



Women in Libraries

Volume 21, Number 4

June 1992

ALA Annual Conference Program Announcements and Descriptions

Feminist Task Force Business Meetings:

Sunday, 28 June, 2:00-5:30pm

Monday, 29 June, 8:00-9:00am

Women's Groups in ALA—COSWL (Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship), ACRL Women's Studies Section, and the SRRT Gay & Lesbian Task Force (GLTF):
Saturday, 27 June, 11:30am-12:30pm

Reception—ACRL-WSS and Feminist Task Force
Friday, 26 June, 5:00-7:00pm

Located in the Renaissance Room of the Sir Francis Drake hotel. Cash bar and munchies.

Susie Bright: "On Sexuality, Censorship and Libraries"
Saturday, 27 June, 8:00-10:00pm

This program will be one of the most exciting and controversial programs FTF has presented in years. Bright, a lesbian author and editor, best known for the periodical *On Our Backs* and a book, *Susie Sexpert's Lesbian Sex World*, will share her views on erotica produced for women and how its existence affects debate on obscenity laws. Bright opposes censorship and has often been the subject of hot controversy; she pushes the boundaries of what we understand is acceptable and forces her listeners to rethink or clarify their commitment to intellectual freedom. Sarah Pritchard will moderate following the talk and invite the audience to comment and ask questions. COSWL, ACRL-WSS, GLTF, and the Public Library Associations Intellectual Freedom Committee are cosponsoring. SD

Feminist Authors Breakfast:

SRRT Feminist Task Force

Sunday, 28 June, 8:00-11:00am

One of the ideas that came out of last summer's Feminist Task Force program in Atlanta, "We Are Our Sisters Keepers: Supporting Feminist Presses as Feminist Activity," and the resulting brainstorming sessions, was for FTF to sponsor feminist authors breakfasts in order to improve communication and outreach among libraries, the public, and feminist presses. The publishers responded enthusiastically and Sherry Thomas of Spinsters agreed to be the liaison with the various publishers. To get our feet wet, we organized an "unofficial" breakfast in San Antonio for Midwinter to get a feel for how it would work. As reported in the March issue of *Women in Libraries*, it was an unqualified success with author Mary Morrell (*Final Sessions*, Spinsters, 1990). Plans are firmly in place for the first "official" breakfast to be held in San Francisco, Sunday, June 28, 1992, 8 - 11 a.m. at the Holiday Inn Union Square Ballroom North.

Here's a brief alphabetical introduction to the authors you will meet at the breakfast:

Dorothy Allison

Dorothy Allison writes fiction that crawls through your dreams— searing, very southern, and sometimes sexy. Her first book, *Trash*, (Firebrand, 1988) was a collection of 15 tightly written stories— "mean" stories, "stories about women from her poor white trash growing-up years; stories about women chafing against the constraints of feminist

political correctness; stories about women getting into trouble and working their way out." She is also the author of a collection of poems, The Women Who Hate Me (Firebrand, 1991), which are as gritty and as lusty as her stories. Allison's newest book, Bastard Out of 'Carolina (Dutton, 1992), is a powerful novel that you won't want to read without having someone around to talk about it. The reading Dorothy gave from Bastard in Atlanta last month was one of the all-time most magical readings I've ever heard. Firebrand will also publish a collection of Allison's essays about class, Skin, in the fall of 1992.

Sandy Butler

Sandy Butler's book, Cancer in Two Voices (Spinsters, 1991), co-written with her partner Barbara Rosenblum, is a vibrant testimony to living. Though framed by lives irreparably altered by Barbara's impending death, the overwhelming theme of Cancer in Two Voices is about living life to the fullest. Written in each woman's voice, each entry is an incisive look at what it is like to deal with breast cancer. Cancer begins in the days immediately following Barbara's diagnosis, a year after a misdiagnosis of benign fibrocystic disease. The book takes the reader through three years of daily life with these passionate and loving women which includes Barbara's receipt of a large malpractice settlement. I avoided reading this book for nearly six months, but once I got over my fear of "The 'C' Word," cancer, I could not put it down. *Publisher's Weekly* calls it a landmark feminist perspective on breast cancer. This is a powerful and emotionally instructive book for everyone whether cancer and death are daily realities or not.

Katherine Forrest

Lambda Book Report called Katherine Forrest one of "the 10 most influential women and men in Gay and Lesbian literature" in the 1980s. She was also the most-read lesbian author of that decade. The author of four murder mysteries— the Kate Delafield Mystery Series— and four other classic lesbian novels, Curious Wine, The Emergence of Green, Daughters of a Coral Dawn, and Dreams & Swords, all for Naiad Press, Katherine Forrest writes my favorite kind of books to read in the bathtub— page-turner, whodunits sprinkled with sweet sex. The latest Kate Delafield mystery is Murder by Tradition (Naiad, 1991) which I indeed read in my bathtub this winter until my toes began to shrivel. This prolific author is also senior editor for Naiad Press. One of her mysteries, Murder at the Nightwood Bar (Naiad, 1987), has been optioned for a major motion picture and hopefully Forrest will fill us in on the latest Hollywood scoop. Just who will get to play Kate Delafield?

