

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



*Helen Keller Archive.* The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB).

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Last week my 5th grade niece contacted me for information on a class report she was assigned on any “famous woman.” She chose Helen Keller. The next day she called me back, saying she had changed her mind because four of her classmates had also chosen Helen Keller and three had chosen Anne Sullivan. Helen Keller and her teacher, colleague, and friend Anne Sullivan remain two of the most famous women of the world, and the two are easily named by children as “a famous woman.” They also, however, are some of the most recognizably (in)famous individuals in the history of disability, and thus have had great consequence for the ways we as a culture understand disability. <p> In recognition of the April 14th birthdate of Anne Sullivan, I have selected the American Foundation for the Blind’s (AFB) on-line Helen Keller Archive as H-Disability’s website of the week: <p> <blockquote>http://www.afb.org/info\_documents.asp?collectionid=1</blockquote>\$ <p>

The AFB holds Keller’s archival collection and its own material pertaining to Keller and Sullivan. The on-line material the organization provides is incredibly popular with the web-surfing public. While most of the papers of these women were unfortunately destroyed by a house fire in 1946, what remains offers tantalizing glimpses into the lives of these two women, which go far beyond their veneration and the myths surrounding them. <p> The ever-expanding website include selections from Keller and Sullivan’s correspondence, photographs, speeches, and writings. While much of the material selected for the website is predictable, rich material is available for those who dig. This includes material on Keller’s early life and education, her political and social views as an adult, the purposeful efforts of the AFB and others to influence our memories of her, debates about social policy and spending pertaining to people with disabilities, Keller’s loves of dogs, and Keller’s extensive international travel. <p>

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-disability>

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