



Women in Libraries

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March 1991

ALA Midwinter '91 - Conference Notes

From the Chair

Midwinter 1991 was, for me, the most fun and rewarding ALA conference I've ever attended. Some people (who have clearly never been involved with FTF) might question that any ALA could be either of those things. Even the threat of war, perhaps because we didn't really believe it would happen, did not seem to dampen our enthusiasm for each other and the work we were doing.

I've given some thought to why Midwinter was so successful. Of course, we went to Chicago with a full agenda and by the end of the meeting everything that needed to be, was accomplished. But that's been true in the past. What I think was different was that I felt that we were a real group, not a few individuals carrying out tasks. At the first meeting, we talked about what work there was to be done, deferred some of it until more information could be gathered, and divided up those things that needed to be done right away. Discussions continued over lunch; small groups of people worked on issues together. We enjoyed one another's company. At FTF meetings, newcomers have always been welcome to attend and to volunteer to work. This time the social circle was

flexible, too. New people joined in for lunch or dinner, someone always remembered to call someone else.

In Chicago last summer, we talked about wanting to re-radicalize FTF. We may not have been particularly radical this Midwinter, but I do think we have begun to revitalize FTF. We all went home to find out that the U.S.A. was going to war, and many of us became caught up in peace work. ALA seemed very unimportant in contrast. But I've been able to remember the energy I felt in Chicago this Midwinter, and call on it when things seemed grim at home. I'm looking forward to a return engagement in Atlanta. Sherre Dryden

New Logo

Please take a look at the new FTF logo (see FTF names/addresses list on last page), which appears on our new Feminist Task Force flyers. The logo was designed by Arturo Espanza, from the UCLA Library. Polly Thistlethwaite designed the flyers. Good job, folks!

We hope to get these flyers into the New Member Roundtable's packet of information, and thus, into the hands of potential new FTF members.

FTF Business Meetings

There were three Feminist Task Force meetings at ALA Midwinter this January 1991 and lots of information was passed on. Mary Vela-Creizell (past, past co-editor of Women in Libraries) showed up at one meeting to let us know that she has all of the earliest WIL issues and asked if we were interested in doing something with them. Sherre Dryden had previously talked with Margaret Mayer about the fact that ALA doesn't have any of the FTF papers or newsletters. Arrangements will be made to get the old WIL issues to ALA for archiving.

Freedom to Read Statement

If you recently have taken the time to read the "Freedom to Read" statement, then you probably have noticed how out of date it is with all the "citizens, He" and "reader, Him" phrases which flavor the language of the text. At Midwinter, it was announced that a committee has been meeting to discuss the outmoded language. Some initial changes had been suggested (and approved by the FTF) which eliminate the sexist language, although concern was noted about the increase in the "nationalistic" tone of the statement. A letter will be sent to the Intellectual Freedom Committee thanking them for their quick work on changing the sexist language but urging them to eliminate "citizenship" as a prerequisite for the freedom to read in this country.

ALA Elections

Ruth Gordan (COSWL member), who is running for council, attended one of the task force meetings to ask for our support. She wants to be identified with feminists and we agreed to support her. Other candidates we agreed to support include: Myrtis Collins, Eliza Dresang, Audrey Eaglen, Edith Fisher, Julie V. Hunter, Bernice Jones-Trent, Em Claire Knowles, Ichiko Morita, Jane Robbins, Elizabeth Futas, Gail Warner and Ginnie Cooper.

The Feminist Task Force endorses candidates such as these as a way to strengthen the task force and to be able to later approach these people for "favors", if necessary. Letters went to these candidates from Sherre Dryden letting them know that the FTF has endorsed their campaign.

There was no endorsement for the presidency although the discussion around Charles Bunge was generally positive, and comments relating to Herb White were generally not approving, while there wasn't enough information about Marilyn Miller or Marvin Scilkin, editor of Unabashed Librarian, to have a discussion.

Upcoming Annual Program

Because many feminist, small and multicultural presses are in danger of folding, we thought we would present a program on how to get (and keep) feminist and multicultural materials into libraries. The program, "We Are Our Sisters Keepers: Supporting Small Presses as a Feminist Activity," will take place on Saturday, June 29th, from 2-4pm. A panel of women publishers, moderated by a librarian, will discuss the current state of small press publishing and its relationship to libraries. Small groups, facilitated by Feminist Task Force members, will discuss the issues raised by the panel and will brainstorm ways in which we increase mutual support. Time will be allowed at the end of the program to come together to share some of the ideas of the groups.

