

# GLTF NEWSLETTER

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VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3, FALL 1991

## FROM THE CO-CHAIR

As many of you know, this year new appointments to both Co-Chairs should have been accomplished at ALA Annual. However, by the end of the conference, only the male Co-Chair had been elected.

By way of introduction, my name is Roland Hansen. I have been active with the Task Force for some time, and served two terms as Secretary/Treasurer, from 1986 - 1990. I am currently Readers' Services Librarian at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a position I have held for eleven years. I am also a past-chair of the ACRL ARTS Section, as well as Program Chair for 1990 ACRL/ARTS; Chair, Orientation Manual Revision Committee, ACRL/ARTS 1990-1992. I write reviews of video tapes for *Video Rating Guide for Libraries*, and I am in the process of compiling a bibliography related to AIDS and the Arts. I am also a member of the Art Libraries Society of North America.

There are many issues confronting the Gay and Lesbian Task Force of ALA, both externally and internally. Some of the external ones include:

- ▼ Monitoring ALA Placement Services for discriminatory participants.
- ▼ Addressing issues of censorship, as in the case of the Los Angeles Public Library Lesbian and Gay History Month controversy.
- ▼ Gay/Lesbian positive cataloging and collection development.
- ▼ Providing materials for librarians and individuals through the Task Force Clearinghouse.

Within the GLTF, several issues need to be confronted. I would like to address some of these during

the next two years that I am Co-Chair. As a collective group, we need to think about some restructuring of the Task Force. Some ideas have already been proposed, and some will be presented at Mid-Winter.

At issue is the continuity of the Task Force from Co-Chair to Co-Chair, with equal representation between men and women. I feel we really need more participation from the lesbian/librarian community, and I would like to know how we can broaden the Task Force to include more lesbian participation.

My other concern is in organizing and/or reorganizing within ALA guidelines. The Committee on Organization is examining the entire structure of ALA. One of the issues they are debating is the use of the term "task force", and where these task forces fit into ALA. I think once these basics have been smoothed out, we can spend a lot more energy on our programs, workshops, and conference activities as a whole. I plan on staying in contact with Mattye Nelson, the new Director of the ALA Office for Library Outreach Services. (OLOS is the "parent" for SRRT and all SRRT Task Forces.) By the time this gets printed, I will have met with Ms. Nelson at least once. I hope to have something to report for the December issue, as well as during Mid-Winter.

I would really appreciate any input from anyone reading this newsletter on some of the issues I've mentioned. Also, what other issues are people concerned about, and what ideas do you have to deal with/resolve them. As with so many ALA activities, things take time, and require people to do the work. There are many things that take very little time at all, and some things that take a fair amount of time. There is always a strong core group of Task Force members at the conferences, and that has been very instrumental in sustaining this group. We always need new people to get involved. Anyone interested in getting more involved may write to me, or direct your letter to ALA/OLOS if you prefer.

Here are the addresses:

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OR

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## Steering Committee Vacancies

### Female Co-Chair

Duties include: Attend all membership and Steering Committee meetings; presiding at meetings; preparing and distributing an agenda for each meeting; appointing the coordinators of standing and special committees and delegating tasks as appropriate to these coordinators; representing (or appointing a designee to attend) meetings of the Social Responsibilities Round Table Action Council; writing reports of Task Force activities and submitting Task Force budget to Action Council; implementing assignments made by the Task Force membership or the Steering Committee; acting as spokesperson for the Task Force; responding to correspondence received by the Task Force.

Past practices have informally established an alternating pattern. One of the Co-Chairs acts as presiding chair, and the other acts as incoming chair in preparation as the next presiding chair (a variation on the Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect system of ALA). The Female Co-Chair could come in as presiding Chair, or take on the role of presiding Chair at the end of ALA Annual 1992. There would be almost a full year of preparation for anyone coming in now to act as presiding Chair beginning July 1992.

### Clearinghouse Coordinator

As written in the by-laws: The Library Information Clearinghouse is responsible for identifying, obtaining, and distributing written materials related to collecting or cataloging gay - or lesbian-oriented materials

for libraries; for identifying, obtaining, and distributing written materials helpful to individuals in borrowing gay - or lesbian-oriented materials from libraries or interested in improving the quality, quantity, classification or availability of gay- and lesbian-oriented information in libraries; and for identifying, obtaining, and distributing written materials related to the unique issues faced by gay and lesbian employees of libraries.

