

Toward a Global History of Inclusive Travel

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Abstract: This paper provides an overview of the development of inclusive travel and tourism, from its origins in the United States and Europe following World War I and II to its current status as an increasingly important and viable movement worldwide. The paper investigates the key roles played by disability organizations, disability rights legislation, technological change, international organizations and pioneers within the travel and tourism industry. Developments are described sector by sector for air travel, ground transport, the cruise lines and the hospitality industry. While the primary historical focus is the U.S., the paper also highlights advances taking place in Dubai, Egypt, India, Japan, South Africa, Thailand and other countries. It concludes with a case study by José Isola of the development of inclusive travel in Peru. Mr. Isola also describes disability conferences that took place in South America in 2004. It is hoped others will begin to investigate the development of inclusive travel in their own countries and regions and contribute to a truly global history.

Key Words: inclusive travel, disability movement history, accessible travel

While the history of accessible travel and tourism is intertwined with the disability rights and independent living movements, sharing their triumphs and setbacks, it has its own landmark events, advocacy organizations, heroes and villains. Initially a beneficiary of the struggle for accessible transportation and public facilities and services in North America and Western Europe, tourism that accommodates the needs of travelers with disabilities has by now become, in the words of the World Tourism Organization, a “motor of accessibility” worldwide (1997). This opinion was echoed by UN ESCAP at the Asia-Pacific Conference on Tourism for People with Disabilities (2000):

In view of the changing consumer demand, tourism for all is an increasingly important sales argument in a competitive market. At the same time, it can serve as an effective tool in furthering the human rights of people with disabilities in the destination communities.

The extent to which inclusive travel has become big business has been documented in nationwide surveys by the Open Doors Organization (2002, 2005) in the United States and Kéroul (2001) in Canada. This does not, however, mean this market is now viewed uniformly through the lens of “economic opportunity.” The medical or charity model of disability still holds sway in whole regions of the globe and among many entities and even sectors of the tourism industry, within developed as well as less developed countries. This paper will highlight advances in accessible tourism primarily in the US but also worldwide, concluding with a case study by José Isola of the development of inclusive travel in Peru.

Beginnings

The earliest forms of travel by people with disabilities most likely were for purposes of pilgrimage and medical cure, often linked to one another. To this day, the Catholic Travel Office, based in Maryland, holds an annual pilgrimage for people with disabilities or illnesses to Lourdes, France, where pilgrims take the healing waters and visit the holy sites. A popular secular center of healing in England was Bath, whose curative powers were recognized long before the Roman arrival in 43 AD. In more modern times, traveling long distance and even internationally for treatment at the most advanced hospitals and rehabilitation centers remains a common experience for both children and adults with disabilities. One such mecca in the US, dating back to the mid-1920s, is the Warm Springs Polio Rehabilitation Centre (now Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation), organized and funded in its early years by Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Pelka, 1997, p. 318).

In analyzing precursors of inclusive travel, it is unnecessary to go further back than the World War I and World War II conflicts which impelled governments in the United States and Europe to provide benefits and services including rehabilitation, education and income support to returning veterans with disabilities. In England and France, the war wounded received preferential seating on public transport. In the US, camps for disabled veterans provided recreational opportunities, some of which still exist today such as the Disabled Veterans Rest Camp in Minnesota. Between the two World Wars, charity organizations targeting specific disabilities began to organize summer camps (Pelka, 1997, pp. 240-41). For many children, including those affected by the polio epidemic, these provided a first experience of travel away from home. These facilities were segregated, although, ironically, that very segregation may have helped to foster a sense of disability identity or community so important to the later struggle for equal rights (Heumann, 2003).

Competition in wheelchair sports, especially following World War II, provided another opportunity to travel. Since wheelchair athletics was an important tool in rehabilitation at veterans' hospitals, it was natural that the Paralyzed Veterans of America, founded in 1946, play a leading role in promoting wheelchair athletics and recreation. Sports travel took on an international flavor in 1948 when England's premier veterans' rehabilitation center, Stoke-Mandeville Hospital, organized the first International Wheelchair Games to coincide with the London Olympics. In 1960 the first official Paralympic Games were held in Rome, drawing 400 athletes from 23 countries (Pelka, 1997, p. 235). Regional competitions were also organized such as the Far East and South Pacific Games for the Disabled, first held in 1975 (ILRU 2003b). By the 2004 Paralympics in Greece, the total number of athletes had soared to 3,969, representing 136 nations (Cruise, 2004, p. 16). A lasting benefit of the Paralympics is the boost in accessibility of the host city, which typically makes public streets, hotels, attractions and even mass transit systems wheelchair accessible. In Athens, even the Acropolis now has a wheelchair lift.

As persons with disabilities began to form their own political organizations, their members began traveling to regional and national conferences. Although the earliest such organization, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), has been holding national conventions since the 1880's, such travel would become a meaningful trend only in the 1940's with the formation of a significant number of disability rights groups including the American Federation of the Physically Handicapped, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), the Paralyzed Veterans Association and the National Spinal Cord Injury Association (Pelka, 1997, p. 212). The biennial conferences of the NAD now bring together more than 2500 delegates, while attendance at NFB Conventions typically exceeds 3000; and these are just two of the hundreds of disability organizations now holding meetings at the local, state and national level. International disability conferences also draw delegates from every corner of the globe. In 1999, an International Summit Conference on Independent Living, held in Washington, DC, was attended by 110 leaders in disability rights from 50 nations (ILRU, 2003b).

The Role of Technology

Technology plays a key role in the development of inclusive travel. Landmark events in the history of the wheelchair, for example, include the folding wheelchair, patented in 1909, and the Everest and Jennings (E&J) X-frame chair, patented in 1937, which was "less cumbersome during travel" and could be packed in a trunk. Following the anti-trust suit against E&J by the US Justice Department, settled in 1979, other companies were free to develop lighter, more user-friendly models such as the Quickie, the brainchild of Marilyn Hamilton (Pelka, 1997, pp. 320-21). Off-road, hiking and beach wheelchairs now open up the world of outdoor recreation. The power chair and the three-wheeled scooter merit their own histories. The latter dates back to 1968, when Al Thieme, President of Amigo Mobility, built the first model in his garage for his wife who had developed multiple sclerosis but did not wish to use a wheelchair (Thieme, personal communication, 1999).

