenic public discourse; an economic collapse and its intensification of socioeconomic precarity; an escalation of violence against people of color and against the civil unrest that sought to prevent it; and the continued refusal to acknowledge the disastrous ecological effects of environmental degradation and global warming.

As you well know, communities of disabled people and their allies, including those fostered by the Disability History Association (DHA), have been enormously impacted by these concurrences. The mechanisms of debilitation and exclusion that have been on such vivid display throughout these public crises are, after all, outgrowths and remnants of the systems that appear in the histories we give voice to.

But our histories also tell of alternatives. They tell of non-normative ways of being, knowing, and belonging that can and should inform our process. Which is why, in this moment of urgency and transformation, I find myself humbled and inspired by the opportunity to guide the DHA for the next three years. And while the possibilities before us carry tremendous promise, I also understand them to carry an equally tremendous charge.

As such, I invite you to join me in focusing our collective attentions on three points of priority:

1. **Continuing to reflect critically on the past, present, and future of the DHA.** The approaching twentieth anniversary of the DHA's founding (2024) makes the next three years a particularly appropriate time for retrospection and historically-informed self-reflection. Building on the work of Susan Burch and Dan Wilson, who wrote a brief history of our organization for a recent newsletter (Spring, 2020), the Board of Directors will prioritize the documentation and preservation of the DHA's past in an accessible way. The question, then, will be how to bring this history to bear on how we function, what we prioritize, and who we invite to the table.
2. **Diversifying the DHA's leadership, membership, and partnerships, while also recommitting to the diversification of both disability history and the institutions that foster it.** The DHA remains committed to highlighting the historical intersections of race, ethnicity, and disability, as well as the support, promotion, and amplification of work produced by people of color. Although we continue to do so through our podcast and blog, we will actively seek additional opportunities to further these aims. This is a call, as well, to consider other aspects of diversity, including disciplinary scope and interdisciplinary alliances, institutional locations, and the practice of disability history as it takes place afield of traditional spaces.
3. **Emphasizing sustainable practices, operational transparency, and rhizomatic leadership.** The Board will reconsider the structures and practices that constitute the DHA, paying particular attention to traces of ableist and white supremacist logics embedded there. Ultimately, the goal is to determine which changes, and to what extent, might be implemented to counteract this inheritance. This might mean transitioning to a more egalitarian process for determining who serves on the Board; courting a more diverse group of historians by instrumentalizing more and more varied channels of communication; and creating a committee system that will allow for broader participation in the daily functioning of the DHA.

You may expect to hear from us in the coming weeks and months because, quite simply, you are necessary. If this work is to be undertaken in meaningful, substantive, and sustainable ways, it will require all of us.

Kathleen M. Brian

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The 2021 Tobin Siebers Prize for Disability Studies in the Humanities

Do you have a book manuscript nearing completion? Have you still to sign a contract with a publisher? If your answers are ‘yes’ and ‘no’, this might be for you!

Submissions are now open for the 2021 Tobin Siebers Prize for Disability Studies in the Humanities. The prize is awarded in memory of disability studies pioneer Tobin Siebers, Professor of English at the University of Michigan and author of many influential books and articles in the field of Disability Studies. The prize is awarded yearly for the best book-length **manuscript** on a topic of pressing urgency in the field (with the exception of 2020, due to the challenges presented by COVID-19). Reflecting on the work of the scholar the prize commemorates, the competition invites submissions on a wide range of topics, from literary and cultural studies, to trans-historical research, to contributions to disability theory such as work in crip/queer studies. The deadline is August 1, 2021. The winner will be announced in January 2022. Winners receive a cash prize of \$1500, and a book contract from the University of Michigan Press to be published in the Corporealities: Discourses of Disability series.

Previous winners:

2019 Kateřina Kolářová, ‘Rehabilitative Post-Socialism: Disability, Race, Gender, and Sexuality and the Limits of National Belonging’

2018 Stephen Knadler, ‘Vitality Politics: Health, Debility, and the Limits of Black Emancipation’

2017 Elizabeth B. Bearden, ‘Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability’

2016 Shelley L. Tremain, ‘Foucault and Feminist Philosophy of Disability’

2015 Anne McGuire, ‘War on Autism: On the Cultural Logic of Normative Violence’

Guidelines for Submissions

Eligible submissions include complete book-length scholarly manuscripts not under consideration by another publisher. Unrevised dissertations, fiction, poetry, and memoirs will not be considered. Manuscripts and supporting documents should be in digital format and must be sent via email to siebers.prize@umich.edu no later than **August 1, 2021**.

In addition to a complete book-length manuscript, please send the following materials:

- A description of the manuscript
- A brief statement regarding its relative contribution to the field of Disability Studies
- The word count and illustration count
- A current curriculum vitae

For assistance with the submission process, please contact:

siebers.prize@umich.edu

Call for Papers: Assistance, Assistants and Assistive Media. Barriers and Interfaces of digital cultures

As technological assistants and automated systems are becoming more and more ubiquitous, human-machine interactions are mediated through a growing number and variety of interfaces. This call invites scholars from media studies, disability studies, sociology as well as historians of science and technology and fields related to these areas to discuss the notion of assistance in relation to media at a two-day conference.

In cars, for example, a range of “advanced driver-assistance systems” (ADAS) support the operator in changing the lane, parking the vehicle or monitoring dead angles. The auto-correction function featured in most word processors and messengers, too, may be viewed as a technological assistant or automated support. Yet, the term “assistive technology” usually only denotes (high and low tech) devices devised for people with sensory, cognitive or motor disabilities. While ADAS tend to convey notions of comfort and convenience, assistive technologies often carry stigma, especially when “drawing attention to an otherwise invisible disability” (Mills, 2012, p. 327). However, the terminology of technological engineering poses an exception: here an “assistive system” (Assistenzsystem) is any computer based device or programme that supports any user in successfully completing a specific task. In engineering, “assistive systems” are designed to “compensate for human

weaknesses" (Gerke 2014, p. 10) that only occur in the process of engaging with a technological system in the first place. Consequently, from an engineering point of view, the need for assistance is relational as well as temporary, since it only emerges from a specific (media) environment. This view resonates with statements from scholars within disability studies such as Katherine Ott: "Since all useful technology is assistive, it is peculiar that we stipulate that some devices are assistive while others need no qualification" (Ott, 2002, 21). Nevertheless, resorting to "human weakness" as a reference point – may it be temporary or not – for conceptualising assistance entails another set of fallacies and has therefore rightfully been criticised by scholars within disability studies and cultural studies, for example Karin Harrasser (2018). What is more, the expertise of users, drivers, caretakers etc. plays an essential role when technological assistants and assistive technologies are used/deployed as "support mechanisms". These practices entangled with assistive systems require consideration and critical analysis, too (Mauldin 2020).