The Clearinghouse Coordinator, with the help of volunteers and the guidance of the Steering Committee, is responsible for developing and following procedures to organize and distribute these materials; for obtaining from the authors or holder of copyright permission to distribute relevant items through the Clearinghouse; for responding promptly to inquiries about orders for Clearinghouse materials; for maintaining a bank account to handle income received for publications purchased through the Clearinghouse, and for reporting Clearinghouse expenses to the Steering Committee; for maintaining and publicizing a list of materials available through the Clearinghouse; and for developing liaisons with other information-providing organizations which publish gay- or lesbian-oriented materials helpful to librarians or to library users. The Coordinator has a special responsibility for alerting the Steering Committee and the Task Force membership to publications produced by the Task Force itself that need to be revised, and to which new publications might further the goals of the Task Force. The Coordinator will annually submit to the Steering Committee and all Clearinghouse Committee members a written report of the Clearinghouse activities during a past year.

Cal Gough and Anka Shamin, past Coordinators, are handling Clearinghouse duties until January. Orders and payments for materials are now sent to ALA. ALA deals with the money, and forwards the orders to be filled to the Coordinator. Handling of funds has been reduced to a minor function of the job. Sending out the requested materials, and monitoring revisions of publications are the most demanding aspects of this position. Committees will probably need to be formed in 1992 for the revision of several (or at least a few) of the Clearinghouse publications.

### Finance and Fund-Raising Committee

From what I understand, there are currently three members on this Committee and Joseph Eagan is the chair. If this is not correct, please contact me. At any rate, the main charge here is to pursue funding for the Book Awards, and funding for the Exceptional Achievement Award, pending its approval. Also, raising money to supplement the budget we get from SRRT is another

# GLTF NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3, FALL 1991

function. We are looking for more members. SRRT Action Council has been interested for some time now in outside funding for the Book Awards, similar to the funding for the Coretta Scott King Awards.

## Feminist Task Force Liaison

Fairly self-explanatory. This person helps monitor conference program and meeting conflicts, as well as help in organizing any social activities that might include both Task Forces. It is helpful to be able to attend at least both Steering Committee meetings.

I hope we can sustain the progress we've made as the oldest professional gay/lesbian group in the country, as well as the oldest of the SRRT Task Forces. Our programs at conferences have been very well attended and received. This is something that we can all be proud of. I'm looking forward to a very busy and challenging two years.

Roland C. Hansen, GLTF Co-Chair

## GLTF BUSINESS

### **Steering Committee Membership List** September 1991

#### Male Co-Chair

Roland C. Hansen  
Readers' Services Librarian  
SAIC Flaxman Library  
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7/91 - 7/93

#### Female Co-Chair: Vacant

#### Secretary/Treasurer

Joseph Eagan  
Enoch Pratt Free Library  
Government Reference Service  
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(301) 486-6310 (h)  
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7/90 - 7/92

#### Book Award Committee Chair

Susan Hoffman  
180 Wilson Library  
University of Minnesota  
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7/91 - 7/93

#### Clearinghouse Coordinator: Vacant

#### Newsletter Committee Chair/Newsletter Editor

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7/91 - 7/93

#### Annual Program Committee Chair

Timothy Lynch  
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(402) 471-2083 (fax)  
7/90 - 7/92

#### Publicity Committee Chair

Leon Bey  
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7/91 - 7/93

#### Special Committees

#### Annual Conference Read-Aloud Program Coordinator

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# GLTF NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3, FALL 1991

Feminist Task Force Liaison: Vacant

Finance Committee Chair

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**Business/Steering Committee Meetings  
from Annual Conference, June, 1991**

Steering Committee Changes

Roland Hansen was elected to succeed John Sandstrom as the Male Co-Chair; the Female Co-Chair position continues to be vacant. Kathy Anderson will succeed Steve Wooldridge as the Newsletter Editor. The resignation of Suzy Taraba left the Feminist Task Force Liaison position vacant.

Program Committee

The Task Force will sponsor a Pre-Conference in San Francisco in 1992 on human sexuality. Next year's annual program will focus on gay/lesbian media issues since the Mapplethorpe controversy; a panel format was chosen.

Book Award Committee

At its July 2 meeting, the Steering Committee approved the "Gay/Lesbian Book Award Selection Procedures and Gay/Lesbian Book Award Committee Duties." This document provides detailed selection guidelines and delineates committee responsibilities. A proposal to change the Fiction Award to a Literature Award was discussed and approved as part of the document. Another proposal to establish a permanent Award for Exceptional Achievement was discussed and will be an agenda item at the 1992 Mid-Winter Conference. (See page 6 for draft of new award.)

Los Angeles Public Library

A Task Force letter responding to the censoring of certain materials that were part of LAPL's celebration of Lesbian and Gay History Month was approved and sent to Elizabeth Martinez Smith, City Librarian of Los Angeles.

Wilson Index Campaign

GLTF member Polly Thistlewaite is continuing her campaign to have H.W. Wilson Company indexes include major gay and lesbian periodicals in their coverage.