Sherry Thomas from Spinsters Books and Nancy Bereano from Crossing Press will share the panel with a librarian. Anyone interested in being a facilitator should contact Theresa Tobin at: (617)267-6528 - work, (617)253-5674 - home.

SHARE Directory

Ann Doyle will be getting the copy of the SHARE Directory to the proofreaders, creating indexes and getting copy camera-ready. We should be ready to distribute a small batch of this edition before Atlanta. The number of entries was smaller than we would have liked, but in the interest of timeliness, we're going to print 500 copies and try to do a follow-up edition quickly now that everything is computerized.

Women's Night Out

This will take place in Atlanta at the usual time, Monday after the Membership meeting, at Charis Books, Atlanta's women's bookstore. The cash register will be open for purchases at least part of the time, and FTF will provide food and drinks. More information will appear in the June pre-conference issue of WIL.

SRRT Booth at Annual

One of our responsibilities in Atlanta will be to staff the SRRT booth at the exhibits. Our time slot is 2:00-5:00 on Sunday, June 30th. Sherre Dryden divided up the slot into 30 minute increments and asked for 2 volunteers per increment. Our time slot conflicts with the COSWL business meeting, so no one on COSWL can volunteer. We still need at least 1 person for the 2:00-2:30 slot, one person for the 3:00-3:30 slot, one person for 3:30-4:00 and 2 volunteers for 4:00-4:30. People who are willing to help can call Sherre Dryden at (615)343-6043.

Wilson Indexing Petition

A petition was circulated at Midwinter aimed at Wilson Indexes. Apparently in denial that a portion of their readers are interested in gay and lesbian publications, it seems that Wilson does not want to index these periodicals. (See article, pg. 6) Gale Research and other indexers have been responsive to the approach and have agreed to index gay and lesbian literature.

If you haven't seen or signed a petition to Wilson Indexes, please send them a letter urging that they change their policy. It might also be useful to send a copy of the letter to your local public library as their population is the major user of Reader's Guide, a Wilson index.

Mentoring Program

As a result of a Feminist Task Force discussion on racism and anti-bias at the annual meeting in Chicago

in 1990, it was decided that the task force would try to "sponsor" some interested students at the conference in Atlanta. It is a goal of FTF to encourage women of color to participate in ALA and, perhaps, to move into library careers. We will post notices at Spelman College and elsewhere asking students who might be interested in attending the ALA conference at no cost, to contact some key people in the area who will set up a "buddy system" and connect the students with ALA attendees.

Participating in the conference might spark some interest in the students to attend library school or simply to become more active in a professional organization. (See article below) The New Member Roundtable and the Minority Recruitment Committee are also planning some type of mentoring program for Atlanta. Women in Libraries readers who plan on attending the Atlanta conference and who are interested in being mentors, should contact Sherre Dryden at (615)343-6043.

MY FIRST ALA ANNUAL CONVENTION

I would finish my M.L.S. degree in August and needed to find work. Being a single woman, I was willing to relocate anywhere (well, almost anywhere) in the United States. What was my best opportunity for finding work? Fortunately, I have a sister who is a librarian and she generously offered to share her room with me at the American Library Association's convention in Chicago in 1990 so that I might take advantage of the employment center offered during the convention. I needed only to come up with the airfare. I decided to go for it.

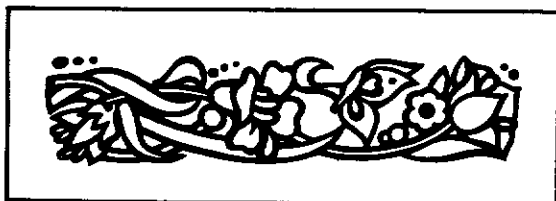
Months later, what do I remember about Chicago? The ALA convention can be a daunting experience for the first time attendee, especially one who is there hoping to find employment. As a student, I was excited about all aspects of the convention. Unfortunately, there were approximately six sessions or meetings I was interested in attending during almost every time slot and sessions were not all the same length of time. I had spent hours going over the program ahead of time, only to find out that it contained only a small percentage of what was happening. Last minute changes occurred and there was often a great distance between locales. I spend many hours in the employment center. I was able to attend many sessions and meetings, view the

extensive exhibits, satisfy my curiosity about many aspects of the American Library Association as an association, see a little of Chicago and find a job. It was a thoroughly exhausting, enjoyable time.