Taking the engineering perspective as a point of departure, we would like to invite contributions that investigate software, hardware, interfaces and devices as mediators of barriers. We want to propose that technological assistants in general and assistive technologies in particular can be described as assistive media – media that intervene in an already existing media environment and add an additional level of translation to the human-machine interaction. As the historical study of technological assistants reveals, in some cases technologies implemented to overcome one barrier eventually created new ones. Each user interface offers new modes of interaction while declining others: the touchscreen merged input and output devices into one plain surface and thereby allowed for a bigger screen – yet, without haptic feedback, a screen reader and voice control, it renders mobile phones almost inoperable for users who rely primarily on their sense of touch. Therefore, we are suggesting to discuss both "assistance" and "access" in relation to (temporal) barriers by focusing on media's oscillation between posing a problem and offering a solution.

The following aspects and questions indicate topics we would like to cover:

- histories of computer-based soft- and hardware assistants
- explorations into non-anthropocentric perspectives on assistive media (e.g. computer-computer interfaces and developer's perspective)
- discuss assistants as technologies that entail enabling and disabling effects at the same time
- If all technologies assist, how do we define "assistive media"?
- interdependencies of assistive technologies and care as practice within socio-technical systems.
- developing for and with dis/abilities: how do concepts like Crip Technoscience (Hamraie and Fritsch, 2019) change the notion of assistance?
- integrating disability studies and media studies

- media histories of disability as a concept

Contributions from both theory and practice are welcome. We are hoping for contributions that represent a wide range of perspectives including the importance of the voices of disabled people.

Abstracts of max. 1500 characters (including spaces) for 30-minute lectures can be submitted via the following address assistivemedia@leuphana.de until 18th April 2021. Please attach a short CV (one page) and send all documents in one PDF. If your contribution is accepted, we will need a short biography and, if available, topic related bibliographical information. You will receive notification regarding the acceptance of your contribution by early May.

The conference will take place from 1st to 3rd July 2021 and will most likely be held online (e.g. Zoom). If the COVID pandemic allows, interested participants are invited to join us for a hybrid format on campus at Leuphana University Lüneburg. In the – unfortunately rather unlikely – event that we all will be able to meet face-to-face in Lüneburg, we attempt to cover travel and accommodation expenses for speakers. CART and ASL are provided either way. For other accommodations, please indicate in your application/registration.

Following the conference, the publication of an anthology is planned. Invited speakers will be kindly asked to submit a first draft of their conference contribution (max. 15.000 characters incl. spaces) by September 30th

Confirmed Keynote Speaker: Mara Mills (New York University)

Organizers: Wolfgang Hagen, Jan Müggenburg, Philipp Sander and Anna-Lena Wiechern

For further Information please contact: assistivemedia@leuphana.de

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The Center for Gender and Development Studies in Kurdistan-Iraq

Lynn Rose

Lynn joined the faculty at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani in 2016 following twenty years as a teacher-scholar in the U.S. and Germany. She has won several teaching awards, including the CASE (Carnegie) Professor of the Year for Missouri, and has served as a Fulbright Scholar and a Mary Switzer Distinguished Fellow. Lynn teaches the history and humanities of the pre-modern world; her scholarship focuses on disability studies in the ancient Graeco-Roman world, but sometimes considers the modern world and non-western societies, and almost always overlaps with gender studies. Here Lynn reports on her role in Kurdistan



We at the Center for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS) at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani, are happy to continue our institutional membership in the Disability History Association. We take an intersectional approach to gender justice, with a particular focus on disability rights and disability advocacy. Working with about ten advocacy and service groups in Sulaimani, we aim to incorporate disability identity into our research and people with disabilities (PWD) into our community. Disability history is an important part of our effort: a common history is crucial to unity and pride. On a larger scale, education about disability is critical. Following is an overview of the situation in Kurdistan.

Iraq has been in an emergency situation for many years and is finally entering a recovery/development stage. Many responses to disability, however, are oriented to the emergency phase. While services such as providing supplies, dealing with immediate medical trauma, and gathering data about the population of PWD is tremendously important, we now need to move toward models of sustainability in social, economic, and legal realms. The problem with soliciting nondisabled people for donations to help PWD is that while the model of pity and charity and presenting PWD as victims is effective in terms of raising money, as we know from the American “Pitython” model, it perpetuates the view of PWD as perpetual consumers. Under the gaze of charity, PWD are seen not as individuals, with the exception of the “poster child”, but as a homogenous lot of defective humans—and, when female, doubly-defective. Contrary to the slogan in the global north, “Nothing About Us Without Us”, PWD in Iraq are rarely involved in any planning or analysis of the research about them.

The World Health Organization estimates that 15% of the world’s population is disabled, and that most of the disability is in the global South. The average prevalence rate of 15% places the number of persons with disabilities in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region at approximately 30 million people, many of whom experience discrimination and social exclusion (World Bank, 2009). The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reported in 2019 that “Iraq has one of the largest populations of persons with disabilities in the world, including victims of conflict and terrorism who suffer injuries, trauma and suffering caused by Daesh, whose crimes and abuses amounted to crimes against humanity.” Iraq adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006; the first key recommendation in the follow-up report (2016) is to “implement a range of measures to shift the widespread charity-based perception of disability in Iraq to a rights-based approach to disability”. The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq confirmed this need in 2018. While demographic data are not exact, approximately 20,000 people with disabilities live in Kurdistan-Iraq, which is composed of four governorates (Duhok, Erbil, Halabja, and Sulaimani). Of these, 7,000 are in our area, the Sulaimani Governorate. A 2016 UN report estimates 4 million people in Iraq as a whole, and points out that there are disproportionately more PWD because of war. Of the PWD, 80% are poor, living on less than \$3 per day on average. As noted above, 15% of the world’s population is disabled, and that most of the disability is in the global South. The average prevalence rate of 15% places the number of persons with disabilities in the MENA region at approximately 30 million people.