Besides being terrific writers, all three women are captivating speakers. They'll read from their books, talk, and answer questions. The author breakfast will be a catered meal including beverages. Advance tickets can be purchased by mail for \$12 from Doty Granger, Pacific Oaks College, 5 Westmoreland Place, Pasadena, CA 91103;

ph:(818) 397-1354. Limited tickets will be available for \$14 until noon on Saturday, June 29th at the ALA conference ticket booth at San Francisco. The cost is partly underwritten by the Feminist Task Force and the participating presses. As an added bonus, breakfast attendees will receive a free autographed book from one of the sponsoring presses (Firebrand, Naiad, Spinsters) at the exhibit booths with your ticket stub! Please join us for what promises to be an unforgettable event. CT

"Poverty, Development & the Environment: Information Challenges for Libraries."

Saturday June 27, 2-4pm.— SRRT Task Force on Environment

David Brower, founder and chairman of the Earth Island Institute, former long-time director of the Sierra Club, founder of Friends of the Earth, and considered by many to be the preeminent environmentalist of our time, will address this topic. Charles Kuralt writes:

"Nothing I have heard from anyone else has affected my thinking so deeply as what I have heard from David Brower...In a complex, technological world, it is astonishing that one man could make as much difference as he has made and is making."

Mr. Brower, who will turn 80 a few days after addressing our meeting, will have just returned from the Earth Summit in Rio that concludes about 10 days before our conference. His thoughts on what our future and that of our children portends are important. His suggestions for what our profession can do are essential.

Christina Peterson, Science Reference Librarian from San Jose State University Library and Karin Weinholt a subject specialist from Cuyahoga County Public Library in Cleveland Ohio will respond to Mr. Brower's comments and suggestions with thoughts of their own. There will be a general Q & A session following. This program is sponsored by the SRRT Task Force on Environment, GODORT, ACRL International Relations Committee, ASCLI MultILINCS International Networking Discussion Group, and the Green Library in Berkeley California.

"Tools of the Trade or Poisons of the Planet: The Environmental Impact of Paper, Computers and Microfilm."

Sunday, June 28, 8:30-11:00am.— SRRT Task Force on Environment

This informative panel discussion will feature David Assmann, Vice President and Director of Information

Services for Conservatree Paper Co. (A leading recycled paper company); Gar Smith, editor of Earth Island Journal and originator of the Green Pages Program; Bill Leland, Program Director for the Institute for Global Communications (ECONET) the international online communications link for hundreds of environmental organizations and concerned individuals; Ted Smith, Executive Director of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, and the prime mover in addressing the pollution problems of the computer manufacturing industry; and Matthew Wolfinger, Environmental Coordinator/Engineer from ANACOMP, Inc., a major microfilm producer.

These folks will open our eyes to the environmental concerns with the media we deal with daily. Bring your questions and invite a vendor of your choice.

For further information about these programs or the SRRT Task Force on Environment contact:

Terry Link, Michigan State University Library, East Lansing, MI 48824-1048. Ph:1-517-355-1751;
e-mail address: 20676tpl@msu.bitnet. TL

"Is the 'Political Correctness' Backlash Controlling Women's Right to Know? Information Suppression in the Information Age

Monday, June 29, 9:30 a.m -12:30 p.m. - ACRL/
WSS & SSRT Feminist Task Force

The emerging trend for "political correctness" will be addressed in terms of how a repressive climate may lead to barring an individual's ideas from publication, academic credibility and bibliographic access. The impact of the "PC" movement on women of color will be discussed, along with its implications for ethnic and women's studies librarianship. Intellectual freedom for children and young people, and the legal challenges facing libraries in the 1990s, will also be addressed.

Keynote speaker Gloria Hull, women's studies professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz and author of several well known books on Black women's studies, will comment on the impact of the "PC" movement on the general academic climate and the challenges facing academic women of color in the "PC" arena. Among her books are "All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us are Brave" and "Color, Sex & Poetry: Three Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance."

Christine Jenkins, a doctoral candidate at the University of Wisconsin- Madison School of Library and Information Studies and former school librarian, has written extensively about intellectual freedom issues. Her dissertation is about the involvement of women in the intellectual freedom movement from 1940- 1975. She will focus on national rightwing groups and their systematic efforts

to control school boards, curricula, and textbooks via the "PC" bandwagon.