## ALA HIGHLIGHTS

### Highlights from the Conference in Atlanta

Read-Aloud

About 90 people attended the Annual Read-Aloud on Sunday, June 30. Six readers entertained the audience with selections from a variety of sources, including the poetry of Becky Birtha, Leslea Newman's short story, "A Letter to Harvey Milk," and a section from the film script of Before Stonewall called, "The Forties." Selections from the recent novels *Daddy's Roommate* by Michael Willhoite and Michael Cunningham's *A Home At the End of the World* were also read.

Two special Read-Aloud guests were Atlanta authors Franklin Abbott and Melissa Tidwell. Tidwell read from her short story "Movie Life," as well as an untitled short story about growing up in the South. Abbott read his essay, "Androgynies," from his book *New Men, New Minds* and two poems: "In the Absence of Our Fathers" and "Mortal Love."

Annual Program

*"Gay and Lesbian Library Service: Exploding the Myths, Dismantling the Barriers"*

About 175 people attended the GLTF Annual Program on Monday, July 1. GLTF members Cal Gough and Ellen Greenblatt, who jointly edited *Gay and Lesbian Library Service* (MacFarland, 1990), were the featured presenters. Gough and Greenblatt enumerated ten myths that many librarians cling to about gay and lesbian library materials and services:

1. "No gays and lesbians live around here..."
2. "Well, if there are any lesbians or gay people living near me, they don't seem to use my library..."
3. "Gay/lesbian materials are too technical/too academic/too clinical/too esoteric for the people who use my library."
4. "But it's so difficult to find reviews of these materials..."
5. "Library vendors don't handle those books, do they?"
6. "We don't /shouldn't cater to specialized needs..."
7. "We simply haven't yet found the time to devote

attention to covering this particular subject area..."

8. "I'm not qualified to order those books..."

9. "Can't people just use interlibrary loan to get these things?"

10. "My library can't afford these materials..."

Gough and Greenblatt exploded these myths, often with humorous examples. Some of the realities cited include:

▼ sexual orientation is an invisible characteristic in most circumstances

▼ many people who use libraries never borrow anything or interact with a librarian

▼ it's not only gay people who need gay/lesbian materials, but also families, friends, and others

▼ librarians cater to many specialized needs every day (large-print materials, Catholic magazines, computer books for computer-owners, books for professional librarians, etc.)

▼ an ILL transaction requires more personal disclosure, including a written record of the request, than most gay/lesbian patrons are comfortable with

▼ the Stonewall Rebellion happened over 20 years ago—an entire generation of unserved or under-served younger library users has come and gone since then

▼ "Whatever our budget, we always have money and staff for some things and not for others." Celeste West

The biggest myth of all, which underlies some of the others listed, was "Gay people don't deserve library services." This is sometimes expressed or disguised as: "I am personally uncomfortable with what some of these materials are all about" or "I'm OK with ordering that stuff, it's just my boss/my board who might get the wrong idea about my professional judgement — or my sexual orientation—if I insist on the need to order it."

The program addressed the idea that, though objections to gay/lesbian library service are often made on allegedly ethical, technical, or financial grounds, these objections are often rooted in a harmful mixture of notions, involving competence, heterosexist bias, laziness, bigotry, and fear.

The speakers ended with positive and practical suggestions for making the library more user-friendly for gays and lesbians and for getting support for your efforts to change the status quo. One resource, now available through GLTF Library Information Clearinghouse, is "What One Librarian Can Do To Improve Services for Lesbian and Gay Library Users." The publication, compiled by Cal Gough and John M. Littlewood, lists 40 ways to improve services and resources.

Following the program, the 1991 ALA Gay and Lesbian Book Award were presented. The Nonfiction Award went to Dr. Wayne Dynes for his editing of *The Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* (Garland, 1990). The Literature Award was presented to Minnie Bruce Pratt for her book, *Crime Against Nature* (Firebrand, 1990). Pratt read selections from her book of powerful, moving poetry and Dynes spoke of his process in editing the landmark book. Both authors were enthusiastically received by the audience.

## NEW EDITORS

Both the Editor and Book Review Editor of the GLTF Newsletter are new with this issue:

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Improving the mailing list and membership procedures for better communication with GLTF members is a top priority for the future of the newsletter. Please note that SRRT membership does not automatically ensure that your name is on the *GLTF Newsletter* mailing list. A separate subscription fee of \$5 per year is required. (See attached subscription form.)

Confused? Just drop a note, fax, or call Kathy Anderson at the numbers listed above.

If you are interested in joining the crack team of book reviewers, contact David Streeter at the numbers above. Reviewing for the *Newsletter* is a great way to join in the work of the Task Force without a major time commitment.

News items and suggestions for stories are welcomed at any time—forward to Kathy Anderson.