While physical and economic barriers keep many PWD from meaningful participation, these are deeply rooted in institutionalized attitudinal barriers, which we must alleviate to effect real, lasting change. The problem will never go away unless and until we address its components systemically, and the “we” must include predominantly PWD. It is CGDS’s aim to address these deep underlying barriers.

The attitudinal barriers appear on three levels: individual, organizational, and community. At the individual level, generational poverty, chronic illness and other invisible disability, lack of education, rural isolation, and gender discrimination compound political and social invisibility. Because of deeply embedded and often internalized patriarchy and misogyny, along with its manifestations (e.g., GBV (Gender-based Violence), child marriage, polygamy), disabled women suffer disproportionately.

Second, the “silo effect” is a barrier at the group level: there is little communication between and among organizations for PWD (e.g., blind people have not joined forces with people with Down syndrome); there is little perception of commonalities among PWD. Service and advocacy organizations, furthermore, include mostly educated, urban PWD, mostly men, in their management.

Third, at the community level, we see a preference for economic solutions and the charity model over a human rights model, but no amount of money will effect lasting change until the needs and identities of PWD are articulated and heard. That said, we must also bear in mind that the social model of disability rights in the global North, based on independent individualism, is inappropriate in this interdependent, extended-family-based society.

“Disabled people are becoming the voices of their own stories,” observes Lawrence Carter-Long, of the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund. While this phenomenon is underway in the global North, PWD are usually invisible in the global South, including in Iraq. Disabled women are even more invisible, and disabled rural women are the most invisible of all.

As an institute of higher education partnering with local disability organizations, we believe that we can produce something more than the sum of our parts. Our key, interrelated hypotheses are: 1) the voices of women with disabilities, presently unheard, are potential tools of self-determination and inclusion; 2) Several organizations of PWD have knowledge and experience; shared knowledge among PWD will facilitate and amplify a collective voice; 3) PWD, working together, can educate civil society about their identities and needs, thus moving away from the charity model towards participatory decision-making.

In spring 2020, CGDS conducted a series of oral interviews with local PWD. The following excerpt from one of the interviews summarizes the situation very well.

Some people are sitting at home right now, and they can reprogram the whole system in the country. Society needs fixing. Universities should teach the humanity of people whether disabled or nondisabled. Pity is so dangerous. If you pity someone, this means that this person is different from this society. People should be respected.

You can find all of our activities and events on our website: <https://auis.edu.krd/CGDS/>

Photo description: A woman with her hair pulled back, wearing black trousers and a white-edged cape, stands in front of a large screen, gesturing at it with her left hand. On the screen we see the words Disability Community in white font on an orange circle, and to the right, eleven names of disability organizations in dark blue font. To



the left of the screen is a white flip chart, and a fabric-draped table is in front of the screen.

2020 DHA Outstanding Book Awards - Winners

The Disability History Association is delighted to announce the results of the 2020 Outstanding Book Award. The depth and breadth of the submissions, as well as of the individual works, are a testament to the continued vitality of Disability History and to the capacity of our field to expand the historical discipline more broadly.

Congratulations and appreciation are due to Sarah Handley-Cousins (winner) and Jason Ellis (honorable mention), as well as to the communities that fostered their scholarship.

Winner

Sarah Handley-Cousins, *Bodies in Blue: Disability in the Civil War North* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2019).



Praise from the committee:

“*Bodies in Blue* illustrates how war wounds cut across the conventional defining lines of disability to draw illness, invisible injuries and impediments, and emotional and mental trauma into the ranks of acquired disabilities. By focusing on not only individuals such as Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain but also groups of war-wounded men such as the Invalid Corps, *Bodies in Blue* surveys multiple manifestations of war-related disability in the post-Union United States. Handley-Cousin's book painstakingly analyzes unusual suspects as subjects of inquiry: rather than focus on amputees, she turns her attention to a wide variety of disabilities and impairments drawn from across the historical record of the Civil War and its aftermath. In the process, *Bodies of Blue* broadens and deepens the historical study of Americans with disabilities, thereby simultaneously expanding both American History and Disability History. Well-written and carefully worded, *Bodies in Blue* demonstrates historical research and writing at its best.”

“In *Bodies in Blue*, Handley-Cousins features Northern Civil War veterans' voices to create a nuanced look at the role disability played in their lives and those of their families and friends during and after the war. Acutely aware of the hold the medical model has on conceptions of the history of bodies affected by the Civil War, Handley-Cousins anticipates and addresses medical model perspectives in an effort to help forward their argument, foregrounding the lived experience of military-related

disability. Handley-Cousins's work is written with sensitivity and detail that will interest the general public and academics alike."

Honorable Mention

Jason Ellis, *A Class by Themselves? The Origins of Special Education in Toronto and Beyond* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).



Praise from the committee:

"Ellis's *A Class by Themselves?* provides readers with a clearly written, well-organized overview of the history of auxiliary or special education for disabled children in Toronto, Canada, public schools, in the early twentieth century. The study makes connections to other urban school trends in the US and will be of interest to academics who study education history, disability history, and the history of childhood. It will also be of interest to practitioners who teach in formal (such as classroom) and informal (such as museum) learning environments, particularly those who would like to learn more about the history of inclusion (and exclusion) in education and teaching.

"*A Class by Themselves?* thoughtfully and meticulously combines historical evidence left by teachers and students, parents and psychologist, and civil servants of multiple sorts to detail the emergence and evolution of "auxiliary education" in Toronto during the first half of the twentieth century. Ellis shows how ongoing innovation and adaptation to historical conditions resulted in the expansion of academic and practical education for children with cognitive, mental, sensory, and even physical disabilities and impairments. As the identification of educational impediments grew and diversified, so did the type and number of opportunities provided by the Toronto school system for students with extraordinary needs. Ellis digs deep into institutional records left by educators and other professionals, skillfully coaxing details from pupil records that show how children and their parents often wielded their own agency and ability to negotiate school-centered social services. Using clear, tidy language, *A Class by Themselves?* draws together a wealth of historical perspectives, weaving

them into a tightly-knit study of the origins of special education in North American schools."