Ellen Brody, Coordinator of Library Publications and History & Film Librarian at the University of California at Irvine, has authored articles on the unmet needs of women library workers and users and issues facing reference librarians as teachers. Ms Brody will discuss academic library "PC" concerns, including collection development, censorship via bibliographic access, and self-censoring in the classroom.

A question and answer/audience participation session will follow the last speaker. The Women's Studies Section believes our speakers will be of interest to academic, public and school librarians. BG



Women in Libraries

Women in Libraries, the Newsletter of the American Library Association's Feminist Task Force, is published five times a year, from September to June.

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Subscriptions are \$5 for individuals, \$8 for institutions prepaid, or \$10 for invoiced subscriptions. Make check payable to *Women in Libraries*.

Contributors: Dee Conkling, Sherre Dryden, Kristin Gerhard, Betty Glass, Terry Link, Thomas Stuart, Teresa Tobin, Wendy Thomas, Celeste Tibbets.

Reviews

Robson, Ruthann. Cecile: stories. Ithaca, N.Y., Firebrand Books, 1991. ISBN 1-56342-002-8, \$18.95; ISBN 1-56341-001-X, \$8.95 (paper).

As the subtitle indicates, Cecile is a book of stories, but it functions as a novel. The stories concern the same three characters—the narrator, her lover Cecile and their son, Colby. The stories, together, create a chronological narrative which coincides with the first few years of Colby's life.

The first story, "Marbalo, Lesbian Separatism & Neutering Male Cats", chronicles the turmoil created in the lives of these two lesbian separatists by the birth of a son. They lose friends who can no longer stand to be in their male-centered home. In later stories they redefine the meaning of family for the day care center and their fellow parents. Throughout the stories, the trials of raising a child in an alien culture arise. While Colby is still too young read, his mothers can redefine the world as it should be; soon, however, we know and they know, that the struggle to come to terms with mainstream culture while maintaining the values of their alternative culture, will provide endless conflicts, decisions, compromises and ethical stands.

As the mother of a son, I found Ms. Robson's observations on raising a male child in contemporary America to be insightful and reassuring. The stories take the family from Florida to California to New York with a possible future far from our shores; one thing the change in locations accomplishes is the reinforcement that the culture of the United States is more monolithic than is usually depicted in our regional literature.

Neither of the women are perfect and they must both work to keep the relationship alive. Their love and caring is a constant need. If you or someone you know is coming out to family or friends this is the book to give them to help them to understand the humanness of relationship, regardless of the genders involved. In the story called "What we do in Bed" not only the obvious happens.

The writing is superb with a very light touch. The author is often oblique then direct by turns. We are involved in the dalliness of the lives of this family: the food preparation, child caring, partner caring, housecleaning, errand running daily lives of these people.

The finesse of the author's writing is a pleasure. These stories are often funniest when they are the most serious. The delicate balance of what to include and what to omit in a short story is maintained throughout. Each of these stories can be read independently, but I do not believe anyone can read just one.

I recently heard Ruthann Robson (at the Outwrite Conference, Boston, March 20-22, 1992) talk about the genre of lesbian fiction and the new forms of fiction which often meld autobiography, memoir, fiction, and prose and poetry. Cecile is an example of an unclassifiable piece of fiction,

which, curiously, feels more natural and truthful than most novels. TT

Intimate Wilderness: Lesbian Writers on Sexuality. Ed by Judith Barrington. Eighth Mountain Press: Portland, OR, 1991. ISBN 0-933377-10-X, \$24.95; ISBN 0-933377-09-6, \$14.95 (paper).

Intimate Wilderness is an exploration of a women's language of sexuality. Through a combination of poetry, theology, short stories, eroticism and philosophy Judith Barrington has shared with us a vision of the directions which can be taken with language. Changing present language and creating a new language which better fits women's needs is an exciting process. As Barrington says, these women are challenging "the limitations of language."

Several of the pieces used in this collection are classical pieces or discussions of these past works: "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" by Audre Lorde and from Lesbian Ethics "Desire and Political Perception" by Sarah Lucia Hoagland. The poetry used is powerful and often erotic, such as "I Give Her the Rose" by Suniti Namjoshi. Sexuality during illness is viewed in two chapters from the book Cancer in Two Voices, "Living in an Unstable Body" by Barbara Rosenblum and "Living in My Changing Body" by Sandra Butler. Sexuality from menopause on is addressed in pieces like the one from Sister Gin by June Arnold.

This excellent collection will leave you unsatisfied because it only begins to address the issue of a women's sexual language. However, many of the essays include good bibliographies so we can continue to explore possible changes in our use of language. This is a book you will want to share with others. DC

Foster, Marion. Legal Tender. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1992. ISBN 1-56341-011-7 (cloth), \$20.95; ISBN 1-56341-010-0 (paper), \$9.95.

