

Last Updated, May 20, 2024

Disability History Association (DHA) Governance Committee Report on Fall 2023 Discussion Sessions About the Next DHA President and the Future of the DHA

Prepared for the DHA Board's January/February 2024 Meeting and
Approved for Release at the May 2024 Board Meeting

Previewed at Fall 2023 Board Meeting via Director of Governance's Report

In the fall of 2023, the Disability History Association's (DHA) Governance Committee held three discussions (one for the Board, and two for members—five members total participated) about finding the next DHA Board president and gathering general feedback about next steps for the DHA. These sessions were not meant to be formal strategic planning sessions, and so questions were not comprehensive. Despite that, we received a lot of helpful feedback about the DHA and how the position of President might be made more sustainable. Below, we summarized feedback received during these sessions and via a feedback form and email. The anonymized transcripts of the discussions are also available to the Board. The Board will discuss the feedback and decide what recommendations it wants to pursue immediately, which recommendations it may want to pursue in the future (and on what timeline), and which recommendations it may not want to pursue in the next few years. Thank you to all who participated in providing feedback.

General DHA Suggestions for Future Initiatives

Develop K-12 resources and connections.

Encourage and/or facilitate disability advocacy and rights groups to preserve their own history (both physical and digital/ephemeral).

Create a forum in which people actively engaged in the preservation of disability history can learn of each other's work (possibly in the form of working groups).

Reach out to and engage with more stakeholders (such as advocates, activists, and teachers, including individuals and groups that are not necessarily "history" groups) in addition to academically trained historians.

Last Updated, May 20, 2024

Many disability-related groups comprised primarily of non-historians do not know about the DHA and its purpose.

Expand member communications and interaction between the Board and members and among members (networking).

Expand member involvement in governance and committee work.

Expand DHA presence at field-wide events (i.e., conferences).

Help students interested in disability history access the resources they need to develop that interest, including marginalized individuals such as those who are incarcerated.

Continue to expand reach and diversify focus beyond North America and Western Europe.

Reflect upon the DHA's mission and practice in light of our commitment to disability justice.¹

Continue to open up the DHA's operations in terms of making them more transparent and democratic.

Fundraise/build fiscal capacity to continue what the DHA is doing currently and to consider starting other initiatives of interest to the community.

Feedback for Next or Future Presidents

Discuss whether the DHA would like to provide future Presidents with a course release or stipend.

Consider whether the DHA can or should have co-Presidents.

¹ This is not an exhaustive list, but some scholars and activists who have been key figures in defining and practicing disability justice include the following: Sins Invalid, "10 Principles of Disability Justice," September 17, 2015, <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/blog/10-principles-of-disability-justice>; Arc Minnesota, "The Arc Minnesota Plain Language Disability Justice Principles," July 12, 2022, <https://arcminnesota.org/plain-language-disability-justice-principles/>; Arc Minnesota, "Position Statement - Disability and Racial Justice," November 19, 2021; and Disability Philanthropy Forum, "What is Disability Justice," Accessed January 20, 2023, <https://disabilityphilanthropy.org/resource/what-is-disability-justice/>.

Last Updated, May 20, 2024

Seek future Presidents who are comfortable interacting with academics, public historians, teachers, and advocates.

Seek future Presidents who have some fundraising experience or knowledge.

DHA Praise

Podcast: The podcast provides a platform to share valuable insights and information on topics related to disability history. It allows for a dynamic way to reach a diverse audience, fostering inclusivity and expanding the organization's outreach. Continuing the podcast ensures that the association maintains an effective channel for disseminating knowledge and building a stronger community.

Blog: The blog offers a space for in-depth exploration of topics, research findings, and personal stories related to disability history. Maintaining a blog is crucial for providing diverse content that caters to different learning preferences and interests, contributing to a comprehensive and well-rounded approach in disseminating information.

Awards: Recognizing achievements within the disability history community through awards not only honors individuals and groups for their contributions but also motivates others to excel in their respective fields. It promotes a culture of recognition and appreciation, fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment within the association and its members.

Internal Communication and Director Onboarding: Ensuring effective communication channels and a thorough onboarding process for directors is essential for maintaining a cohesive and well-informed leadership team. This practice facilitates smooth collaboration, aligns everyone with the organization's goals, and enhances overall efficiency in decision-making and execution.

Last Updated, May 20, 2024

Communication with Members: Maintaining transparent and consistent communication with members builds trust and engagement. Regular updates and direct communication create a sense of community, keeping members informed about the association's activities, achievements, and future plans.

Programming: Well-designed programming ensures that the association remains relevant and impactful. This includes events, workshops, and educational initiatives that cater to the diverse needs and interests of the disability history community. Consistently delivering high-quality programming strengthens the association's reputation and attracts a wider audience.

Shared Governance Among Board Members: Shared governance promotes collaboration, diversity of thought, and collective decision-making. Continuing this practice fosters a resilient and adaptable organizational structure, capable of addressing complex challenges and evolving with the dynamic landscape of disability history.

Accessibility of Meetings: Ensuring that meetings are accessible is a fundamental aspect of promoting inclusivity. This practice aligns with the core values of the association, making it a welcoming space. Continuing to prioritize accessibility reinforces the commitment to diversity and ensures that all members can actively participate in the association's decision-making processes.