



Women in Libraries

Volume 20, Number 1

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Chicago 1990 Report: FTF Meetings



At this year's meetings, there were general discussions about the structure of the Feminist Task Force. We talked about and decided to "officially" extend the coordinatorship to two years and to introduce a "chair-in-training." Introducing a chair-in-training will hopefully facilitate communication, provide for smooth transitions between coordinators, and provide support for both people. Allowing two years for the coordinator will allow her to perhaps feel more competent in carrying out her "duties."

In an effort to facilitate communication in the FTF and planning for projects and programs, the steering committee was reintroduced. Midwinter meetings would be utilized by the steering committee two out of the three meetings to conduct the "business" of FTF. Anyone could still participate in the steering committee meetings, but the steering committee would be made up of the chair, the chair-in-training and committee chairs. This group would figure out the work which needs to be done and do initial program planning, then disseminate the information and garner volunteers to help with the actual work. It was decided that the first meeting of annual would be an "informal" steering committee meeting (one hour) and make the second meeting a two hour meeting to allow people to talk about their interests and brainstorm about the goals and projects of FTF. There is deep concern by all that everyone is encouraged to participate and to feel welcome, even at steering committee meetings. It was noted that some people became involved in early FTF by inviting themselves to the steering committee meetings! Immediately after ALA, we agreed to get something in the mail to let those interested know that there are X projects and we need volunteers to help and call Y person. This "call for help" will come from the steering committee.

The program discussions centered around possible ideas for Atlanta, 1990. Concern was expressed that we do

something which is action oriented. Sherry Thomas from Spinsters/Aunt Lute expressed an interest in doing something with FTF . . . perhaps a panel with her, Barbara Wilson from Kitchen Table Press, and someone from an alternative children's press. The focus would be on how the FTF and feminist presses can come together to encourage women's (multicultural?) writing and then get it into libraries. Perhaps this would result in some sort of traveling exhibit. Theresa Tobin and Katie Horning will help with the program. If interested in working on the planning for this program, please call Sherre Dryden at 615-343-6043.

Is the Feminist Task Force Really a Task Force?

The Committee on Organization issued a statement that long standing committees of the ALA called "task forces" should change their name to reflect their more permanent status. By their definition, a task force is a temporary group whose objectives are very specific and short term. Three members of the FTF met with the Committee on Organization to plead the case of the FTF for maintaining the "task force" name. The committee was very responsive to the request, hearing that in essence, the goals of the FTF have not yet been met and there is a great deal of history around the name, Feminist Task Force.

FTF Racism Meeting

The third meeting of the Feminist Task Force was devoted to a discussion of racism. It is not enough to simply supply the library with a literature of "multiculturalism," but rather stopping to examine one's own biases and taking a pro-active stance to affect changes, particularly in the field of librarianship. To support the creation of an anti-bias philosophy, the group examined things which could be done that don't cost any money. We discussed "mentoring"

programs in libraries as a way to encourage librarians or support staff of color or introducing a "library career day" in local high schools as a way to encourage minority students. Someone suggested writing an article for ACRL on mentoring or how to encourage work/study students and students of color to enter librarianship. (Another told of how one of the work/study students made a career change into librarianship as a result of her work in the library. Remember, treat every work/study student as a potential librarian!) It was also suggested that academic librarians become more active on their campuses in programs for minority retention or join the local REFORMA or Black Caucus group to learn more about their interests and activities.

The discussion shifted to ways we can bring more interested undergraduates or others to participate in the ALA annual meetings. Some noted that ALA annual can be very intriguing to those who are not members of ALA or even librarians.

Members of the FTF decided to work on developing a model for "mentoring" at ALA, whose purpose would be to offer information to people who might otherwise think they were not welcome. Specifics might be asking ALA to waive the registration fees for local students or telling ALA that FTF will pay for registration fees if ALA will match \$ for \$ for meals, creating avenues for interested "outsiders" to participate, coordinating housing or meal allowances, etc. A structure needs to be created with goals, etc., for this type of program. Suggestions for naming this plan included "Guests for a day," or "A day at ALA." The FTF will work to create the "prototype" for this and will then approach other

groups within ALA to let them know what we hope to accomplish and to generate interest and encourage coalitions. Some sort of food-oriented "thing" will be coordinated for Atlanta where we hope to pull together these groups so we can get to know each other and what we do.