The importance of networking in librarianship had been pointed out to me frequently at school, and ALA convention is a great place to begin a professional network. Sharing an interest in feminist issues with my sister, I attended some meetings with her and it was at one of these meetings, I made the connection that ended up in my present employment.

To women still in library school and other women interested in librarianship, I heartily recommend attending an ALA convention. The interview experience alone was worth the trip. Take some time to attend meetings of smaller groups in which you have an interest -- groups such as the Feminist Task Force. Introduce yourself, and take part. I felt welcome to make comments at the meetings I attended. Comments were made by many persons who were obviously attending for the first time and all were taken seriously by members of the organization. The American Library Association is a vast organization. It may take some time and effort to find your niche, but, it is worth it.

Doris Borchert



ANNOUNCEMENTS

**** Applications are being accepted for new grants under the Women's Educational Equity Act. Deadline: April 19th. Contact: Janice Williams-Madison, Dept. of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Room 2049, FOB6, Washington, DC 20202. (202)401-1059.**

**** Applications are being accepted for participation in the Oxford-Oklahoma Library Seminar, to be held in May at Oxford Univ., Oxford, England. Deadline: April 19th. Contact: College of Liberal Studies, Univ. of Oklahoma, Suite 226, 1700 Asp**

Ave., Norman, OK 73037-0001. (405)325-1061.

**** Calls for papers for "Gender in Academe: Who Cares?", 2nd Annual Conference, Oct. 31 - Nov. 2nd, 1991. Hosted by Univ. of South Florida, Tampa. Submissions should be postmarked no later than April 15th. Contact: Lagretta Lenker, U of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Ave., LLL 012, Tampa, FL 33620, (813) 974-2403.**

**** The National Lesbian Conference will take place in Atlanta, Georgia, April 24-28, 1991. The NLC is committed to fighting racism and other forms of oppression and accessibility for all lesbians with disabilities. For more info, write to: NLC, P.O. Box 1999, Decatur, GA 30031.**

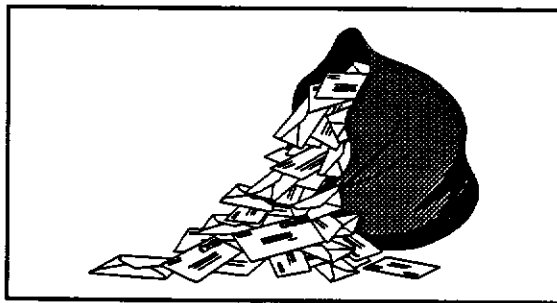
**** The Women's Studies Section of ACRL (Collection and Development Bibliography Committee) is gathering collection development policy statements relating to women's studies and/or gender studies. Libraries willing to share their policy statements are invited to send one copy, by June 1, 1991, to: Bernice K. Lacks, Henry Madden Library, California State University, Fresno, 5200 North Barton Avenue, Fresno, CA 93740-0034. Ms. Lacks may be contacted after the ALA 1991 Annual Meeting for additional information on this project.**

**** Call for submissions for an anthology of new writing by women on the topic of women and censorship, to be published by Cleis Press. The deadline is June 1, 1991. The Conditions Collective will accept the following: poetry, fiction, analytical essays, novel excerpts, interviews, drama, journal entries, correspondence excerpts and translations on this topic. For more information, contact: Conditions, 247 Liberty Ave., Jersey City, NJ 07307.**

**** The 16th Annual Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration will take place from June 30 - July 25, 1991 at Bryn Mawr College. For more info, contact: Cynthia Secor, HERS, Mid-America, University of Denver, Colorado Women's College Campus, Denver, CO 80220, (303) 871-6866.**

**** An NEH Summer Institute, "Re-Reading Intellectual History: Integrating Women's Social and Political Thought into the Undergraduate Curriculum," will take place from July 15 through August 16, 1991. The Institute will introduce participants to the writings of women intellectuals from the 17th century to today. For more info, contact: Women's Studies Dept., University of Cincinnati, OH 45221-0164, (513) 556-6655.**

**** "Women and Work: What Difference Does Gender Make?" will be offered as one of the 1991 MIT Summer Seminars in the Humanities and Social Sciences, from August 5-9, 1991. For more information, contact: MIT Summer Session Office, E19-356, Cambridge, MA 02139, (617) 253-2101.**



LETTERS, ETC.

The following article, "Women and IFLA," was submitted by Estelle Shanley, a freelance journalist in Chicago and Boston. She serves as Communications Consultant to the Illinois White House Conference Steering Committee, and is a member of the Executive Board of the Friends of the Chicago Public Library.