After 1946, when US Public Law 663 granted free automobiles to veterans who had lost limbs or been paralyzed in World War II, the PVA became active in publicizing new technologies such as hand controls. By then, automobiles with automatic transmissions, first sold by General Motors in 1940, had become more common (Zames, 2001, pp. 174-75). The development of hydraulic lifts for vehicles would come in the 1950s. Timothy Nugent, who founded the National Wheelchair Basketball Association in 1949, is credited with creating the first hydraulic lift-equipped bus in the US (Pelka, 1997, p. 225).

For persons with sensory impairments, technology was less a factor in the early history of inclusive travel than at present. At many US airports one can now find not only assistive listening systems, volume control phones and TTY's, but also visual pagers and CRT's at the gates giving real-time information. Portable FM systems are improving access in tour groups. New guidelines for the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) (Access Board, 2004, pp. 235-36) mandate speech output on automatic teller and

fare machines, while in future audible signals at crosswalks and even Talking Signs may be required. Because of technological change, access standards cannot remain static.

The Internet has, of course, revolutionized inclusive travel as it has so many other facets of life for persons with disabilities. The ready availability, indeed proliferation, of detailed access information, unthinkable before the 1990s, has made trip planning easier and less expensive and undoubtedly encouraged more people to travel. It has also made it easier for facilities, even in remote locations, to find the technical information they need to improve physical access or locate product suppliers. One of the earliest sites dedicated to inclusive travel is Access Able Travel Source, run by Carol and Bill Randall. Excellent portals for accessible travel now exist in Europe, the UK, Canada and Australia as well.

The global spread of accessibility via technology is another trend worth noting. In hotels with no other tactile or Braille signage, Otis elevators are accessible to guests who are blind and also have lowered control panels. The standardization of access can also be seen in commercial airplanes since there are only a few major manufacturers such as Boeing and Airbus. Of course, the limited extent of accessibility demanded of the airlines by US Air Carrier Access Act regulations, which permit narrow aisles and mandate no accessible lavatory except on multi-aisle aircraft, could be seen as holding back access worldwide.

Legislating for Access

Inclusive travel depends on a broad range of services and facilities from both private and public sectors. Local transportation, private or public, at the origin and destination; bus and train stations, airports and cruise ports; overnight accommodations; restaurants; attractions of all sorts; tours and excursions; and even the public streets and sidewalks as well as telecommunications must be made accessible. Given this list, it is easy to understand why, even in the United States, the process of regulating access in travel and tourism still remains incomplete. One major gap is guidelines for passenger vessels, which may still take the US Access Board some years to finalize. Travelers with disabilities are also waiting for the regulations to implement Air-21, which in April 2000 made foreign air carriers serving the US subject to the Air Carrier Access Act (Workie, 2001, p. 26).

The pattern typical worldwide including the US is for government owned, operated or funded services and facilities to be regulated first. For example, the US Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 applied just to federal construction and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to federal programs or activities or those receiving federal financial assistance. Thus, urban mass transit, airports and other federally financed transport facilities were affected first by disability rights legislation. In 1986, the Air Carrier Access Act, which prohibits discrimination by air carriers, was passed with final regulations promulgated in 1990. Only with passage of Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 was discrimination finally prohibited *at the federal level* in

public accommodations operated by private entities such as hotels, restaurants, movie theatres, and intercity buses.

Enforcement of disability legislation depends on the creation of legal standards. In the case of the United States, the first architectural access standards were published by the American National Standards Institute in 1961. Developed by a committee which included architects, builders, industry and government representatives and disability rights groups such as the PVA, these specifications became the basis for all subsequent federal access guidelines created by the US Access Board. The ANSI standards also allowed state and local governments to begin enacting their own access codes. The first state code signed into law in South Carolina in 1963 affected only government facilities, but North Carolina's in 1974, developed by universal design architect Ronald Mace, also covered privately owned buildings and facilities except private homes and some industrial structures (Pelka, 1997, p. 26). Prior to the ADA, it was legislation at the state and local levels that moved access forward in the private sector, including the hotel industry.

At present comprehensive rights-based legislation like the ADA exists in only a few countries. Australia's Disability Discrimination Act became law in 1992, while the United Kingdom's Disability Discrimination Act came into force in 1995 and has been implemented in stages so as to not impose too great a burden on the private sector. While many countries now have legislation in place guaranteeing social inclusion for persons with disabilities, most have significant room for improvement, in implementation of legal standards and enforcement, if not in the laws themselves. In the IDRM's *Regional Report of the Americas*, only 5 nations were rated "most inclusive": Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Jamaica and the US (2004). A second report on the Asian-Pacific region is scheduled for release shortly.

Travel and Tourism Pioneers

Until the 1970s, few travel or tourism organizations or companies provided or promoted facilities or services to individuals with disabilities. Perhaps the earliest US tour company was Evergreen Travel, based in Lynnwood, Washington, which offered "Wings on Wheels" and "White Cane" tours from 1961 until 1994, when owner Betty Hoffman retired. Because of the lack of accessible facilities, clients on their early wheelchair tours had to endure a lot of lifting and carrying. One popular overseas destination was China and the Great Wall. By the 1980s the company had acquired a lift-equipped bus for tours of the West. Another pioneering firm, Flying Wheels Travel, founded in 1970 by Judd Jacobson, a quadriplegic, and his wife Barbara, is still in business today, offering independent and group travel. For adults with developmental disabilities, Sundial Special Vacations in Oregon has provided travel and recreation opportunities since 1968 and The Guided Tour, founded by Irv Segal, since 1972. Another pioneer, Wilderness Inquiry, has organized inclusive outdoor adventure experiences in Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area since 1978.