It was decided that work will begin to see if any students of color or support staff would be interested in attending ALA in Atlanta. If anyone is interested in contacting Spelman College (women's centers, re-entry centers, placement centers, etc.) for names of possible participants, or if interested in working on this project (contacts in Atlanta?, pairing a student with a member, coordinating food allowances, notifying ALA, etc.), please call Sherre Dryden at 615-343-6043. The goal is small for Atlanta, perhaps eight support staff of color or students can attend some of the workshops or meetings.

This whole topic generated discussion around the need for another pre-conference workshop around the issue of racism. We need to begin talking about this—deciding on the goals of FTF and what we want to do and how to "reradicalize" the FTF.

Elections

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Chair-in-training: Madeleine Tainton

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ALA Annual Conference Highlight

The most moving and militant feminist program in Chicago was not that of the FTF, COSWL, or other women's groups events. It was to be found at the Public Library Association's annual PLA Hot Topics program. This year's topic was entitled "Women, Speech and Silence" at the Palmer House—the afternoon of Tuesday, June 26. Sara Paretsky, with firmness of facts and fiercely personal anecdotes, depicted the limited opportunities of growing up female in Kansas, the pain of being an intellectual woman studying history at the university, and finally the spitefulness and anger of her male mystery-writing colleagues. She had challenged the desirability of giving an award to a book featuring mutilation, dismemberment and other assorted abuses of women (all books nominated that year shared these same qualities). She was told by the men on the prize-awarding jury they would get even with her for her attitude by seeing to it that she never got an award for any of her books.

Paretsky pointed out to the audience that western civilization had always admired the ancient Greeks of Athens who

considered women chattel when they considered them at all, while abhorring the values of Sparta where women were often in full partnership with the men of that culture, could own property, divorce an unsatisfactory partner, serve in the army, and write poetry as did the Spartan citizen Sappho.

Sara Paretsky said she believes the violence against women in literature, as in life, is a reaction to current threats to the patriarchy, another effort to silence the voices of women.

After a standing and long-lasting ovation from a very large audience of women and men, Paretsky joined her librarian mother, Mary E. Paretsky, Children's Librarian, Lawrenceville, Kansas, at a table where she autographed her most recent and prize-worthy detective novel *Burn Marks*. —BCS with CJ

Jewish American Women: in Exile or at Home?

Books Express Viewpoints

Freedman, Marcia. *Exile in the Promised Land: A Memoir*. Ithaca, New York: Firebrand Books, 1990. Cloth, \$18.95; paper, \$8.95. Marcia Freedman gives an account both personal and political of her fourteen years in Israel. We see her emerge from immigrant to member of Parliament, from a Ph.D. candidate in Philosophy and teach to founder of the feminist movement in Israel, from dutiful housewife to radical lesbian activist.

We admire her courage, verve, and integrity. Marcia Freedman tells the truth, sadly and humbly: about battered women in Israel, about the Occupation, about the legacy of the Holocaust, about the limitations of Israeli democracy, and especially about herself.

This book deserves as great a readership as many of the recent personal accounts of Israel, those of Amos Oz, David Grossman, and even Thomas Friedman. This is an extraordinary book by an extraordinary woman. — HR

Antler, Joyce, ed. *America and I: Short Stories by American Jewish Women Writers*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1990. Cloth, \$19.95. In this wonderful collection of American Jewish fiction by women we hear women's voices responding not so much to religious dimensions of Judaism but rather raising and defining the issues implicit in the American Jewish experience. In her excellent introduction, Joyce Antler, Director of Women's Studies at Brandeis University, identifies these themes of American Jewish women: "the pull between assimilation and tradition; loss of identity, the exploration of unfamiliar cultures; the search for the moral meaning of Judaism and Jewish life, anti-semitism; feelings of marginality (as Jews and/or as women); generational conflict; the importance of social commitment, and of writing itself."

