

Travel and Tourism Through the Lens of Disability Studies
Scott Rains, D. Min.
Zero Divide Fellow, Community Technology Foundation of California

The purpose of this Forum is to establish the topic of travel as a legitimate and illuminating area of inquiry within the broader realm of Disability Studies. My hope is to provide a volume containing works that will be foundational as well as evocative of future lines of research. To that end, this Forum began with a call for papers addressing four topics:

- The history of inclusive travel (travel accommodating those with disabilities)
- The impact of travel on self-identity and disability culture(s)
- The representation of travelers with disabilities in the myth and practice of the travel and hospitality industry
- The place of Universal Design in the sustainability of inclusive travel

History

“Toward a Global History of Inclusive Travel,” by Laurel Van Horn and Jose Isola, is the first published attempt to document the history of inclusive travel. Van Horn, from the USA, and Isola, from Peru, trace this development as one of many topics within the disability rights movement. The authors bring extensive personal knowledge of the emergence of a movement promoting inclusive travel and its maturation process.

Muriel Larrouy examines the development of the disability rights movement in her native France in the article, “Invention of Accessibility: French Urban Public Transportation Accessibility: 1975 to 2004.” She writes as a sociologist through the lens of Baker’s theory of the moral enterprise. Her study analyzes the campaign for accessible public transit in France and the transformative effect on both disability advocacy groups and the definition of disability.

Self and Cultural Identities

An ethnobotanist, My Lien T. Nguyen, plunges into the complex intersections created when a Vietnamese-American, wheelchair-using scientist undertakes field research in Vietnam. Part travelogue – recounting the logistical realities of travel and suggesting practical solutions - and part orientation to the work of ethnobotany, “Ethnobotany on a Roll! Access to Vietnam,” also contributes to an understanding of the impact of individuals with disabilities upon their chosen professions.

Malaysian pianist, Lee-chin Heng, reports as a participant on the “No. 1 Piano Paralympic in Japan,” the first Piano Paralympics held in Tokyo, Japan during January 2005. The event included 99 musicians with disabilities selected from around the world for their high achievement. The tension between great personal accomplishment and the demands of travel with a disability is manifest in various glimpses of the value often attributed to disability cultures – interdependence.

Michele Sheib moves the dialogue on identity forward with, “Making an Impact: The Benefits of Studying Abroad.” Writing from the Mobility International, USA’s

National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange, Sheib compares the experiences of ten study abroad alumni with published accounts from the general study abroad alumni population and draws out the implications for identity creation.

Travel and Hospitality Industry

The travel and hospitality industry occupies a gatekeeper role in the universe of travel options for those with disabilities. Marina Golyanich of Russia observes the hospitality industry from within the profession. Her contribution on representation of travelers with disabilities, “Optimization of Hotel Reception and Accommodation Service Management for Guests with Disabilities” is based on original research she has undertaken to measure attitudes toward guests with disabilities and their reflection in the behavior of hotel management and staff.

Universal Management is a concept incorporating the seven principles of Universal Design into the policies and processes of business. Australian Peter Rice provides an in-depth overview of Universal Management in an article of the same name and applies it to inclusive tourism in the Australian context.

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With hindsight the years 2004 and 2005 may be revealed as a turning point in the effort to open the travel and hospitality industry to full participation by travelers with disabilities. Australia, Brazil, and Mexico held national conferences on the topic. Taiwan, Japan, Brazil, Germany, and England held regional or international conferences. It is an auspicious time for *RDS* to bring this dialogue into the heart of the academy with the launch of this Forum.

Scott Rains, D. Min. is a ZeroDivide Fellow of the Community Technology Foundation of California and Director of Programs and Services at SeniorNet, an international organization specializing in technology education for seniors by seniors. He speaks internationally on the topic of travel and Universal Design and the development of tourist destinations. Dr. Rains recently completed a year appointment to the Center for Cultural Studies of the University of California Santa Cruz as Resident Scholar pursuing independent research on the topic. He publishes the Rolling Rains Report on Universal Design, Travel & Disability at <http://www.RollingRains.com>. He may be reached at: srains@oco.net.