Disability in the Modern World: History of a Social Movement

ONE PERSON IN SEVEN EXPERIENCES DISABILITY*, yet the story of this community and its contributions is largely absent from the scholarly record. Disability in the Modern World: History of a Social Movement is a landmark online collection that fills the gap, with a comprehensive and international set of resources to enrich study in a wide range of disciplines from media studies to philosophy.

* World Bank, World Report on Disability, 2015, Washington, DC

"No other products directly compete with Disability in the Modern World, given its special focus on disability studies... supporting diverse scholarship, Disability in the Modern World helps address a pressing need to further examine the history of disability through 'a thoughtfully curated mix of primary and secondary sources from the field.' Summing up: Highly recommended [for] lower-division undergraduates through faculty."

– Choice Magazine, Outstanding Academic Title 2020
Interdisciplinary Focus

Never before have students and scholars across disciplines been able to observe and analyze so much content from the disability community in one place. The documents are indexed to make content easily findable for a variety of research and teaching applications, including:

War, Industry, and Technology

Technological and industrial changes during wartime have had a huge effect on the disabled. But while much attention has been paid to postwar economics and politics, research has yet to address how the forces of conflict have affected the disability community. Disability in the Modern World brings that balance, allowing users to examine the destructive effects of war-related developments in technology. The content reveals how society has responded over time, particularly as advances in medical treatment allow more of the war-injured to survive, but with significant physical and mental injuries.

Documents such as a 1943 Office of War Information press release entitled “Rehabilitation of Soldiers and Sailors” shows the debilitating effects of war on society. Students of veterans studies and military history can see how war has influenced the development of legislation and governmentally sponsored programs to support the disability community. Researchers can track how laws increasingly have encouraged advancements in disability aids, technological accessibility, and universal design. Soldier rosters showing the level of disability at the time of discharge reveal just how tremendously war has impacted the disabled.

The Media

Mass media have long helped determine how society talks about itself and the world—not always to our benefit. The media have been guilty of perpetuating stereotypes and underrepresenting the disabled. Disability in the Modern World now provides the tools to identify these wrongs. Periodicals developed within the disability community, such as The Disability Rag, will let users examine activities that led to changes in the media—from accessibility tools such as closed captioning to changes in the common language—letting students develop the skills necessary to critique mass media for prejudice and bias.

Advocacy and Rights

Activism and the work of disability rights organizations have not existed in a vacuum. Coalition building, internally and externally, has created the political momentum to effect legislation for inclusion and accessibility. Students of political science, race, LGBT studies, and Second Wave Feminism will learn about alliances among subsets of the disability rights movement, and with other civil rights movements, and will see how common strategies were critical for the passage of milestone legislation.

For example, during a 1973 protest over Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, members of the Black Panther Party publicly endorsed the civil protest and provided disability rights protestors with hot meals. Later, during the development of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, members of the LGBT movement banded together with the Disability Rights Movement, defeating efforts that would have excluded people with AIDS. Disability in the Modern World will let students analyze these and other alliances of race, class, sexuality, gender, art, sports, theory, legislation, politics, and education.
Content Highlights

"…one of the most important publications to come out of the disability rights movement.”

The Disability Rag/The Ragged Edge Periodical Archives
Available here for the first time is the complete digitized run of
the 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 the
disabled had no control over their portrayal in non-disabled
media, periodicals like The Disability Rag were the answer,
fostering solidarity and community building among groups.
From its first issue, The Disability Rag provides a lens through
which the entirety of the disability rights movement’s history
and challenges can be seen.

Red Cross Records
Established in 1881, the American Red Cross has a long history
of providing assistance and disaster relief. Records related to
the disabled include Carry On: A Magazine on the Reconstruction
of Disabled Soldiers and Sailors, published in 1918-1919
as a response to the influx of disabled veterans returning
from World War I. Essays, reports, and surveys explore the
conditions at home to which disabled veterans returned and
how governmental and charitable organizations responded to
this growing population.

Remploy Ltd. Archives
Through a partnership with the National Archives of the United
Kingdom, Disability in the Modern World includes archival
records from Remploy Ltd., an organization in the U.K. that
provides employment placement services for disabled people.
Remploy was originally established under the terms of the
Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, to provide training
and employment after World War II for injured and disabled ex-
service personnel and miners.

Sproutflix
The only film distributor featuring people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities, Sproutflix films promote
inclusivity and accurate portrayals of people with disabilities
through dramatic art films, seminal documentaries, and other
productions.

Gallaudet University Press
A nonprofit scholarly publisher that shares knowledge by and
about deaf people with the world. Gallaudet University Press
is the only academic press in the world with a mission
to publish content by and about deaf and hard of hearing people,
and their publishing program reflects the rich cultural life and
diverse perspectives of this community.

Some titles include:
• Signs and Voices: Deaf Culture, Identity, Language, and Arts
• Women and Deafness: Double Visions
• The History of Special Education: From Isolation
to Integration
• Outcasts and Angels: The New Anthology of Deaf
Characters in Literature
No Limits
From Disability Media Australia, No Limits is a frank and candid chat show that 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. Included are seven seasons, from 2007 through 2013.

Handicap International/Humanity & Inclusion
"Our teams act on the frontlines of the world’s most pressing emergencies, promote disability rights, provide rehabilitation, and ensure people live safely after conflict."

Humanity & Inclusion was the co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize as a founding member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines which led to the signing of the Mine Ban Treaty. This collection brings together pamphlets, reports, case studies, workshop material, manuals and guides created by Humanity & Inclusion from 1985-2021. The documents are published in various languages from English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic covering the organization’s work in Africa, Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Some of their projects and case studies include mine victims and their rights, explosive remnants of war, abuse and protection for people living with disabilities, prosthesis, and rehabilitation and physical therapy services.

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