The book is arranged chronologically, with stories grouped into four eras: Part 1: From the Ghetto and Beyond: 1900-29, Part 2: Troubles in the New World: 1930-59, Part 3: Wider Glimpses: 1960-79, and Part 4: The Past as Present: The 1980s. It will become a classic, I suspect, in courses on American Jewish Literature, the American Jewish Experience, and on Jewish Women.

One of the book's most important contribution is to bring together recent contemporary Jewish short stories of the 1980s. It clearly argues implicitly against those doomsayers who contend that American Jewish fiction writing cannot survive because assimilation has destroyed any ongoing Jewish sensibility. Some of the recent stories address contemporary events or modes of life with a distinctive Jewish voice, for example, in Leslea Newman's "A Letter to Harvey Milk," an old Jewish man's response to the shooting of Milk, in Joanne Greenberg's "L'Olam and White

Shell Woman," a college student offers the reader a Jewish response to the Navajo, and Johanna Kaplan's "Sour or Suntanned, It Makes no Difference," captures both the anguish and cynicism of a child of Holocaust survivors along with a hilarious portrait of an Israeli sent to be a drama director at an American Jewish summer camp.

It is appropriate that the volume's title is taken from a story by Anzia Yezierska, included in the collection. Her passionate and anguished cry articulating the American and female Jewish experience as being ripped in two by the stifling but rich ties of tradition and the Jewish family, on the one hand, and the freedom but alienness of America, on the other, retain their poignancy especially since we have now come to understand the ongoing conflict of women's lives in terms of just this tension between self-expression and caring and loyalty. — HR



Women in Libraries

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Equality Award

The Equality Award Committee selects an individual who has made a significant single or sustained contribution towards promoting equality between men and women in librarianship. Examples would include activity in such areas as pay equity, affirmative action, legislation and education. Any librarian, trustee or person working in a library, a library-related institution, organization, association or a subdivision of any of these is eligible for the \$500 cash award and certificate donated by Scarecrow Press. You can participate in the selection process by nominating

worthy individuals. Complete the nomination form below and send it to: Cynthia Fugate, Campus Librarian Bothell Branch Campus Library, University of Washington Libraries XB-05, Seattle, Washington 98195.

The nominations must be received by December 1, 1990 to be considered by the Committee. The committee has to make its recommendation in early February. Send your nominations in right away so that they may receive ample attention.



1984 Margaret Myers
1985 Anita R. Schiller
1986 Kay A. Cassell
1987 Kathleen M. Heim
1988 Kathleen Weibel
1989 Sanford Berman
1990 Betty-Carol Sellen

ALA EQUALITY AWARD 1991 NOMINATION FORM

I wish to nominate the following for the ALA Equality Award:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

Which of the following categories best represent the area in which the nominee contributed to equality. (You may check more than one.)

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| Discrimination in librarianship | Legislative |
| Comparable worth/pay equity | Education |
| Group effort (institution, professional association) | Minority Concerns |
| Research/publication | Other |

Please provide a short narrative description of the activities of the individual or group which you feel qualifies the nominee for the ALA Equality Award. Please include when and where the activity(ies) occurred.

If there are any documented reports of the activity(ies) please cite and attach if possible.

What impact do you believe this work has had on individuals? On the library and information science profession? Outside the profession?

Attach additional information as available.

DEADLINE FOR NOMINATION: December 1, 1990

SUBMITTED BY: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

Lesbian Fiction Contest

Mary Morell of Albuquerque, New Mexico, has been selected the winner of the 1990 Lesbian Fiction Contest. Morell received the prize for her *Final Session*, a humorous murder mystery to be released in the spring of 1991. Spinster's Book Company holds the contest annually, awarding a \$2,000 prize to the winner.

For next year's contest, entries for 1991 must be submitted between January 2 and February 28, 1991. For guidelines, write to Spinsters Book Company, PO Box 410687, San Francisco, CA, 94141.



Call for Editor

A new editor is needed for Women in Libraries!
The past editor's term has expired, and no one new stepped in at the annual conference. If you would like to volunteer or to recommend someone, call Sherre Dryden, 615-343-6043.