## BOOK AWARD NEWS

### Call for Nominations

The Gay and Lesbian Task Force of the American Library Association is issuing a call for nominations for its 1992 Gay/Lesbian Book Awards. Awards are made for both literature (long and short fiction, poetry) and nonfiction, and are given to books of exceptional merit relating to lesbian and gay experience. To be eligible, a book must have been published in calendar year 1991. Awards are not limited to works issued by American publishing firms: books published outside the United States are eligible. As most non-English language titles cannot be read and adequately evaluated by all committee members, only titles in English translation can be considered for these awards.

The awards have been given since 1971, making them the oldest gay and lesbian awards in the United States. A committee made up of librarians who are members of the ALA Gay and Lesbian Task Force decides each year's winners from a list of nominations compiled throughout the year. Any individual or group not affiliated with the publisher of the book being nominated may submit nominations to the Chair of the Book Awards Committee. Please send nominations to: Susan Hoffman, Reference Librarian, 180 Wilson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, 55455. Fax transmissions may be sent to 612-626-9353. A short statement describing why the book is being nominated must accompany the nomination. Nominations must be mailed out by December 31, 1991. Award winners are announced in March 1992.

## NEW AWARD

### Award for Exceptional Achievement Selection Procedures

▼▼▼▼ Draft, July 1991, for member comments ▼▼▼▼

#### I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Gay and Lesbian Task Force of the American Library Association is the sponsor of the annual

Gay/Lesbian Book Award for books of exceptional merit relating to the gay/lesbian experience.

In 1990, the Task Force established the Award for Exceptional Achievement. This award is given on an irregular basis, and is intended to acknowledge an outstanding contribution in one of the following areas: writing, illustration/fine art publication, media (e.g. audio and video recording), publishing, librarianship, and bookselling. Consideration for this award is based on an individual's, group's, or organization's contributions over time and, in the case of writers, illustrators, media artists, and publishers, through the publication of more than one work.

The Award for Exceptional Achievement honors the consistent effort of an individual, group, or organization to explore and communicate the lives, experiences, and diversity of lesbian and gay people.

#### II. AWARD SELECTION

Individuals, groups, and organizations, rather than specific publications, are considered for this award.

The award is determined by the Gay/Lesbian Book Award Committee of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force from nominations submitted to the Committee. Nominations may be made by any person, group, or organization not affiliated with the nominee(s), and must be submitted to the Chair of the Gay/Lesbian Book Award Committee by the Midwinter American Library Association conference (usually held in early January). A statement as to why the individual, group, or organization is being nominated must accompany the nomination.

Periodically throughout the year, the Chair of the Gay/Lesbian Book Award Committee, working with the Publicity Committee Chair, will issue a call for nominations in the library and the lesbian and gay press.

Nominations may be based on one or more of the following criteria:

- ▼ Literary/artistic merit of an individual's or group's work to date
- ▼ Quantity of publications
- ▼ Exploration of new and emerging themes/issues/problems
- ▼ Contributions toward greater understanding of the gay and lesbian experience within the whole of human experience

The Gay/Lesbian Book Award will meet at the Midwinter Conference, or shortly thereafter if necessary

# GLTF NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3, FALL 1991

(e.g. by telephone conference), to consider the nominations of the previous year. The Committee will decide by consensus whether to make a recommendation for the award to the Steering Committee of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force, which will have the final decision as to whether the award will be made in any given year. Only one award will be made in a given year, and in some years no award may be made.

A monetary award equal in amount to that given to each winner of the Gay/Lesbian Book Award will be presented to the winner of the Award for Exceptional Achievement. The Award will be announced at the same time that the Book Award winners are announced, and the recipient(s) will be invited to attend the GLTF awards ceremony at the ALA Annual Conference.

▼ Please send comments on the selection procedures to Susan Hoffman, Chair 1991-1992, Book Awards Committee, 180 Wilson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455 or by fax to 612-626-9353 or hold for Midwinter conference discussion.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

▼ The Anti-Fundamentalist Task Force, organized as an outgrowth of an informal ecumenical group in 1980 in Arizona, invites new members. The Task Force consists of concerned Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish theologians in addition to others irrespective of religious beliefs. The Task Force's Prospectus states: "The increasing power of political/social control by the radical Christian right and conservative Catholic hierarchy has instigated the decision to go public at this time. However, the organizing core group which has retained anonymity for tactical reasons will continue to do so."

The goals of the Task Force, as stated in their Prospectus, include: "1. Form a powerful network of organizations targeted by the well organized and united fundamentalists." Interest groups targeted for network membership include AIDS, feminist, and gay and lesbian.

For more information, contact Dr. Bob LeFrey, Executive Director, Anti-Fundamentalist Task Force, P.O. Box 2516, Van Nuys, CA 91404-2516, (818) 985-3530.

▼ Queer Press, a new non-profit, community publishing corporation, has recently been started in Toronto in

response to the limited publishing opportunities for gay and lesbian materials in Canada at this time.