Ospedale San Lazzaro, Reggio Emilia – and patient Federico S (1830-1902)

Chiara Bombardieri



In 1821, Francesco IV, Duke of Este, decided to organize a modern psychiatric hospital in Reggio Emilia. As a consequence, the "Ospedale San Lazzaro" developed and eventually became famous throughout Europe. By the beginning of the 20th century, the hospital consisted of more than twenty buildings and hospitalized around 2,000 patients annually.



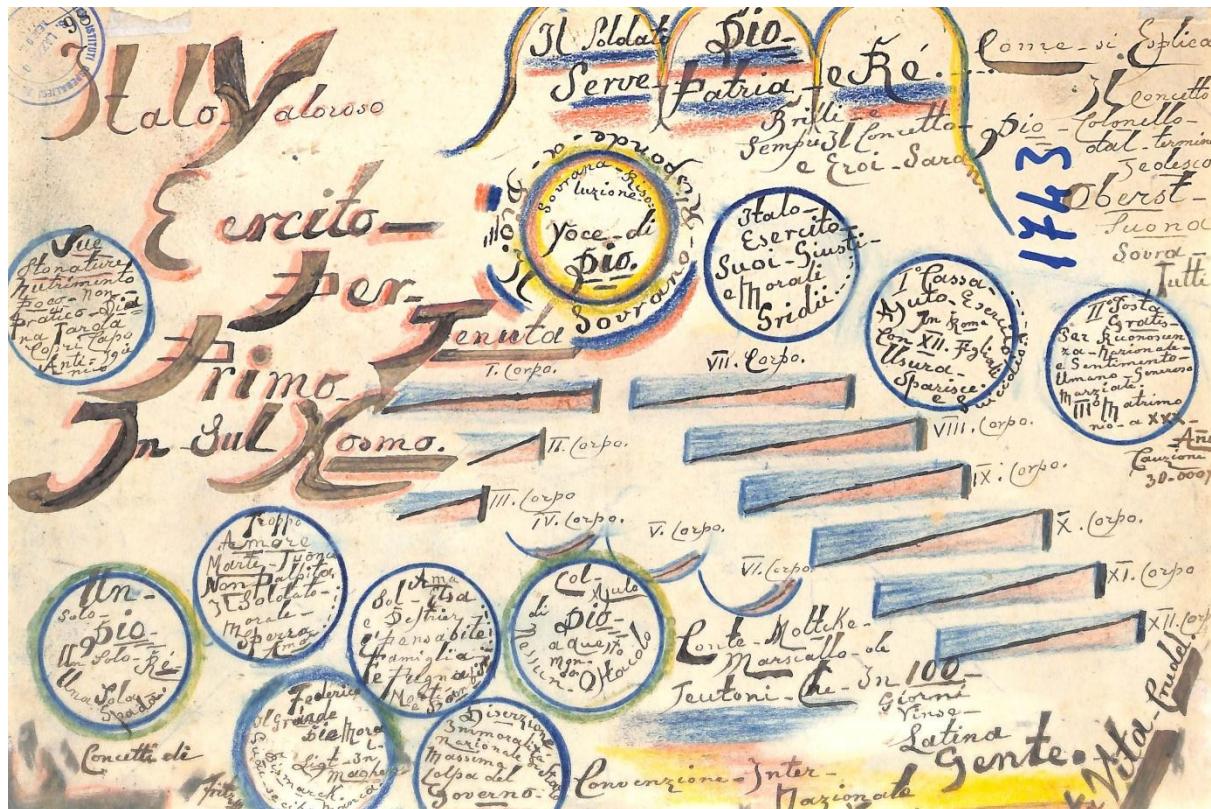
In 1978, psychiatric hospitals were closed by law in Italy, and were replaced by Community Psychiatric Services. In Reggio Emilia, we preserve a huge historical heritage of the former psychiatric hospital consisting of a museum, archive and library. Between 1821 and 1978, "San Lazzaro" hosted about 100,000 patients and so our archive conserves about 100,000 case files and 1,000 boxes with other documents consisting of records that reveal details of the hospital's economic management, staff, buildings and so on: the so-called administrative fonds.

Occasionally, patient files contain photos, drawings, private letters (from doctors to family, from patient to family, from patient to doctors...). This occurs in the case files of Federico S., Earl of Belfort.

Federico was born in Trento in 1830, son of a rich and influential family. At that time, Trento was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, therefore he studied law in Germany and then worked in Milan as employee of the Austro-Hungarian army. In 1859, when the army left Milan, he returned home, where he lived as a private citizen and with no interest in work or engaging in public activities. Instead, he used to spend his time drinking and soon he developed a hallucinatory state. He claimed to be a close friend of the Archduke; and his odd behaviour was soon noticed by the local police. His family considered him to be a cause of embarrassment and dishonor, and consequently his relatives decided to hospitalize him. "San Lazzaro" was chosen because it was recognized as a famous and modern hospital that provided special treatment for rich people. Most importantly, it was sufficiently far from Trento that they felt secure that no one would discover his hospitalization. Mental illness was considered to be shameful, and well-known families especially did everything they could to cover up such illness in their sons.

He arrived in Reggio Emilia in 1884 and he is described as 1.80 cm tall, blond-haired, blue-eyed, but with just one tooth in his mouth. He described himself as the most educated man in the city of Trento, he was loquacious and he often gave suggestions to doctors about the hospital management, about therapies and also about dress code.

He used to spend his time reading and walking in the garden, San Lazzaro having a typical "village structure" that included a great park. He also loved to hold conferences for other patients, usually about politics or moral matters. He was accomplished at drawing tables and charts to illustrate his presentations.



In our archive we preserve about ninety of his drawings. Some of these are shown in the Museum of the History of Psychiatry, hosted in one of the pavilions of the former psychiatric hospital. Many of them have travelled around Italy and the world, for several art brut (raw art) exhibitions.