In Canada, one of the first specialized travel agencies, Handi-Tour, was created in 1977 by Cinnie Noble, who later wrote *Handitravel: A Resource Book for Disabled and Elderly Travelers* (1985). Other pioneering travel agents from the 1970s in the US include Lou and Yvonne Nau, of Nautilus Tours; Joan Diamond, the company's current owner; and Bob Zywicki, of Whole Person Tours, who also published a bi-monthly travel magazine, *The Itinerary*, until his retirement in 1992. In the UK, Chalfont Lines, founded by Terry Reynolds in 1972, remains a leader to this day. Chalfont wowed the industry in 1997 with its \$500,000 "Millennium Executive" coach, designed to be universally accessible and featuring a wheelchair accessible restroom and an assistive listening system. In the Netherlands, Anna Dekker's tour company, EuroWorld, dates back to 1977.

Many of these early advocates for inclusive travel were active members of the Society for the Advancement of Handicapped Travel (now Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality), a non-profit educational organization founded in 1976. Its chairman, Murray Vidockler, a travel agent from Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, believed people with disabilities had the right to travel like everyone else and that inclusive travel would become an important market. Mr. Vidockler had previously contributed to the civil rights struggle, chartering 500 buses from as far away as Canada for the March on Washington in 1963, and had also founded the Africa Travel Association in 1975 (Van Horn, 1999, Spring/Summer, p. 5). His new organization SATH would set out to convince a highly skeptical travel industry that accessible travel was not only the right thing to do morally, but also monetarily.

The extent to which SATH has achieved its goals is debatable. Certainly over time its decision to remain an all-volunteer organization controlled by family members has limited its effectiveness and size. While the National Tour Association and American Society of Travel Agents each awarded Mr. Vidockler its highest honors before his death in 1999, their commitment to inclusive travel remains skin-deep. In 1997 only a hundred ASTA member agencies were specializing in this market (Van Horn, 1997, p. 13). As a result, travelers with disabilities rely much less on travel agents than does the general population (Open Doors Organization, 2002, p. 20). The NTA has been even less responsive. Its members, who primarily provide motorcoach tours, have resisted mainstreaming clients using wheelchairs, even though lift-equipped buses are now mandated and readily available. SATH's main focus since 1997 has been its annual World Congress for Travellers with Disabilities, held in South Florida and designed primarily to educate travel agents.

From the beginning, SATH attempted to raise awareness internationally. Between 1976 and 1984, the Society held conferences in Rome, Amsterdam, Vienna, London and Toronto, as well as Boston, Washington, DC and Los Angeles. The strategy was to induce a spirit of competition among cities as well as countries, while providing agents and tour operators the opportunity to research access and recruit receptive operators in new destinations. At home, SATH served on the advisory committee for the Congressional Caucus on Travel and Tourism and worked closely with the US Travel and Tourism Administration (USTTA), a now defunct branch of the Department of

Commerce. In 1985, SATH and the USTTA hosted a tour of the US for British and German journalists specializing in disability issues (Davis, 1986, p. 1). The USTTA, along with Greyhound Lines and ASTA, also funded publication of a SATH booklet, "The United States Welcomes Handicapped Visitors" (Snider, 1985). According to author Harold Snider, the booklet was later translated into 11 or 12 languages, with 500,000 copies distributed. Snider, who is blind, was a SATH officer from 1980 to 1986 and previously served as the first coordinator of disability programs at the Smithsonian Museum.

Three other organizations important to the development of inclusive travel were also founded in the 1970s. In the UK, The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR), a cross-disability organization dedicated to social inclusion, was formed in 1977 and Holiday Care Service (now Tourism for All UK) in 1979. Both still play important roles in educating the travel industry and consumers. RADAR is responsible for creating the National Key Scheme and publishing access guides such as *Holidays in Britain and Ireland* (2004), which has been issued annually for more than 20 years. In Canada, K eroul was created in 1979 by Andre LeClerc. K eroul, like SATH, works in partnership with the tourism industry. Initially focused primarily on Quebec, the organization over time has taken on both a national and international leadership role, addressing issues such as universal access standards and market statistics.

Access to the Skies

While SATH and the other non-profits within the tourism sector advanced the cause via gentle persuasion, American disability organizations began turning to stronger tactics, including sit-ins and lawsuits. The history of the rights movement of the 70s and 80s (Pelka, 1997; Scotch, 2001; Shapiro, 1993; Treanor, 1993; Zames, 2001) need not be retold here beyond identifying some of the organizations and events of particular note in the development of inclusive transportation.

In terms of air travel, the most influential role was played by the PVA, whose law suit versus the Department of Transportation was heard by the Supreme Court in 1986. The PVA contended all airlines benefited from federal subsidies at airports including the use of federally paid air controllers, and therefore were subject to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which provides that:

No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States...shall solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activities receiving Federal financial assistance. (p. 153)

Travelers with disabilities, especially those using wheelchairs, were being discriminated against: denied boarding unless accompanied by an attendant, required to produce medical certificates, denied choice of seating, and subject to quotas per flight. The Civil Aeronautics Board's final regulations in 1982 addressed some of these issues, but only for commuter or regional airlines receiving direct federal support, not the major

airlines. Louise Weiss' *Access to the World* provides a fascinating snapshot of the travel industry in 1986, with pages of tables on the differing airline policies. Although the Supreme Court would rule against the PVA, the storm of publicity surrounding the case finally led Congress to decide having some airlines covered by federal legislation while others were not was unacceptable. The result was the Air Carrier Access Act of 1986.

In November 1986, the Canadian Transport Commission also came to the defense of travelers with disabilities, ruling that Air Canada and the other national airlines could no longer require an attendant for passengers with disabilities. Australia's Air Carriers Access Act dates to 1986 as well.

Accessible Mass Transit

The US battle for accessible mass transit and intercity buses was especially heated, with the PVA, American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, Disabled in Action and ADAPT, founded in 1982, playing key roles. A major concern was that riders with disabilities not be relegated simply to alternative transportation systems such as paratransit, which had proliferated during the 1970s. Under DOT regulations implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, it was up to local transit authorities to decide whether to provide accessible mainline service or to create a separate system to serve residents with disabilities. Although a low floor, wide door "Transbus," designed using federal money, made accessible mainline bus systems feasible, local authorities with few exceptions opted for paratransit. These separate services required users to book their rides in advance, provided a limited number of rides per month during limited hours of service and usually served a smaller geographic area than mainline transit; they also were plagued by long waiting lists and unreliable service. Not surprisingly, disability advocates felt that the community would, in large part, be better served through mainline transit. In the end, the disability organizations prevailed, which meant that all new city buses would become accessible, as well as trains, light rail systems and even, in time, older subway systems such as New York's. The provisions of the ADA also mandate paratransit services for those unable to use buses and subways (Pelka, 1997, pp. 11-13, 237-38, 253-55).