Queer Press' first book is about lesbian and gay survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Possible future publications include a children's book, Canadian plays, a queer cuisine cookbook, a collection of writing by lesbians and gays with AIDS, and a Canadian queers cartoon collection.

Anyone interested in donating money, becoming a member, submitting manuscripts, or (outside of Toronto) being a regional representative should write to Queer Press, Box 485, Station P, Toronto, ON M5S2T1, or call (416) 516-3363.

▼ The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reports that a Lancaster, PA gay bookstore has been firebombed twice recently and that the August 24, 1991 Ku Klux Klan march through the city was focused on anti-gay slogans. KKK marchers chanted, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, the faggots got to go" and carried signs referring to Bible passage Leviticus 18:22.

The newspaper reports that many demonstrators said the bombings and the march were the outgrowth of a political fight that has brewed in the city and county for months. Recently, the Republican-controlled Lancaster County commissioners, with the support of conservatives and fundamentalists, disbanded the joint city-county Human Relations Commission after the Democratic city government expanded its human relations ordinance to outlaw discrimination based on sexual preference.

.....from *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 25, 1991

▼ In the aftermath of the storm over Los Angeles Public Library's Lesbian and Gay History Month display, LAPL is developing a series of diversity workshops to promote understanding among LAPL employees.

A poster quoting Langston Hughes' poem, "Tell Me" ("Why should it be my loneliness, Why should it be my song, Why should it be my dream deferred overlong?") and a bibliography including works by Hughes were withdrawn by City Librarian Elizabeth Martinez Smith in early May after LAPL employees and members of the California Librarians Black Caucus called her to voice their objections.

Charges of homophobia and censorship were raised by the controversy, issues which continue to concern the GLTF Steering Committee. A letter from GLTF was sent to Martinez Smith.

# GLTF NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3, FALL 1991

▼ The Free Library of Philadelphia has distributed among its 52 branches 318 books that help parents deal with the homosexuality of a child. The purchase was made possible by three donors: Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, the Claudia Scott Fund, and Core States Bank.

...reported in *American Libraries*, July/August 1991

▼ Besides its book reviews—about a dozen per issue—the *Journal of the History of Sexuality* has a regular column entitled "Books of Critical Interest" that librarians, especially academic librarians, will find useful. For subscription information, contact John Fout, Editor, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504.

▼ Librarians thinking about assembling an exhibit of their gay and lesbian materials might consider doing that near October 11, 1991, the fourth annual "National Coming Out Day." For information on NCOD itself, call or write P.O. Box 8349, Santa Fe, NM 87504; (800) 445-NCOD.

▼ The 5th Lesbian and Gay Studies Conference, co-sponsored by Rutgers and Princeton Universities this year, will be held at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey this year on November 1 - 3. For more information, contact Monica Dorenkamp or Beryle Chandler, (909) 932-8678.

....reported in the *Newsletter of the Association for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Counseling*, vol. 16, no. 4 (April 1991).

▼ Sessions sponsored by the Association for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Counseling at this year's convention for the American Association of Counseling and Development were "Coming Out: How Risky is It?," "Sexuality: An Integral Part of Wellness and Wholeness," and "Transition Rituals: Exploring Rites of Passage for Gay and Lesbian Youth." The conference was held April 21-24 in Reno.

....reported in vol. 16, no. 4 (April 1991), p.8 of the association's newsletter

▼ Brown University's John Hay Library has announced the establishment of The Richard G. Katzoff Collection of fiction, poetry, and plays published in North America with gay, lesbian, and bisexual themes. AIDS literature is an important component of the collection. The collection is thought to be the only one of its kind within the context of a university library special collection. The library plans to establish a \$10,000 working endowment to be used for cataloging and acquisitions.

The Katzoff Collection is accessible to the general public as well as to the Brown University community. For more information, contact Sam Streit, Assistant Librarian for Special Collections, John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912.

▼ "Keepin' On", a traveling exhibit of images of African American Lesbians from the Lesbian Herstory Archives collection, is now available for loan. The exhibit covers the early part of this century to the present and includes photos of the famous alongside snapshots of everyday life. Comprised of high quality color xerox copies mounted and captioned on boards that are 32" x 40", the exhibit requires about 56 running feet of wall space. To book the exhibit, contact the Lesbian Herstory Archives at P.O. Box 1258, New York, NY 10116; (212) 874-7232.

....reported in *Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter* #12 (June 1991)

▼ A special bibliography, "Lesbian and Gay History Sources: Some Essential Research Guides", was compiled by the Lesbian Herstory Archives to help librarians and researchers effectively develop their collections. To get a reprint, contact the Archives at the address/phone above.

....reported in *Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter* #12 (June 1991)

▼ The University of Chicago Press is initiating a new book series, "The Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society", edited by Dr. John C. Fout, Professor of History, Bard (NY) College. The series will include works in the humanities and the social sciences and is designed to publish original work of serious scholarship investigating such issues as the regulation of sexuality, how sexual behavior and mores are socially constructed, and how sexual politics function at all levels of society.