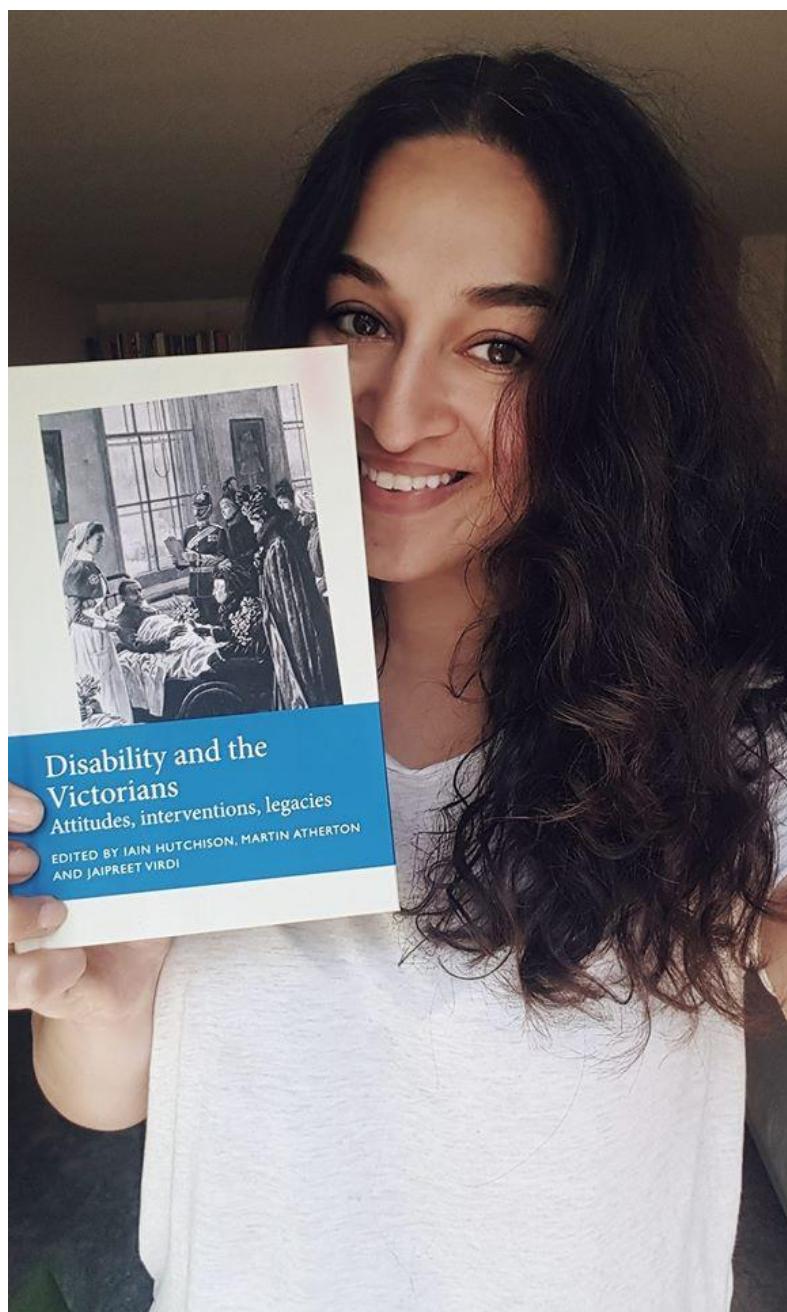
His art, on parchment 30cm x 40cm, demonstrates some graphic elements, such as circles or columns, and several crossing letterings. Federico used to sign his artwork "concetti di Fritz", which means "thoughts by Fritz" (Fritz being the standard nickname for Federico in German). The language is refined and solemn, with references to history, art, politics, medicine, religion and especially the Bible. Transcription and comprehension of the texts is not easy, but today we can appreciate them as art work, regardless of their original meaning.

Federico spent eight years in San Lazzaro. Initially, he was positive and dynamic. Then he became increasingly depressed. He was always quiet and he looked for solitude. He died in 1902, age 73, his death being attributed to "senile disease".



Jaipreet Virdi – in conversation with Iain Hutchison

I first met Jaipreet at a wonderful conference, titled ‘Disability and the Victorians: Confronting Legacies’, at Leeds Trinity University in 2012. Jaipreet was working on her PhD thesis at that time and I had the pleasure of chairing the panel in which she presented her research. Our paths were to cross again, notably when, along with Martin Atherton, we collaborated in the editing of Disability and the Victorians: Attitudes, interventions, legacies (Manchester University Press, 2020). Almost simultaneously, Jaipreet’s first book, Hearing Happiness: Deafness Cures in History (University of Chicago Press, 2020) was launched and rapidly attracted a portfolio of laudatory reviews. She joined the Board of the Disability History Association in 2019.



IH: Jaipreet, you were born in Kuwait to a Sikh family, grew up in Canada, and now live in the USA. Tell us a bit about your childhood and youth.

JV: My memories of my childhood in Kuwait are blurry, but I remember most clearly being surrounded by family. That was the hardest thing to adjust to when we immigrated to Canada, for I was six, and couldn't really understand why I couldn't "go home" or see my relatives or play with my cousins. The struggle of being an immigrant family with a deaf child I imagine, was difficult for my parents, but soon they found a Sikh community in Toronto to connect to; it was from these connections that we learned about an oralist school for me to enrol in, and it was in Canada where I received my first pair of usable hearing aids. Most of my education was mainstreamed and in the "gifted program"; I also underwent years of speech therapy to regain my English. At home, my parents and siblings predominantly communicated with me with oral English as well, to ensure that the effects of my speech therapy would be prolonged.

IH: You became deaf at the age of four. To what extent do you see hearing loss as part of your identity?

JV: I don't think I ever perceived my deafness as part of my identity until adulthood. I really internalized the ableism that I faced and regarded my inability to hear properly as a medical condition that would eventually be "fixed". Truthfully, I spent years feeling ashamed of my deafness and wanting badly to be "normal", without understanding what that even meant. I even used to conceal my hearing aids and avoid any questions asking me about my "accent" or making fun of me for misunderstanding.

IH: You lip read and happily employ assistive technology. To what extent do you see different modes of communication within deafness as generating inclusion and division?