The motorcoach industry, long at odds with the disability community and pleading poverty, managed to stave off access requirements until 1998. When the Department of Transportation published the final rule for over-the-road buses, the American Bus Association immediately filed a lawsuit contesting its legality. ADAPT, which waged a two-year "We Shall Ride" campaign against Greyhound, responded by sending 700 members to shut down the ABA's Washington DC office (ADAPT, 1998). Although the US District Court rejected the ABA suit, the organization on appeal did manage to have a compensation provision for riders struck down (Workie, 2001, p. 26).

Under the final rule, a 48-hour advance notice is required for lift-equipped service, which will continue until large companies like Greyhound achieve 100% accessibility of their fleets, currently set for 2012. Because small companies are not required to purchase lift-equipped vehicles, the 48-hour advance notice for them is

permanent. The availability of lift-equipped service, especially important for rural areas and for lower income riders in general, means individuals with restricted mobility can now join mainstream bus tours. But neither charter nor fixed-route companies are as yet reaching out to this new potential clientele.

Aside from the movement of technology from one country to another, it may not seem there is much global effect in advances in ground transport. Sometimes, however, just the example of achievement can lead others to demand similar accommodation, even where financial resources are quite different. The recent creation of fully accessible subway systems in New Delhi and Bangkok would certainly indicate this is the case.

The Cruise Industry

In contrast to other tourism sectors, the attitude of the cruise industry, largely market driven, has been positively welcoming. Already by 1967, Cunard's QE2 was designed to accommodate passengers using wheelchairs, with 4 staterooms for wheelchair users (Weiss, 1983, p. 76). By the mid-1980s, Princess Cruises and Holland America were also buying, retrofitting and building accessible ships, with Royal Caribbean and Celebrity Cruises joining the competition in the 1990s. Between 1999 and 2002, the number of wheelchair accessible cabins on ships sailing in the Caribbean jumped from 670 to 1,076, a 60% increase in just three years (Wade, 1998, section 5, p. 2). The needs of passengers with sensory impairments are also being met through use of FM systems in theatres, communication and alerting devices in cabins, sign language interpreters, Braille and tactile signage and accommodations for service animals. Oxygen canisters and concentrators can be brought aboard, special diets are available and one can even arrange for kidney dialysis while at sea.

The picture is not, however, entirely rosy. Accessibility and attitude vary widely among companies serving the US market, which has led to several vitriolic lawsuits. Because the cruise ships are almost all foreign flagged vessels, there was disagreement on whether new passenger vessel guidelines, released in draft form by the Access Board in November 2004, would apply without additional legislation from Congress. Following contradictory rulings at the district court level, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case of *Spector v. Norwegian Cruise Lines*, ruling in June 2005 that the civil rights protections of the ADA do indeed apply to foreign-flagged ships serving US ports. However, the extent of structural modification may be limited to what is "readily achievable" and must be decided on a case to case basis.

Like the airlines, cruise companies have an international impact on access, delivering passengers with disabilities into ports of call where their local counterparts are not integrated into the society or viewed as viable customers. To provide an equivalent service and avoid complaints over the lack of accessible tours or attractions, cruise lines have become advocates for disability access in areas such as the Caribbean. Since 1999, the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association has sponsored workshops on accessible shore excursions at its annual conference. In St. Thomas, Princess Cruises contributed a wheelchair lift at Mountain Top Observation Deck, a stop on the new lift-equipped trolley tour. Acapulco, Mexico, an important stop for cruise ships from California, also

has accessible trolleys for city tours, while Barbados and Curacao have lift-equipped motorcoaches. All over the Caribbean, investments are being made in accessible cruise ports and airports, impelled but also funded by the region's largest industry, tourism.

The Hospitality Industry

Because the large hotel chains have a global presence, they too can impact access in the far corners of the world, should they choose to do so. Travelers with disabilities are known for brand loyalty so it would make sense to create brand standards for accessibility, as for other facilities and amenities. This indeed is the policy for a number of major chains, such as Wyndham, Hyatt, Radisson and Holiday Inn. Oberoi in India and Amari in Thailand are regional leaders in this regard. Of course, the spread of legal access standards is also preventing multi-national firms from backsliding outside their home markets. This is an issue as well for restaurant chains such as McDonald's, whose inaccessibility in some foreign countries has angered American travelers with disabilities.

In the US, one of the early leaders in hotel access was Holiday Inn, who set a policy in 1964 of creating one barrier-free room per 100 in each of its hotels. By 1978, 625 of its 1700 locations had such a room (Weiss, 1983, p. 149). As a result, in this period before the ADA, the chain became a favorite among travelers with physical disabilities. In 1985 the company also began installing visual alert systems for guests with hearing loss, and by early 1986 had these emergency alarms in place at 150 of their properties (Holiday Inns, 1986, p. 4). Although Holiday Inn ran afoul of the Department of Justice in 1998 because of reservations policies and access violations, it has since tried to regain its earlier reputation.

In many destinations worldwide it is becoming easier to find relatively accessible hotels, resorts and even guest houses--for those using wheelchairs, that is. For individuals who are blind or deaf, little is yet being done at all outside the most developed countries. Even in the US, the needs of those with hearing loss have taken a back seat. A number of factors could contribute to this inequality: the invisible and variable nature of the disability, communication barriers, a tendency by many not to self-identify and historic differences in activism and media coverage, to suggest a few.