She sent the piece to one of the library journals and was informed by the editor that since IFLA was not an American organization, Americans had no right criticizing it. As Ms. Stanley writes in her cover letter, "American journalists and editors have never been shy or reluctant to criticize institutions, associations or political bodies because they are not American. This editor's response is another illustration of the sexism in a profession that is dominated by women."

Stockholm -- Sexism is alive and well and reigns supreme in the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). When female librarians are approached about this, whether American or Swedish, they shrug and say lamely that this has always been the case.

Women, who outnumber men in the library profession, and attend IFLA in larger numbers than their male colleagues, are woefully absent from leadership roles in the organization. In 1988, at the opening ceremony of IFLA in Sydney, Australia, not one female was present on the stage at the Sydney Opera House. Even the trumpet player who provided the musical program, was a male!

As I gazed about in the splendor of that wondrous architectural monument, I was dumbfounded that the audience of librarians were mostly women, yet they had no representation at the podium.

I recalled that when Pope John Paul II made his first historic tour of the United States in 1979, ending the trip at the Cathedral in Washington, DC, a nun, in a rather unorthodox but courageous move, rose in the congregation and began to speak. She asked the Pontiff not to ignore the importance of women in the American Church and in society. As she spoke, one woman stood, then another and another. By the time the nun finished her respectful plea for recognition and equality, hundreds of women, including journalists stood in support.

Were I a librarian, I would have stood in the Sydney Opera House and made a plea for recognition of my gender who make up the bulk of library professionals. Hopefully, there would have been the same support as was demonstrated on that sultry October day in Washington.

In 1990, IFLA in Stockholm featured one female speaker, Birgitta Bergdahl, the first woman in Sweden's history to head the National Library. All other speakers were men, as were the vast majority of presenters and panelists. In keeping with the tone of sexism, all of the 200 volunteers staffing the convention were women.

In an apparent determined move to change the male dominance of IFLA, Linda Crismond, President of the American Library Association, served as acting chairperson of a Women's Issue Group, and a general

invitation was issued to women to attend a meeting at the conclusion of the convention.

This certainly is a move in the right direction, for as one librarian from Chicago observed, "The only way to break this is to move women candidates to the forefront of the organization." The good old boys may be in for a fight and eventually be forced to relinquish the reins of control.

Campaign to Index Lesbian/Gay Periodicals in Reader's Guide

The Gay and Lesbian Task Force of the American Library Association is conducting a campaign to have the gay and lesbian periodicals indexed in standard indexes, such as the Reader's Guide, which currently index none of the gay/lesbian identified periodicals. The project was initiated by former Feminist Task Force coordinator, Polly Thistlethwaite, who is now head of Public Services at Hunter College.

Having such standard indexes omit homosexual materials denies users access to important commentary including lesbian and gay perspectives on homophobia and heterosexism, censorship and intellectual freedom, AIDS/HIV-infections and healthcare. This kind of exclusion impedes lesbian and gay participation in political and cultural debate. Not having gay and lesbian periodicals indexed also has a deleterious effect on library acquisitions. Since many patrons initially go to the standard tools for information, many libraries will not routinely purchase materials which are not indexed in these tools. On the other hand, publishers say they don't want to index publications that are not widely purchased by libraries.

To break this catch-22 situation, librarians have started to lobby publishers to be more gay-lesbian-inclusive in their indexing and are making headway. Gale Research, which publishes Book Review Index, responded immediately and positively to requests to add The Advocate, Lambda Rising Book Report and Out/Look to the list of publications whose book reviews are indexed.

H.W. Wilson, who publishes The Reader's Guide to Periodicals, has not been so accommodating. They have not responded to letters and phone calls. When the company president was approached in person at the recent ALA convention, he just couldn't "understand what all the fuss was about." After much

persuasion, he agreed to review the situation.

Since this is a critical and decisive time for Wilson publishers, they need all the encouragement they can get to do the right thing. Petitions are being circulated which ask that The Advocate, BLK, Gay Community News, The Lesbian News, Out/Look and OutWeek be indexed in The Reader's Guide. However, nothing hits home like direct mail. Please write Wilson directly and encourage them to put an end to the ignorance about lesbian and gay lives, histories and politics. Address letters to Leo Weins, President, H.W. Wilson Company, 950 University Ave., Bronx, NY 10452. Ginny Daley



Women in Libraries

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watching cartoons regularly
talking back to the
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-Pat Van Remmen

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