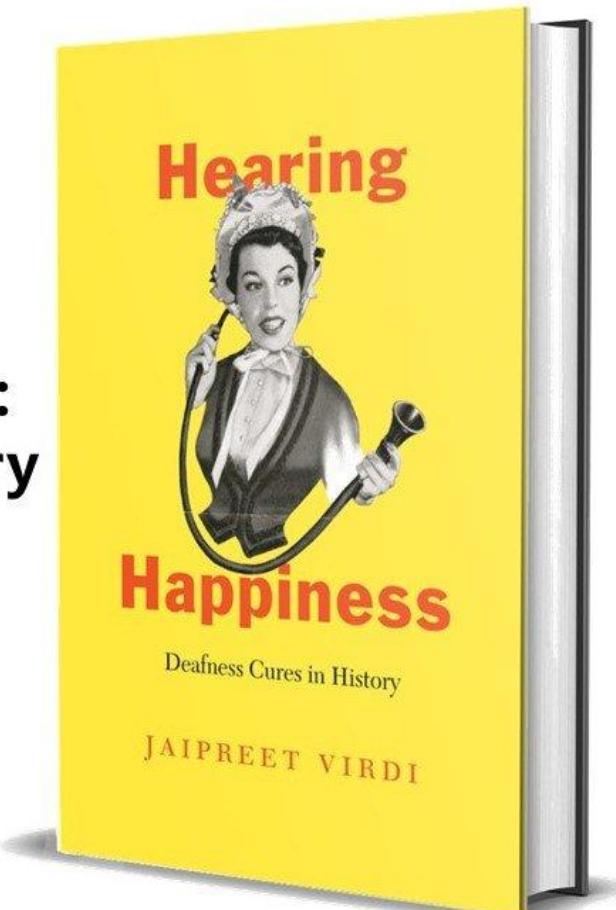


JV: If we accept deafness as a spectrum that includes hearingness, then we present an opportunity for us to grasp that people have different means for employing how they want to communicate and through which medium. There's a common presumption that *all* deaf people communicate with sign language, and that if they don't, then they aren't *really* deaf. But sign language is a language of its own right and expecting all deaf people to communicate with sign is like expecting all people living in the United States to be fluent in Spanish (which is the most studied language in the country) or all Canadians to be fluent in French (the official second language of Canada). I don't experience this as much anymore, but when I was a teenager, I also faced questions from people inquiring whether I was wearing a cochlear implant and if not, why I was "denying" myself the technology. I've lived as a deaf person for most of my life, communicating via lip-reading, wearing hearing aids, or making use of alternative methods (e.g. texting), and even *still*, there are audiologists who, upon reading my audiogram and seeing that I have "severe profound deafness" and 98% loss, recommend me for a cochlear implant. My entire lived experience cannot always be read in an audiogram, but too often, that's all that seems to matter within the medical community.

HEARING HAPPINESS: Deafness Cures in History

By Jaipreet Virdi

Through lyrical history and personal memoir, *Hearing Happiness* raises pivotal questions about deafness in American society and the endless quest for a cure.



IH: How have your own experiences of deafness, technology, and societal attitudes shaped your career as an academic?

JV: On the one hand, it's been wonderful seeing the responses to my work and my perhaps risky rhetorical strategy to include myself in my writing, for my work presents new paths and styles for thinking about how we can engage with academic scholarship and make it more accessible to general readers. These experiences have definitely radicalized me: because I study the history of inequality and disability trauma and have both studied and experienced the pressures of medicalization through technology, I have a public platform to speak on these issues. This has enabled me to think of the different ways in which my scholarship can—and should—transcend beyond academic circles and impact policy making and scientific development; for instance, even though I don't write (or haven't yet) on CRISPR technology, I've spoken a lot about it because I see the technology as another example of the long-standing harmful effects of "deafness cures" and the expectations for deaf people to conform to "normality".

IH: How well has academia shaped up in providing an inclusive and positive environment for deaf students and educators? In what ways do you think universities could do things better for students and staff with a range of impairments?

JV: It's been a struggle to advocate for accessible environments, more so in this Zoom World we all find ourselves in the midst of the pandemic. I've worked for months testing out different captioning platforms and applications to write up a report to distribute amongst universities for best practices to include captioning for virtual conferencing events. Even in places where that report has been accepted and I've been asked to consult, I'm constantly disappointed to see ineffective measures in place, if not a complete disregard to incorporate access. We also need to move away from these expectations on disabled people to do the labour and to constantly serve as consultants on matters that could easily be solvable by a Google search.

IH: You are collaborating with Coreen McGuire of Durham University to write the story of Phyllis Kerridge. Who is Kerridge and why is her story important?

JV: She was a British chemist and physiologist who made original contributions to science and whose work aimed to measure and standardize a number of "invisible" disabilities, including deafness, breathlessness, nutrition deficiency, and colour-blindness. Our biography intends to do more than celebrate a "forgotten" female scientist—though she *has* been forgotten—but to frame how women scientists have forged their own approaches to navigate the gendered aspects of scientific practice and discovery. Kerridge, for instance, made use of the audiometer when it wasn't widely available, or used in scientific practice, as a way to assert her scientific authority and claim jurisdiction over her research projects.

IH: In what ways do you think that women innovators such as Kerridge have been ill-served by history?

JV: Other than being forgotten, the way their biographies have been framed via the male connections in their lives has limited their agency over their lives. Understanding Kerridge's life and work—and comparatively that of other women scientists collaborating with her or working in the same period—helps us to understand the structural process that restrict access to science in the first place. Moreover, it's also important to frame her story as one of a *scientist*, rather than as a *caretaker* whose medical interests with disability have otherwise been feminized and used as a justification for her success as a scientist, rather than her scientific work itself. Kerridge was incredibly well-revered in her own lifetime, but tragically, died shortly after the Second World War started, and her legacy wasn't preserved. Dr McGuire and I are hoping to change that.

IH: Your students at the University of Delaware, where you now teach, seem to hold you in extremely high regard. What do you consider to be your greatest rewards – and frustrations – from teaching?

JV: Right now, being away from my students and only communicating with them virtually. No matter how much we make the best of the circumstances, it's difficult to forge connections with them, which I have always enjoyed doing.

IH: Where do you see disability history – and Jaipreet Virdi – in, say, ten years time?

JV: Covid has taught me not to plan too far ahead in the future...so I have no idea!

IH: Thank you, Jaipreet. Your final answer is not only candid and to the point, but one that many of us should internalise as a crucial lesson.

Disability History Association - Outstanding Article / Book Chapter Award, 2021

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 10th Annual Outstanding Publication Award that also includes a separate Book Award.

In calling for article and edited collection book chapter submissions for the 2021 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, 2020. 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 2020 might actually appear in a 2019 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, 2021. 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 2021.

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

Disability History Association - Outstanding Book Award (2021)

The Disability History Association (DHA) promotes the relevance of disability to broader historical inquiry and facilitates research, conference travel, and publication for those engaged in any aspect of disability history. As part of the Association's 2021 Award Series, the DHA Award Committee invites entries for its tenth annual Outstanding Book Award. The amount of the award is \$300 for first place and \$100 for honorable mention. The winning book, as well as the book receiving the honorable mention, will be announced in September, 2021.