The Impact of International Institutions

The International Year of Disabled Persons, 1981, was a watershed year for both disability rights and inclusive travel. The United Nation's 1975 Declaration on the Rights of the Disabled had already brought about a jump in awareness. The UN's intent in proclaiming first a Year and then a Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) was to encourage concrete commitments on the part of governments and international organizations (Pelka, 1997, p. 168). It also led to the creation of national disability organizations in many countries, from Thailand to the UK, South Africa and Brazil (ILRU, 2003a). In the US, Susan Sygall and Barbara Williams in 1981 founded Mobility International USA, a non-profit organization dedicated to international educational exchange, leadership development and travel by persons with disabilities. At a

conference in Singapore in late 1981, attended by 400 persons with disabilities from 51 nations, Disabled Peoples' International also was founded (Pelka, 1997, p. 103). And in the UK, the British Tourism Authority hosted a first-ever familiarization tour for disability travel specialists.

Another landmark in 1981 was the publication by the International Air Transport Association of "Resolution 700-Acceptance and Carriage of Incapacitated Passengers." This agreement among IATA member airlines harmonized on a worldwide basis the regulations and procedures applied to passengers with disabilities and medical illnesses (1981). It was, however, voluntary and not enforceable. In 1993, Resolution 700 was revised to bring it into conformity with the US Air Carrier Access Act (IATA, 1993). In recent years, IATA has also been conferring with the European Community which would like to make its own voluntary code of 1992 legally binding for member states (IATA, 2002; ECAC, 2001).

In 1985 the World Tourism Organization, an intergovernmental body formed by UN Charter in 1975, officially recognized the importance of inclusive travel by accepting SATH as an affiliate member. The following year a working party on disability travel, chaired by SATH, was formed. In 1991, the General Assembly unanimously approved a resolution entitled "Creating Tourism Opportunities for Handicapped People in the Nineties," written largely by SATH's executive director, Peter Shaw-Lawrence (WTO, 1991).

WTO's commitment to inclusive travel was reaffirmed in 1999 by Articles 2 and 7 of its "Global Code of Ethics for Tourism," which state that tourism activities should promote the rights of people with disabilities and "tourism for people with disabilities should be encouraged and facilitated" (WTO, 2001). At a practical level, the WTO addresses the issue of accessibility as a "quality determinant" along with "safety and security, hygiene, transparency and harmony of the tourism activity with its human and natural environment." The organization's current definition of accessibility employs the terminology of universal design (2003).

This determinant requires that physical, communication and service barriers must be done away with to allow, without discrimination, the use of mainstream tourism products and services by all people irrespective of their natural and acquired differences, including people with disabilities.

In a "Tourism for All" Forum in Barcelona in 2004, Henryk F. Handszuh, Head of Quality and Trade in Tourism, called for "the design of a set of technical specifications that are shared at the world level," noting the International Organization for Standardization is now interested in "carrying out the worldwide coordination of standards for tourism accessibility" (WTO 2004, ISO). This is a goal long championed by SATH and Kéroul which now may actually be within reach, thanks to WTO's support.

Nowhere has the impact of the United Nations been stronger in the field of disability rights and inclusive tourism than in the Asia Pacific region. Here the

governments made a “collective commitment to improving the lives of persons with disabilities,” declaring the period 1993-2003 as the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons. “This regional initiative focuses on promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream society and mainstream development programs,” including access to transportation (UN ESCAP, 2000). UN ESCAP Pilot Projects to improve the accessibility of urban areas have been carried out in Beijing, New Delhi and Bangkok, with lasting impacts in terms of awareness, legislative developments and expansion to other areas (Parker, 2001, pp. 103-115). The importance of accessibility for sustainable tourism has also been directly addressed, with the first Asia-Pacific Conference on Tourism for People with Disability held in Bali, Indonesia, in September 2000.

Kenneth J. Parker notes of Singapore: “The demographic trend of increasing numbers of elderly persons is a major concern to the authorities and it is probably this, more than anything else, that has brought more attention to inclusivity in recent years” (Parker, 2001, p. 107). This is certainly true for Japan, which boasts the world’s oldest population and has become a major center for universal design. The Japanese have played a critical role in raising awareness, funding training and providing technical expertise throughout the region. Key institutions include the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and DPI-Japan, founded in 1986, which has successfully campaigned for accessible transport and legislative changes in Japan and provided training locally, regionally and now globally. As part of the 2nd Decade of Persons with Disabilities in Asia and Pacific Region (2003-2012), JICA has funded a 5-year training project by DPI-Japan to empower and mainstream persons with disabilities in Southern Africa (DPI-Japan, 2004). The World Bank has also begun funding DPI-Japan workshops on inclusive education in Latin America.

The World Bank’s new focus on inclusion was signaled by the appointment of Judy Heumann in June 2002 as their first advisor on disability and development. Ms Heumann was founder in 1970 of Disabled in Action and co-founder in 1983 of the World Institute on Disability. Over time the World Bank’s focus has shifted from economic development pure and simple, which often brought about even greater income inequality, to poverty alleviation and now at last to the realization that the latter cannot be achieved unless persons with disabilities are also brought into the mainstream. This new approach is due in part to the influence of James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, who formerly was chairman of the board of the International Foundation of Multiple Sclerosis Societies. Current projects supported by the World Bank include accessible rail and bus-based mass transit systems in Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru.

Best Practice in Travel and Tourism

In 2003, Kéroul produced a document for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation entitled *Best Practices in Tourism Accessibility for Travellers with Restricted Physical Ability*, providing details on projects carried out in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines and the US. Some of these organizations are described below.

In the United States, Accessible San Diego (ASD) offers a unique service to both visitors and residents with disabilities, not only providing access information online and via a print guide, but also working to make San Diego one of the country's most inclusive cities. Thanks to their efforts, the trolley tours and sightseeing boats are accessible and there are even power beach wheelchairs available free at several local beaches. Another ASD initiative was the "2 for 1 Pass" allowing visitors with disabilities to bring a companion to many of the area's local attractions such as the San Diego Zoo.

