Advocates for Disability Rights: Building the Texas Disability History Collection

Digital Frontiers 2017

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Texas Disability History

Samantha Dodd, Special Collections Archivist
“Disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories we write.”

-Historian Douglas C. Baynton (2001)
“People with disabilities are the largest minority in the country – they’re 20 percent of the population. We have only just begun to integrate this story into a larger picture of the Civil Rights era as well as U.S. history more broadly.”

--Dr. Sarah Rose, Director, Disability Minor Program at the University of Texas at Arlington
UT Arlington & Disability Activism

[Jim Hayes and Ronnie Eaton race in a dead heat]
Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection. Series 6: Negatives

[Group photograph of the University of Texas at Arlington's 1975 Brazos Dorm Council.]
Calendar No. 856

110th CONGRESS
2d Session

H. R. 3195

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 26, 2008
Received and read the first time
JUNE 27, 2008
Read the second time and placed on the calendar

AN ACT

To restore the intent and protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Represen-
2 tatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.
The Disability Studies Minor

- One of the only programs of its kind in the South
- Started offering in 2013
- Multidisciplinary
- Changing perspective in this field of study
- Internship component

[Hearing-impaired children in sign language conversation at Regional School for the Deaf in Fort Worth]
Disability Studies Minor
Disability Studies Minor

**On-campus partners**
- Office for Students with Disabilities
- Movin’ Mavs Adapted Sports and Recreation
- UTA Libraries
- College of Liberal Arts
- Social Work BSW program

**Off-campus partners**
- Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
- Arlington Mayor’s Committee on People with Disabilities
- Texas Governor’s Committee on People with Disabilities
- Helping Restore Ability
- UTARI

**Emerging partners:**
- UT Austin’s Texas Center on Disability Studies
- Per4Max
Health Professions (38)  
Biology/pre-med (4)  
Exercise Science/ Kinesiology (7)  
Nursing (2)  
Psychology (15*)  
Social Work (10)  

Liberal Arts (33*)  
Art (1*)  
Communication (7*)  
English (1*)  
History (21**)  
Linguistics (1)  
Political Science (1)  
Sociology (2*)  

Interdisciplinary Studies (6)  

Engineering (3)  
Biomedical (1)  
Computer (1)  
Mechanical (1)  

University Studies (3)  
Non-degree-seeking (3)  
Business (1)  
Education (1)
Opening the Collection Scope

[UTA Handicapped Association group photograph]
Opening the Collection Scope

Mission
To showcase Texas’s central role in the disability rights movement, especially as it relates to access to higher education and adapted sports, and reveal the impact of disability rights on ordinary people’s lives.

The collection also aims to help students and scholars from across the state and nation to incorporate regional and racial diversity into disability history and civil rights narratives.
The Grant Process (Part 1)

TexTreasures grant from the TSLAC

Staff from the UT Arlington Libraries, in collaboration with the University’s Disability Studies minor program director and assistant, developed a web-site called the Texas Disability History Collection. We identified approximately 1,600 disability-related images, documents, oral histories and videos held in the Library’s Special Collections and Archives collections for the site. These materials help to illustrate development of disability awareness and rights, especially in north Texas generally and at UT Arlington specifically.
Locating and Tracking Materials

- Representing the collections
- Locating embedded disability records
- Tracking scanned materials

[Staff Sargeant Warren C. Cowen recuperates in hospital after losing both legs]
Warren C. Cowen papers
Scanning/Handling Guidelines

- Document removed forms
- Excel spreadsheet / shared drive
- No sheet feeding
- Gloves
- Call slips – sign in/out
- Limit documents checked out
Building the Collection: Finding Donors

- Explanation of origins and goals of TDHC
- Accessible design of website
- Seed grant and expansion plans
- Request for suggestions
- Role of oral histories and public history aspects
- Explain the kinds of materials that archivists are seeking and the donation process
- Special Collections tours
- TDHC highlights
- TDHC website demonstrations

[Texas Disability History Collections event I February 2017]
Texas Disability History Collections event I
February 2017
“Building a Barrier-Free Campus” explores how UTA began to become a model accessible campus for students with disabilities starting in the mid-1960s—a time when disabled students had no right to attend K-12 schools or college. The exhibit covers:
Exhibit: Building a Barrier-Free Campus (Digital)