▼ Cornell University's Human Sexuality Collection, aided by a recent grant from the New York State Documentary Heritage Program, has processed five collections of personal papers of notable gay figures. Processing archivist Phil McCray has made accessible the papers of Robert Roth, co-founder of Cornell's Student Homophile League and a pre-eminent collector of materials of the international gay liberation movement; James Foster, a San Francisco gay activist who was the first openly gay delegate to address a National Convention (Democratic Party, 1972); Perry Brass, gay playwright and writer; Robert Lynch, lawyer and gay diarist; and David B. Goodstein, *Advocate* founder and Cornell benefactor.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### NON-FICTION

**Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers.** By Lillian Faderman. Columbia University Press, 1991. Hardcover. \$29.95. (ISBN 0-231-07488-3)

Faderman, the author of *Surpassing the Love of Men*, has made a significant contribution to the field of social history in her excellent, readable study of lesbian life in America. Lesbian relationships and images of those relationships have undergone remarkable changes throughout the 20th century.

The decades have witnessed varying degrees of naivete, support, tolerance, condemnation and suspicion of "The Life" since the turn of century to the present time. The era of the "educated spinster" and "devoted companions" of the middle to late nineteenth century was a time when women's "romantic friendships" were accepted and even encouraged. Such relationships came under scrutiny in the early 1900's, becoming "abnormal" and "inverted." The author continues her odyssey through the "lesbian chic" of the 1920's, which for some was a period of voluntary ostracism from the mainstream values and deliberate experimentation outside the standard moral code; through the shadowy and confusing 1930's; to the amazing expansion of the lesbian culture of the 1940's; to the backlash, ambivalence and cruelty of the 1950's; to the "revolutions" of the lesbian culture in the 1960's and 1970's; to the present where the personality of the lesbian of today is being redefined and refined within the community and without.

The final lesson of this history (and other histories!) is the realization that after all this time, the only thing consistent among lesbians is their persistence and diversity in loving women. Recommended for all libraries.

Jane Jurgens  
Northeastern Illinois University  
Chicago, Illinois

**In God's Image: Christian Witness to the Need for Gay/Lesbian Equality in the Eyes of the Church.** By Robert Warren Cromey. Alamo Square Press, 1991. Paper. \$9.95. (ISBN 0-9624751-2-2)

A timely and personal book revealing the anger and frustration of one Episcopal cleric, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in San Francisco, who believes the church should wake up and accept the presence of gays

and lesbians as gifts of God. Following on the coattails of Bishop Spong's *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, Reverend Cromey seems to express sincere anger and frustration at not being able to perform marriages or union ceremonies for committed gay or lesbian couples within the church. He makes several references to "we can bury them, but we can't marry them" kinds of actions taken by the church and recounts his own battle with the Episcopal Church at performing such a union ceremony.

What the reader will gain here is not a scholarly approach to canon laws and rules, but a true, sincere, passionate plea for the spiritual fulfillment of gays and lesbians through the sacrament of marriage. Through many accounts of AIDS-related deaths of lovers, Reverend Cromey points out that only in the gay and lesbian community has he ever witnessed such a strong bond and loyalty when it came to facing death and dying. One goes away from reading this book feeling that, to Reverend Cromey, there truly is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, gay and straight, for to him all are one person in God's image.

It would be an excellent addition to any adult collection accenting social responsibility and reform.

Charles Whitlow  
AT&T Tax Libraries  
Morristown, New Jersey

**Love Letters Between a Certain Late Nobleman and the Famous Mr. Wilson.** Edited by Michael S. Kimmel. (Journal of Homosexuality Series: No. 19, No. 2). Harrington Park Press, 1990. Paperback. \$11.95. (ISBN 0-918393-69-8)

*Love Letters* was originally published as a volume of *The Journal of Homosexuality*. The work discussed was published anonymously in 1723 and makes up only about a quarter of the book. Essays on sexuality and gender in 18th century England make up the rest of the book. The work is not a novel but the plot line is wonderfully convoluted, resembling a Fielding novel.

Rudolph Trumbach's essay is short and derived from his works on the history of homosexuality in this period. G. S. Rousseau acts as an historical detective, disclosing the political and social motives behind the writing of the *Letters*. David F. Greenberg's essay uses the work to demonstrate changes in English social perceptions from an emphasis on homosexual acts to homosexual individuals with a distinctive sexual identity. Jargon is used occasionally but the writing is generally accessible to students of 18th century England or of the history of homosexuality. The endnotes provide

sources for further research but not all the essays also include bibliographies.

Although the plot would be of general interest, it makes up a small part of the book, so it would be most appropriate to a graduate level library.