Also based in California is Access Exchange International (AEI), a non-profit organization that promotes accessible transportation worldwide through workshops and publications. *Mobility for All* (Rickert, 1998), AEI's guide to the fundamentals of accessible transportation, is available online at the website of the Independent Living Institute (www.independentliving.org/mobility) and has been translated into Spanish, Japanese, Russian, Portuguese and Bahasa Malay. A second publication, *Making Access Happen* (Rickert, 2003), is geared to advocates and planners.

Open Doors Organization (ODO), a Chicago-based non-profit founded in 2000, has drawn media attention and raised industry awareness via its groundbreaking studies of disability travel, conducted in 2002 and 2005 by Harris Interactive. Thanks to this research, hoteliers, restaurateurs, airlines, car rental agencies and other suppliers now have reliable data on which to base investment decisions, as well as details on the extent and types of barriers that still remain. In 2002, ODO estimated that revenues from the US disability travel market could easily double from the current level of \$13.6 billion per year if certain needs were met and obstacles removed. To assist with this process, ODO works with a growing list of corporations in travel and hospitality. In 2006 ODO will produce an access guide for Chicago and host a symposium for the airline industry, among other projects.

In India, two organizations are making an impact on the accessibility of tourism facilities. The National Centre for Promotion of Employment of Disabled Persons (NCPEDP) in 2001 carried out a six-month project, funded by the U.S. Embassy, to raise awareness of the need to make India's historic monuments accessible. The issue came to the forefront when Professor Stephen Hawking visited Delhi in January 2001. When the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) refused his request, NCPEDP organized a media campaign to pressure ASI to make four sites accessible. Temporary ramps were installed and local wheelchair users were able to visit the Red Fort and Qutub Minar for the first time. Since the larger issue was permanent access, NCPEDP continued to lobby until ASI agreed to make two dozen monuments accessible including the Taj Mahal. The NCPEDP project consisted of detailed audits of four sites—Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Jaipur City Palace and Sarnath—and a workshop for architects and designers, presented in conjunction with the Council of Architecture. Laurel Van Horn, then executive director of SATH, assisted with the site inspections and training. Thanks to lobbying and technical assistance from NCPEDP, the Craft Museum in Delhi also constructed a ramp at its main entrance in 2002. Javed Abidi, executive director of NCPEDP, has also won a case in the Supreme Court forcing the Airport Authority of India to provide mobile lifts at the major metropolitan airports.

A second Indian organization, Samarthya, succeeded in improving access at another popular tourism attraction in Delhi, Dilli Haat, a village-style craft market. The group has also approached the Youth Hostels Association of India (YHAI) to request their entrances and at least one room per hostel become barrier-free. The National Chairman of YHAI, as a beginning, has approved the provision of a ramp and lift at the International Youth Hostel in New Delhi (UN ESCAP, 2000).

In Thailand, the city of Pattaya is a leader in accessibility, due in large part to the influence of the Redemptorist Centre, which trains young people with disabilities in computers and electronics. This seaside resort city now has an accessible boardwalk and barrier-free attractions and hotels, the most accessible of which is the Redemptorist Centre guesthouse with its 48 rooms with roll-in showers. Students have created an online access guide for Pattaya (www.access2thai.com) and one graduate has opened a tour company using lift-equipped vehicles. Each year the Centre hosts international wheelchair athletes who participate in the Pattaya Marathon, an event sponsored by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

TAT has taken an active interest in accessible tourism for a number of years and was the principle sponsor for the UN ESCAP project in Bangkok. Sethaphan Buddhani, former director of TAT in New York (TATNY), has been the main proponent of inclusive tourism within TAT since serving as director in Pattaya. He credits his awakening to a sensitivity awareness course he took in Japan. In 2003, TATNY sponsored a Barrier-Free Thailand project, led by Laurel Van Horn, which brought in American and Canadian access experts and tour operators to meet with government officials, conduct access audits and provide training to hoteliers, tour operators and tourism students. The goal of creating an access guide for Thailand has since been sidelined due to funding constraints, but the project did lead to the production and circulation of a detailed report (Van Horn, 2004).

National tourism boards can play a critical role in raising awareness, setting access standards for the sector, gathering and disseminating access information and in promoting the destination as welcoming to all. In South Africa, the tourism board, SATOUR, has been actively involved in accessible tourism since the early 1990s, working in conjunction with Disabled People of South Africa and later the South Africa Federal Council on Disability. Not only are hotels and attractions in the main cities accessible, but also smaller guesthouses and even camping facilities in the national parks (Van Horn, 2002a, pp. 21-22). A growing number of tour companies offer group and independent excursions via adapted vehicles. One operator, Epic Enabled, uses a lift-equipped truck for their wildlife safaris (Krimberg, 2002, p. 23).

Dubai is another success story in inclusive tourism, with the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing playing a key role. Because so much of the infrastructure is new and because the awareness was present to build it accessible to all, Dubai is a very welcoming destination. Even the Burj Al Arab tower, the symbol of modern Dubai, has an adapted suite with its own private elevator. Ground transportation

in 2002 was a weak link and little was being done for guests with sensory impairments but, given the pace of change in this dynamic destination, these limitations will no doubt be addressed in the near future (Myers & Van Horn, 2002, pp. 12-13).

In Egypt, the Ministry of Tourism is working to improve access and in 2002 invited a team of access specialists (Van Horn 2002b, pp. 6-9, 26) to see the results. Mobile lifts are in place in airports, the newly developed beach resorts of Hurghada and Sharm-El-Sheik have excellent access, and even historic monuments such as Luxor Temple are now being ramped. The latest development is an accessible cruise ship on the Nile, which Flying Wheels tours already made use of in Fall 2004. Ground transport is also improving, with tour operators now offering adapted vans with ramps.

Finally, Peru provides an interesting example of the important role that a national tourism board can play, working hand in hand with disability organizations and tourism providers, to raise sectoral awareness and stimulate concrete change. It also illustrates the difficulty of maintaining the commitment over time, as governments and personnel change.

PromPerú's "Tourism for All" Program

In 1998 Peru's national tourism board, PromPerú, developed a program to address accessibility and services for people with disabilities. It was initiated by a non-disabled tour operator, Juan José "Pepe" Lopez of Apumayo Expediciones, who dreamed of opening the riches of Peru to travelers with disabilities. When he met Sharon Myers and Laurel Van Horn from SATH in 1997 at the American Travel Market in Orlando, he decided to actualize his dream. It took him a year to convince PromPerú and other local suppliers to sponsor the first study tour that took place in April 1998.