The exhibit covers a broad timeline (mid-1960s to today) and introduces viewers to both UTA’s status as a leader in disability accessibility today and the multi-championship-winning Movin’ Mavs adapted sports program.
Disability Sensitivity Training

The following are some of the things to consider when interacting with disabled individuals:

• Ask before you help
• People desire to be independent
• Treat with respect
• Be sensitive about physical contact
• Think before you speak
• Speak directly to the person
• Don’t make assumptions
• People are the best judge of what they can or cannot do
• Respond graciously to requests
• An accommodation is not a complaint

Source: Office of Disability Rights (https://odr.dc.gov/)

• Visible vs. Invisible Disabilities
• Awareness and Etiquette
• Language
• General Considerations
“Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.”
–Helen Keller

[UTA’s Freewheelers in action]
Digitizing for Accessibility: Building an online exhibition

Jeff Downing, Digital Projects Librarian
The Texas Disability History Collection

• Developing the site
• Testing
• Metadata challenges
• Site tour
• Defining success
• http://library.uta.edu/txdisabilityhistory/
Site Development

• Built in Drupal
• HTML coding
• Rich media
• Structure and visual design
Web Usability Testing

• Volunteers scoured the site and provided feedback – site modifications made in response
• Tools used to test the site included:
  • HTML/CSS validation
  • Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool (WAVE)
  • Color contrast (Contrast checker)
  • Colorblindness (http://colorlab.wickline.org/colorblind/colorlab/)
  • Tested on multitude of screen readers
Metadata challenges

Mashing existing taxonomies with new terms
Disability History Museum
Locally-created terms
Thesaurus for Graphic Materials
Historical context
Which words are offensive?
Showcasing Texas' central role in the disability rights movement, especially adapted sports and access to higher education.

More about this collection

Exhibit: Building a Barrier-Free Campus

"Building a Barrier-Free Campus" explores how UTA began to become a model accessible campus for students with disabilities starting in the mid-1960s—a time when disabled...
Defining success

Awareness
Blurbs appearing in the press
Requests for presentations
Funding
Interest at the Texas state government level
Third most visited digital collection site
The Grant Process (Part 2)

University of Texas, Arlington
The Disability History/Archives Consortium: A Portal to Disability History Collections
DHAC Members

- American Foundation for the Blind
- American School for the Deaf
- Assn of Universities Centers on Disabilities
- F.D.R. Presidential Library & Museum
- George H.W. Bush Presidential Library
- Disability History Museum
- Perkins School for the Blind
- Starkloff Disability Institute
- Texas State Library & Archives Commission
- U.S. Holocaust Museum
DHAC Members

Universities:
– California @ Berkley
– Georgia @ Athens
– Kansas
– Massachusetts @ Amherst
– Minnesota
– South Florida
– Texas @ Arlington & Austin
– Toledo
– Utah Valley
From Cure to Care: Expanding the Texas Disability History Collection

Sarah Rose and Gerald Saxon (History) and Brenda McClurkin (UTA Special Libraries Collections) propose to expand the recently released Texas Disability History Collection beyond its current focus on UTA-related history. This work is crucial in order to apply for major archival processing and digitization grants and will enable researchers to begin actively incorporating Texas into national narratives about disability history and, in particular, disability rights.
Publicity-Events and promotion

- Travel for disability minor students: oral histories
- Travel for archivists
- Promotional materials for advocacy in Austin
- Seeking Additional funding
Texas Disability History Collections events
February & May 2017
Texas Disability History Collections events
February & May 2017
Going forward
The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) is building the first disability history archive in the Southwest: the Texas Disability History Collection (TDHC). One of just five such dedicated repositories in the country, this collection aims to preserve records related to all aspects of disability history including organizational records, personal papers, business records, maps, government reports, audio and video recordings, artifacts, University-related records, labor and political records, photographs, oral histories, cultural representations of disability, and more.

UTA is actively collecting these records and depend on contributions from people like you. If you or someone you know have materials relating to any aspect of disability history, please contact Brenda McClurkin at mclurkin@uta.edu. We welcome the opportunity to discuss how your contribution might benefit the TDHC.

The Texas Disability History Collection reflects an ongoing partnership between UTA Libraries, the Disability Studies Minor, and the Department of History’s Public History and Archives programs.