Bill Edminster  
Gerber-Hart Gay and Lesbian Library  
Chicago, Illinois

## FICTION

**The Gilda Stories: A Novel.** By Jewelle Gomez. Firebrand, 1991. Library Binding - Adult. \$20.95. (ISBN 0-932379-95-8) Paper. \$9.95. (ISBN 0-932379-94-X)

This is an African-American lesbian vampire story. One of the advantages to the vampire format is that the author has several characters who live for hundreds of years — tremendous scope for historical, current and futuristic comment. There is also currently interest in the lesbian vampire as a genre.

There are eight chapters, some of which have appeared as stories in other publications. Perhaps that is why some read as major works in themselves (Yerba Buena, 1890, for example) while others seem less developed (Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, 2020).

The tale begins in 1850 with Girl, a runaway slave, saved by Gilda. Gilda and her lover, Bird, take Girl in and she begins to share their life. Gilda moves on to the true death, and Girl adopts Gilda's name. From then on, she grows and changes in many ways as she seeks family and belonging. The 200-year span of the story allows time for glimpses of African-American life during slavery; in California at the turn of the last century; the African-American section of a small Mid-West town in the 1920's; Boston in the mid-50's; New York in the 70's and 80's; New Hampshire in 2020; and finally New Mexico and South America in 2050. The time span also permits the author to comment on the coming eco-disaster.

If you enjoy the vampire genre, you may like this book a great deal. A twist on the standard vampire lore is that Gilda is required to give something to those from whom she feeds— because she can read their minds, she tries to give them something they both want and can use. An example of this is a young man who wanted to visit a sick friend, but had procrastinated and was now feeling guilty — she strengthened his resolve to see his friend the very next day.

Gilda's African-Americanness is not a critical element of the stories after the first chapter, although it remains a central element of the book. Her lesbianism is also simply a part of her, rather than forming the focus of any of the crises.

The book is suitable for collections of contemporary lesbian fiction, gay and lesbian science fiction (but loosely), and fiction about African-Americans.

Susan Lee Sills  
University of California  
Irvine, California

**Priorities.** By Lynda Lyons. Naiad, 1990. \$8.95. (ISBN 0-941483-66-5)

In the first book of the *Controllers* Series, we are introduced to a world of humans, androids and aliens. The world is governed by one President and a Committee who must contend with an evil scientist, the Doctor, and a crime syndicate, the Group. The Doctor is responsible for creating violent androids who maim and kill humans. After lengthy introductions to the two main characters charged with capturing the Doctor — Amelia, the Director of the International Control and Registry Center, and Valentine, Amelia's stunningly beautiful top field agent — the plot actually gets underway.

The Doctor kidnaps the President's son for the Group. During a somewhat confusing search for the missing boy, Valentine and Michelle, a private helping in the search, have sex on a deserted boat near where their plane is forced to land for mechanical reasons. Not exactly appropriate timing for someone tracking a kidnapper, but Valentine soon discovers this to be the Doctor's boat and the kidnappers and the Doctor are discovered and captured. Surprise.

Predictable, dull, over-populated with minor characters who could have been interesting, and much too little plot. The story ends with the Doctor's escape — this is a series, remember. In an epilogue, the author poses a few questions. Did Amelia somehow help in the Doctor's escape? If so, is Amelia a creation of the woman she is charged with capturing? Three guesses.

Recommended only for those who find politically correct science fiction better than good science fiction.

T.R. Salvadori  
Glassboro Public Library  
Glassboro, New Jersey

# GLTF NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3, FALL 1991

**Vampires Anonymous.** By Jeffrey N. McMahan. Alyson, 1991. Paper. \$8.95. (ISBN 1-55583-183-4)

Andrew Lyall, who made his first appearance in the short story collection *Somewhere in the Night*, is gay, attractive, witty, incredibly sexy — and dead. Andrew introduces us to the subculture of homosexual vampirism. It's not bad enough that a stake-wielding crazy named Steven Verruckt is constantly tracking Andrew with murder on his mind, but now a group of high-minded vampires (including Andrew's lover Pablo) have rejected their natures to form Vampires Anonymous! What's a vampire to do?

McMahan creates a marvelous mood in this world inhabited by men of the night — part suspended horror, part forbidden eroticism — and his story, which grows darker with a murder and evidence of a much larger plot afoot, is nicely constructed. If McMahan's writing seems a little self-indulgent (particularly in Andrew's irritating habit of speaking of himself in the third person), be patient. What first appears as flippancy demonstrates itself to be a finely honed wit by the end of the novel.

In a story that is in fits and turns a murder mystery, horror story, comic novel, and social commentary, McMahan gleefully skewers pretense and social norms with a far greater accuracy than his vampire-killer Verruckt. Recommended for larger fantasy/horror collections.