At the time Peru's General Law of People with Disabilities was under consideration in the Peruvian Congress, and therefore the issue of the rights of disabled people was in the midst of a nationwide discussion. It was also fortunate that Beatriz Boza was then president of PromPerú, as she had studied in the US and knew from experience the importance of people with disabilities as a market segment.

Participants on the first tour included Sharon Myers, a SATH member who uses a wheelchair; Paula Bonillas, editor of *Hearing Health*, who is deaf and has a cochlear implant; and Laurel Van Horn, editor of *Open World*. The group also included a Peruvian with a disability, José Isola, then using crutches due to polio. The group was accompanied by Pepe Lopez from Apumayo Expeditions and Rosario Griffiths from the Sonesta Hotel chain, which hosted the group in Lima, Cusco and the Sacred Valley. The group also visited Paracas, home of the National Marine Reserve.

The project had several goals: to inspect hotels, attractions, and means of transport in the country's most popular areas; make recommendations on how to improve accessibility; provide hands-on training for the Apumayo staff, and begin generating publicity in the American disability press as well as local media. On all counts the trip was a success despite the diverse needs of the group's members and the lack of physical

access. Virtually every means of transport was tried--vans, mini-buses, motorboats, rafts, trains, planes and even a helicopter. The group saw sea lions in the Ballestas Islands, attended a Palm Sunday mass in Quechua, the language of the Incas, rafted down the Urubamba River and even climbed Machu Picchu. Back in Lima the PromPerú staff including Alessia Di Paolo, who would later direct the project debriefed the group for hours, gleaning every detail.

In December 1998, Sharon Myers and Laurel Van Horn returned to Lima for a disability arts conference, with performances by theatre groups from Mexico, Spain, France, Argentina and Peru. Once again, disability issues made the front page in the Lima press. The visit allowed Sharon and Laurel to meet again with José Isola, Pepe Lopez and Alessia Di Paolo, who was then preparing the PromPerú report on the disability travel market (PromPeru, 2001). Most importantly, Sharon brought José a copy of the ADA Access Guidelines (U.S. Access Board, 1991), which led him to start fighting for an update of Peru's own access code, in effect since 1978. His translation of ADAAG (a Spanish version is now available from the U.S. Access Board—see Resources) became a draft proposal to Peru's Ministry of Housing and Construction. After more than two years of work and an immense effort to convince the authorities of the need for such a reform, the revised Peruvian Accessibility Guidelines were ready in August 2000 (MPS, 2001). These new guidelines, in effect since February 2001, insure that all new construction in Peru will be accessible to individuals with mobility and sensory impairments.

In October 1999, PromPerú published its report, "Tourism for People with Disabilities: A Growing Market," and to promote the study held two conferences in Lima and Cusco. Beatriz Boza, president of Prom Peru, and Carlos Zuñiga, president of the Peruvian Chamber of Tourism (CANATUR), shared the stage with Pepe Lopez, Sharon Myers and Laurel Van Horn. Also speaking were Andre Leclerc and Patricio Hernandez of Kéroul, which now joined SATH as international consultants on the project. The response to these meetings was overwhelming. More than 300 attendees crowded the conference room in Lima, with another 50 watching the proceedings on a television outside. More than 100 also turned out in Cusco, where the city's mayor himself took the podium. That same week Pepe Lopez's accessible tourism project received the prestigious "Award for Creative Entrepreneurship" from Peru's University of Applied Sciences, drawing even more media attention.

While in Peru, Sharon Myers and Laurel Van Horn were invited by Rainforest Expeditions to inspect their ecotourist lodge, Posada Amazonas, located in the Madre de Dios district and reachable only by motorized canoe. Here the challenge of getting up and down the muddy riverbanks proved even more formidable than Machu Picchu, but Sharon had brought along a rescue device called a Lifeslider which made the task possible, if not accessible. Since the visit, the lodge has added boardwalks between the buildings so that once on site, wheelchair users can move independently.

Back in Lima, José Isola introduced the two visitors to a gathering of Peru's leading disability activists, including Pedro Chavez and Susana Stiglich, founders of a

new, influential cross-disability organization, Asociación Pro Desarrollo de la Persona con Discapacidad (APRODDIS). APRODDIS is the first Peruvian NGO to receive grants and funding from international agencies in the USA, Canada, Great Britain and Japan. To date, they have held a series of international conferences and produced a number of outstanding publications on disability issues.

Having raised sectoral awareness with its report and conferences, PromPerú decided in September 2000 to undertake a more ambitious project which would focus on training and generate two tangible products: an 85-page training manual (PromPerú et al., 2000) and an access report, produced in both Spanish and English (PromPerú, 2001). This second study tour included project director Alessia di Paolo from PromPerú; Guy Derý from Kéroul, a quadriplegic; Laurel Van Horn from SATH; José Isola representing CONFIEP, a national business organization, and Francisco Vasquez, a blind Peruvian who was then president of CONADIS, a governmental body representing the interests of people with disabilities. Accompanying the group were Fernando Sotomayor from Lima Tours and Ghyslaine Busby, Guy's assistant.

During the grueling trip which lasted a full month, the group visited five cities--Cusco, Aguas Calientes (Machu Picchu), Lima, Trujillo and Iquitos; inspected over 100 hotels, restaurants, shopping centers, museums, tourist attractions and airports, and trained over 1,000 tourism employees and students, as well as government officials. Almost every service including hotel rooms, meals and transportation was donated by private companies in exchange for employee training, advice on improving accessibility, and a listing in the access report. This not only made the project affordable for PromPerú but also guaranteed active participation. The training sessions were also attended by local people with disabilities.