Eligibility

Committee members welcome monographs and edited collections, provided the book is new, original scholarship and published in English. The award is open to authors writing across all geographic areas and time periods whose book was first published between January 1 and December 31, 2020. Members of the DHA Board of Directors are not eligible.

Submission Process

The deadline for submission is **May 15, 2021**. In order to be considered, please send:

1. a brief cover letter, inclusive of a full bibliographic citation;
2. four copies of the book, as well as a full bibliographic citation, to the Award Committee via Kathleen Brian at the address below; and
3. an electronic copy in text-based .pdf or .doc file format compatible with screen reading software for the review committee. The members of the Award Committee understand that copyright rules apply and will use the electronic copy for the sole purpose of selecting a winner. Books that are not provided in accessible electronic formats for screen reading software in a timely manner will not be considered for the prize.

These materials should be sent to:

Kathleen Brian
 Western Washington University
 Department of Global Humanities and Religions
 Bond Hall 159A, MS 9064
 Bellingham, WA 98225 USA

An Introduction to Alexander Street's

Disability in the Modern World: History of A Social Movement

By Dawn Kaczmar

In an 1872 advertisement for J. Alderman, a person is depicted as sitting in a carriage being carried up the stairs by two men. Surrounding the carriage are two different models of wheelchairs and two small couches. The advertisement emphasizes the comfort, independence, and mobility the wheelchairs provide for the "invalid"-- as well as the elegance of the product. The advertisement includes a testimonial letter from a customer who writes, "You have alleviated half my sufferings." Although contemporary disability activists stress the importance of

accessible built environments against overly-elaborate devices to overcome stairs, the language of the advertisement makes it clear: disability is not simply a bodily condition, but an issue of access. It is the wheelchair that has relieved "half" the sufferings of the customer by providing access of movement.



If you've ever wondered about the history of mobility devices, disability prosthetics, and other issues related to the history of disability, this advertisement is just one of thousands of items found in a database from Alexander Street, *Disability in the Modern World: History of a Social Movement*. This landmark online collection is focused on Disability Studies that allows students and researchers to explore a wide range of materials to enrich study in fields from media studies to philosophy. Disability studies is an interdisciplinary academic discipline that foregrounds disability as a lens, rather than a passive object of medical investigation, and provides new insights about the body, accessibility, politics, and culture. This collection features historical periodicals, brochures, pamphlets, diaries, monographs, as well as incredible video content like documentaries, art films, interviews, chat shows, and performances.

Disability in the Modern World showcases pivotal work done by disability activists and scholars. One of the gems of the collection are the periodicals *The Disability Rag*, and its successor, *The Ragged Edge*. With its launch in 1980, *The Disability Rag* started a revolution—connecting isolated activists nationwide in what would become a growing, passionate community. At a time when disabled people had no control over their portrayal in non-disabled media, these periodicals created solidarity and community. *The Disability Rag* focused on issues like what upcoming elections meant for disabled people, and often featured personal essays that highlight

common experiences among disabled people. Importantly, *The Disability Rag* also documented accessibility rights legal battles and legislation as they were happening to keep disabled people up to date on their legal rights, such as amendment proposals to transit regulations that pose threats to accessibility laws.

Students and scholars can use primary source materials to learn about disability activism around the world. For instance, the *Disability in the Modern World* collection contains letters, advertisements, newspaper clippings, and legislation on the Blind Marches in England during the early twentieth century. Thousands of Londoners attended the marches and listened to the speeches they delivered, which were reported widely in newspaper periodicals. These marches were pivotal: they led to governmental changes and built coalitions across communities. A more thorough essay on this activism can be read here:

https://alexanderstreet.com/sites/default/files/UseCase_BlindMarch_Ro3.pdf.

Disability in the Modern World's unique video content includes the frank and candid chat show *No Limits* from Disability Media Australia, which covers “everything you ever wanted to know about disability but were afraid to ask.” The show tackles a range of topics, from current events to sexuality, science, accessibility, and more. A contemporary production, *No Limits* documents advocacy in action, tracing the evolution, role, and influence that the media can and do have.

Despite the legislative victories seen over the past few decades, stereotyping people with disabilities is still common, and the mass media has played a role in perpetuating those stereotypes. Both through language and depiction, the media continues to focus on the medical model of disability: disability as pathologized difference, disability as something to be fixed, disability as an individual “problem.” Disability culture aims at breaking down the perception of disability as tragedy or deficiency through the development of accessible programming and greater and more authentic portrayals of people with disabilities. Periodicals such as *The Disability Rag/Ragged Edge* and Disability Media Australia’s chat show *No Limits* combat disability stereotypes by increasing the visibility and involvement of people with disabilities in the media.

The *Disability in the Modern World* database also offers resources for instructors, such as playlist syllabi. One of the useful tools of the database is that it allows users to create “playlists” of its content that they can store and share with others. The collection also features playlists that have been made into syllabi—for instance, ‘Introduction to Disability Studies’ or ‘Disability and Poverty’. Particularly during a pandemic when easily accessible online resources are integral to remote education, these playlist syllabi allow instructors to use materials that are all located in the same place for their students.

The ‘Introduction to Disability Studies’ syllabus covers fundamental topics in disability studies such as: the social model of disability, disability rights, accessibility, disability and gender, disability and race, disability representation in the media, disability performance, and Deaf gain. This syllabus uses multimedia materials that emphasize disabled voices and experiences in texts, videos, and primary sources to explore the history and culture of disability. Each source is accompanied by a brief description and guiding questions to help students think through the materials. This syllabus includes essential materials like Susan Wendell’s essay “The Social Construction of Disability”, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and videos of disability dance performance.

The ‘Disability and Poverty’ syllabus focuses on exploring the nexus of disability and poverty. Disabled people around the world face high rates of poverty and barriers to securing steady paid employment. By looking at scholarship, articles and videos made by and for disabled people, and historical primary sources, this syllabus uses multi-media to think about the ways in which state policies and cultural attitudes contribute to economic barriers that disabled people face. Because disability and poverty is a complex issue, this syllabus is organized into several recurring themes: employment, state aid, history of disability and poverty, homelessness, and activism. The materials range from scholarly essays, such as Edward Hall’s "Workspaces: Refiguring the Disability-Employment Debate," to historical primary sources, to episodes of *No Limits* featuring the personal narratives of disabled people who have faced economic barriers. By pairing these materials side-by-side, students get a better sense of how policy and legislation affects the material realities of people with disabilities.