Jim McPeak  
Lepper Public Library  
Lisbon, Ohio

**Death with Dignity.** By Jack Ricardo. Banned Books, 1991. Paper. \$8.95. (ISBN 0-934422-34-4)

In the small east Florida town of Rivera Beach, a chapter of Dignity, a gay Catholic organization, is struggling for existence. Deacon Pete Jenco joins and the chapter begins to grow. Deacon Pete is a rebel. He is recently estranged from his wife; taken up with hustler Scott; is actively supporting a group against the direction of the church; and performed a para-liturgy using consecrated wafers.

Private investigator Jim Halden, after two years of celibacy, attends his second meeting of Dignity and discovers Deacon Pete's body. Who did it? Deacon Pete's estranged wife? Sam, an organizer of Dignity? Bobby, Sam's partner? Schizophrenic Grant? Johnny? Sister Sandra? Hustler Scott? Halden joins investigative forces with police officer Hap Gannet. Gannet, unsatisfactorily married, earlier had a three-month relationship with

Halden, which resumes in the end. The force of this book is not one of murder and detection. The strength of this book is its detailing of the relationships of the characters and their struggle to exist with Dignity. Recommended for comprehensive collections.

David Streeter  
Pomona Public Library  
Pomona, California

**Just Say Yes.** By Judith McDaniel. Firebrand, 1991. Library Binding - Adult. \$18.95. (ISBN 0-932379-97-4) Paper. \$8.95. (ISBN 0-932379-96-6)

This novel about a summer in Provincetown (P-town) takes place on a number of levels. On one level, it is a Bildungsroman, as Lindsey attempts to come to terms with whether to continue graduate school, what is true love, and what is true lesbian literature. Part of the book is political and social commentary. On another level, it is a romantic novel.

Lindsey comes to spend a summer as a waitress in P-town, living in a "dyke house" near the main street. Basically comfortable with herself as a lesbian, she is nonetheless searching for herself as a person. She is also looking for love, romance, excitement, commitment and answers to her almost endless internal questions. While she is looking, there is a murder of an unidentified young gay man, a march to memorialize his passing, a Feminist Writers Conference (some of the most biting wit is woven through this part of the plot), another murder, a major drug bust, and possible true love for her. Quite a summer.

The novel tries to be more than a quick summer read and succeeds on some levels. The integration of women of color into the story is among the best I've ever read. Lindsey's initial confusion and eventual growth are shown convincingly. The humor is sometimes in the words and sometimes in the situation, and the erotic passages are powerfully realized. Most of the people are well drawn: Carol, struggling with the decision to leave the convent or not; Rachel, the Unitarian minister who is unsure of some of her own answers; most especially, Lindsey herself, with all her hang-ups, innocence, indignation, and amazing capacity for erotic response.

The point of view changes almost every chapter (and sometimes in the middle of the chapter), from Lindsey's to the author's, although the author is quite visible most of the time. The difficulty for me was the author's "preaching", even when I agreed strongly with her message. I found it disconcerting to have social commentary mixed in with the story's exposition in a rather didactic fashion.

# GLTF NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3, FALL 1991

While the book aims to entertain, and succeeds, it is surprisingly honest in portraying a part of the contemporary lesbian scene. This may not be verismo, but is far beyond a simple romantic tale.

*Just Say Yes* is suitable for collections of contemporary gay/lesbian life.

Susan Lee Sills  
University of California  
Irvine, California

**Getting Away With Murder.** By Pele Plante. Clothespin Fever Press, 1991. Paper. \$9.95. (ISBN 1-878533-00-2)

Amateur detective C.C. Scott, a semi-retired therapist and avid bird-watcher, successfully uncovers the murderous past of do-gooder Jeffrey Randall in this "quick read". The suave Jeffrey has indeed murdered several wealthy, elderly women after they've made his charitable organization their major heir, C.C. discovers. She prevents the same fate from befalling her neighbor and friend, Kathryn, a recent widow.

C.C.'s relationship with her lover Barbara, and their life in a small California town on the edge of suburban sprawl, is well portrayed. But the plot lacks suspense, given that Jeffrey is the only logical suspect. Furthermore, a cost of \$9.95 for this 189-page paperback may deter many libraries and bookstore browsers from purchasing it. Still Plante's novel will appeal to lesbians and gays and to readers hooked on the amateur sleuth genre. Recommended for public libraries with large mystery/detective collections.

Joseph M. Eagan  
Enoch Pratt Free Library  
Baltimore, Maryland

Reviews are a regular feature of the *GLTF Newsletter*.

If you would like to be a reviewer or would like to receive reviewer guidelines, contact the Reviews editor, David Streeter, at the following address:

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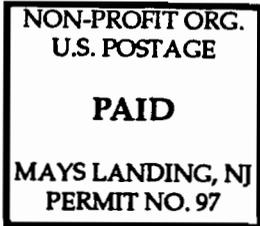
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