This particular visit to Machu Picchu became a media event. José Isola and his wheelchair were carried up all the way to the highest part of the archaeological site so that he could accomplish a lifelong dream: to touch the Intihuatana, the Inca's solar clock completely carved out of stone. This adventure was shared with Francisco Vasquez, the blind member of the group, who spent over 45 minutes touching the stone to "see" every single corner of it. On their arrival, they were surprised by TV cameras and journalists who were there because the huge stone had recently been damaged during the filming of a TV commercial. Suddenly the whole attention of the media turned to them. The coverage was aired on national and international TV that same night.

After the tour, Alessia Di Paolo, José Isola and Laurel Van Horn turned the information they had gathered into the *First Report on Accessibility in Peru for Tourists with Disabilities* (PromPerú, 2001). The report was presented to the international public at SATH's Fifth World Congress in Fort Lauderdale, Florida in January 2001. The Spanish version was presented to the President of CANATUR at a public ceremony and press conference in Lima, Peru, that March.

In November and December 2001, PromPerú, CONFIEP, CONADIS and the Ministry of Housing and Construction joined together in a project to audit accessibility in

over 100 cinemas and theatres in Lima. The resulting publication, "Report on Accessibility in Theaters and Movie Houses in Lima," was presented to the public in late December of that year.

Although the products created by PromPerú between 1998 and 2001 were high quality and admired wherever they were presented, nonetheless at the end of 2001 the whole project was discontinued, since the new officer in charge did not like the image of people with wheelchairs roaming around the ruins of Machu Picchu. However, individual companies in the private sector have continued the initiative, relying on their own money or charitable contributions from a few sponsors.

Since 2003, Nuevo Mundo Viajes, Peru's second largest travel agency, has developed a department to handle travelers with disabilities, both inbound and outbound. Over the next two years this separate section will disappear once all staff members learn how to handle the special needs of these customers. In 2004 José Isola and his associates held training sessions at Nuevo Mundo's Cusco office for guides handling groups to Machu Picchu. They have also provided training for Orient Express, which runs the Hotel Monasterio in Cusco and the Machu Picchu Sanctuary Lodge, as well as the new Hiram Bingham luxury train between Cusco and Machu Picchu. For 2005 they plan to work with two lodges in the Amazon jungle in Northeast Peru and in the Manu Natural Reserve.

Recent Conferences in Latin America

These efforts to create inclusive tourism in Peru have been complemented by the work being done in other countries of the region. In 2004, three important congresses have been held. The "First Virtual Ibero-American Congress on Tourism for People with Disabilities: Tourism for All," was organized in Argentina by the Tourism for All Foundation. Papers by representatives of Argentina, Costa Rica, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela were presented, motivating an interesting cyberspace debate throughout the month of October.

The second event was the Ibero-American Congress on Tourism for People with Disabilities: Consumer Market for Tourism without Barriers, which took place in Canela, Brazil. Speakers from Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Spain and the United States gathered for three days to learn from each other's experiences. Especially interesting were the presentations by Martin Aranguren from Entre Rios, Argentina, on "Tourism Alternatives for Blind People" and José Ignacio Delgado from Tenerife, Canary Islands, on Mar Y Sol Hotel, a totally accessible facility.

This last presentation motivated a discussion about whether or not one should create specially designed hotels only for people with disabilities. This is still the Spanish way of dealing with people with disabilities: separate housing, specialized hotels and other specialized facilities. Most will not agree with this approach but it sometimes proves useful. In April 2003, the World Bank and the European Community organized the European Congress on Independent Living. The Mar y Sol and nearby Mare Nostrum

Hotel complexes were the only locations in all Europe that could comfortably receive 400 people with disabilities, more than 100 of them wheelchair users needing adapted rooms.

Finally, Adaptive Environments' bi-annual conference on universal design, "Designing for the 21st Century III," was held in December 2004 in Rio de Janeiro. For the first time ever, the event included a full day, pre-conference workshop on "Universal Design and the International Travel & Hospitality Industry," organized by Scott Rains, a resident scholar at the Center for Cultural Studies, University of California Santa Cruz. This international workshop included presentations on inclusive tourism advances in Israel, Greece, the US Virgin Islands, the US and Brazil. In her discussion of the Rio City Universal Design Project, Regina Cohen, from the Federal University of Rio De Janeiro, addressed the tourism linkages of this urban make-over, which conference attendees had the opportunity to view first-hand. The complete contents of the Conference Proceedings are available online (Adaptive Environments, 2005).

Conclusion

Although relatively recent in origin, the movement for inclusive travel is now underway to some degree in most countries worldwide. The growing importance and competitiveness of the tourism industry combined with the aging of the population in regions supplying most of the world's tourism demand makes a compelling economic argument for creating facilities and services accessible to all. The global spread of the disability rights and independent living movements is also heightening awareness and leading to legislative changes that are beginning to impact private as well as governmental sectors.

While a "seamless" travel experience largely remains a goal rather than a reality even in the United States, tangible improvements in access are nonetheless taking place every day. Specialized tour operators in many countries now make travel possible for domestic as well as foreign tourists with disabilities. Over time, as public transportation, accommodations and attractions become routinely accessible, inclusive travel will become more and more mainstream, no longer a case of "special needs."

This paper has highlighted many individuals, organizations and companies working toward this ultimate goal. Due to space limitations, there are many, many more who have not received mention. Now that this fascinating topic has been broached, it is hoped others will begin to investigate the development of inclusive travel in their own countries and regions and contribute to a truly global history.

Laurel Van Horn (B.A., Bryn Mawr College, M.A., New School for Social Research) has worked in the field of disability travel since 1987. She was formerly executive director of SATH and editor of *SATH News* and *Open World for Disability and Mature Travel*. She has also taught in the Travel and Tourism program at Baruch College in New York City. Laurel is currently research director and editor for Open Doors Organization and also writes a travel column for *Able News*. She can be reached at laurel@opendoorsnfp.org.

José A. Isola has been involved in advocating for the improvement of accessibility, including writing the 2001 modification of Peru's Accessibility Guidelines, and promoting disability travel in Peru since 1998. He has written several articles on accessible tourism in Peru for Access Able Travel Source, the International Institute on Disability in Washington DC and Open World Magazine. José is currently the President of the Peruvian Polio Society. He can be reached at joseisola@yahoo.com.

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