At completion, *Disability in the Modern World* will include 150,000 pages of primary sources, supporting materials, and archives, along with 125 hours of video. The content is essential for teaching and research—not only in the growing disciplines of disability history and disability studies, but also in history, media, the arts, political science, education, and other areas where the contributions of the disability community are typically overlooked.

Disability in the Modern World database:

<https://alexanderstreet.com/products/disability-modern-world-history-social-movement>

Introduction to Disability Studies Syllabus:

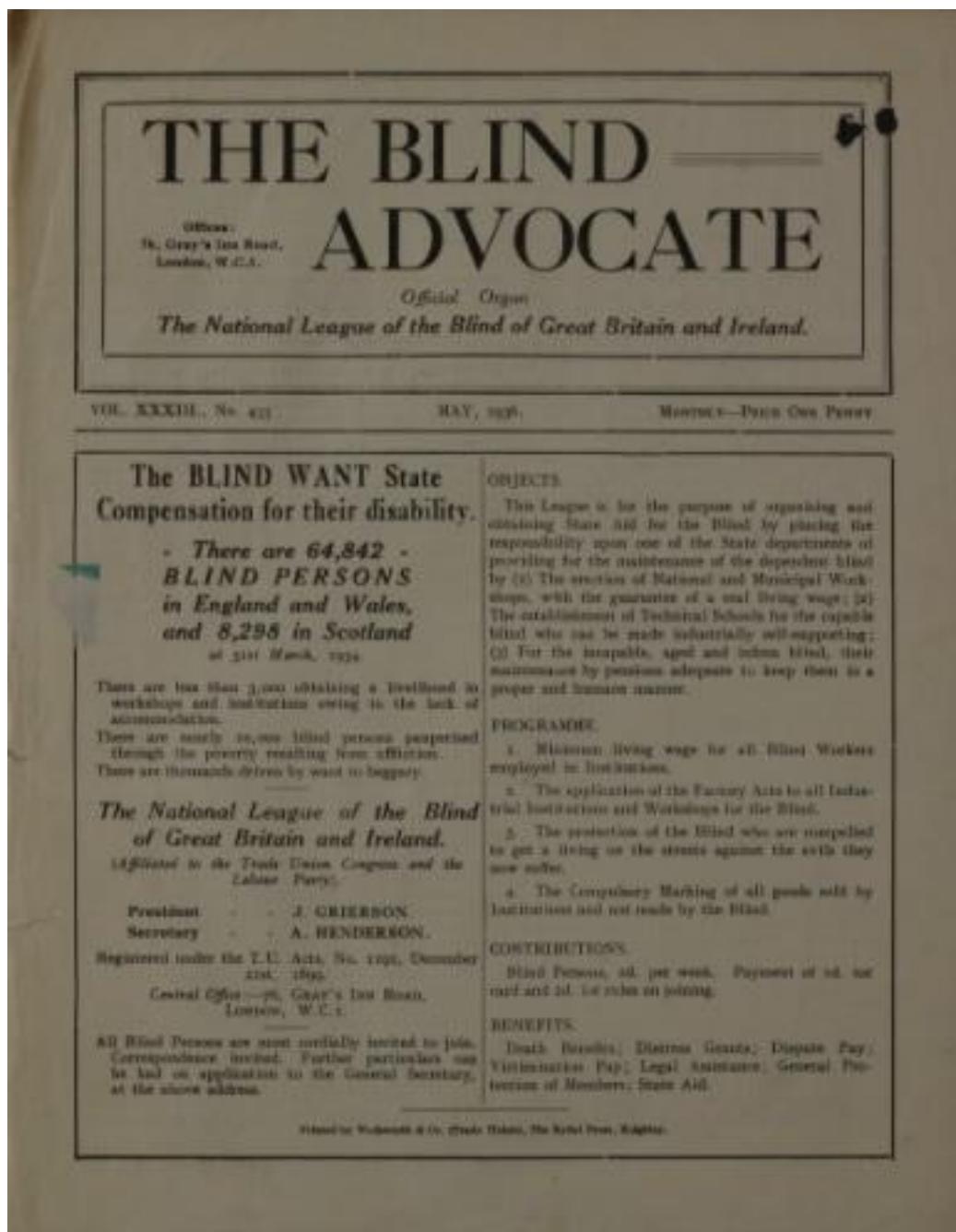
<https://search.alexanderstreet.com/playlist/531681>

Disability and Poverty Syllabus:

<https://search.alexanderstreet.com/playlist/531663>

Essay on the Blind Marches:

https://alexanderstreet.com/sites/default/files/UseCase_BlindMarch_Ro3.pdf



Call for Applicants:

Disability History Association Conference Award

The Disability History Association invites applications for the Spring 2021 Conference Award. This award is intended to help cover costs for virtual and in-person conferences attended between April 1, 2021 and September 30, 2021.

Eligibility: This award is open to graduate students and contingent faculty, as well as underemployed, unemployed, or community-based scholars and artists. The DHA is particularly interested in supporting those who will receive limited or no support from other sources, including their home institutions.

Applicants must be presenting on a topic directly related to disability history at a conference occurring between April 1, 2021 and September 30, 2021. Eligible conferences may be either in-person or virtual. The award may cover travel, registration, or the cost of academic memberships required to attend the conference. Depending on demand, demonstrated need, and the availability of funds, award amounts may range from \$100 to \$300.

Criteria: Applications are adjudicated based on a combination of demonstrated financial need and the significance of conference attendance for the applicant's career and the advancement of the field.

Application Materials: Applicants must write a letter of between 1-2 pages describing what conference they will be attending, the nature of their participation in the conference, and the significance of conference attendance for their career and the advancement of the field. They should also include a brief budget indicating expected costs, and how the award will help them cover these costs. If they are applying for or have received other funds to help defray the cost of attendance, applicants should indicate this in either their letter or budget.

Please submit applications to Dr. Caroline Lieffers at clieffers@gmail.com by April 30, 2021.

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, USA

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