Marion Foster, author of The Monarch's Are Flying (Firebrand, 1987), has written her second fast action mystery. Legal Tender draws the reader into the story of Harriet Fordham Croft and Leslie Taylor through the eyes of a detective. Croft is a strong-willed corporate attorney who switched to criminal practice and in defending Leslie, discovered her own lesbianism. Leslie Taylor is a free-spirited lesbian journalist with an outdoorsy "practiced grace" and "black Irish moods." Tupper Brack is the hard-boiled, almost *noir*-ish private investigator hired to find Harriet. The mystery is who hired him and why.

The story switches between Tupper's mission and the daily lives of Harriet and Leslie. The setting also skips between busy Toronto's seamy east side and a remote island in the Canadian wilds. Foster's descriptive prose is fresh, rich, emotive and almost tactile. She is equally adept at describ-

ing seedy city bars and their patronage as she is at bringing craggy shores and dense underbrush into sharp focus. She is, however, not quite so consistently capable with all of her characters.

Marion Foster seems to feel most comfortable with Tupper Brack throughout a large portion of her book. She chooses him to introduce the story and entice the reader to the next page. She allows him to communicate to the reader through no-nonsense third person stream-of-consciousness which is another of the author's strong points. It is the bits and pieces of Tupper's personal philosophy which keep the pace and provide the link between the various parts of the story. Sadly, Foster abandons him near the end of the book in order to focus solely upon the leading female characters.

Of the two, Leslie is the more easily described female character. Her emotions are uninhibited; her thoughts free; her motivations natural. She isn't afraid to expose herself to the reader, and in being the object of desire, she is seen from various perspectives. She is the copper-skinned beauty who revives Tupper's "discarded idealism." She is the foundation who enables Harriet to "turn over a new leaf." She is Clarence's comrade in arms against the threats to Harriet's safety. She is a women's advocate who provides the voice for the author to express her concerns on various issues including the prevalence of violence against women in fiction, hostility toward same-sex relationships, date rape, etc. (Does it really matter that these passages are a bit contrived?)

Harriet, on the other hand, is closed and secretive. Her surface is cool and controlled, so much so that in some passages, she seems flat. The reader occasionally gets brief

glimpses of her intelligence and courage; these passages are quite satisfying. But Harriet lets go of these moments, returning to a sort of stubborn oblivion. She refuses to admit her own vulnerability. She hides from herself as well as the reader. Perhaps it is the fear of losing her newfound "vivid technicolor" world which causes her to stick so close to the familiar black-and-white one.

Legal Tender is also peopled with minor characters of varying interest. Clarence (Clare) Crossley is Harriet's private investigator "who double[s] as den mother and self-appointed guardian." His protectiveness becomes almost tiresome until Tupper Brack explores Clare's personal belongings, including multicolored bikini briefs and a collection of Elizabeth Barret Browning's poems. There is more to Clarence Crossley than meets the eye. However, what you see is what you get with Harriet's ex-husband, Cornelius, "a hybrid bred to visual perfection at the cost of fragrance." The rest of the characters, including a few of Harriet's clients and the villains of the story, are discouragingly only marginally memorable.

Unfortunately, like the villains, who are more interesting while they remain hidden, the reason for Harriet's danger is unsatisfying when it is finally revealed. Of all the possibilities with which Foster teases the reader, she chooses an anti-climatic solution to the mystery. Despite that short-coming, Legal Tender is an enjoyable exploration of the depths a person can uncover when it comes to saving a special relationship and venturing out into untravelled territory. Foster juxtaposes strength and weakness, power and defenselessness and in so doing, provides a provocative opportunity for the reader to investigate her own inner character. JP

Regional News

New Group Forming for Women's Studies Librarians

The New England Chapter of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) is forming a new special interest group for librarians interested in Women's Studies. This new interest group will focus on collection development, reference, and other issues in this interdisciplinary field, and will give Women's Studies librarians a chance to meet and network. In addition, the group plans to visit Women's Studies collections in New England to learn more about what is available.

At the first meeting April 10, 1992 at Radcliffe College, members of the Women's Studies Interest Group discussed topics for future meetings. Collection Development, bibliographic instruction in women's studies, interacting with faculty, communicating to publishers about needed

reference works in women's studies, etc., were some of the issues that were raised. It is hoped that this group will give members a chance to meet other librarians who are interested in women's studies and will facilitate information and resource sharing.

The next meeting will be held at Tufts University's Wessell Library on June 5, 1992 from 1:00 to 3:00. The topic of this meeting will be organizing for collection development in women's studies: who makes the decisions, what criteria are used, and which libraries have collection development policies for women's studies.

For more information, or to get on the mailing list, please contact the co-chairs of the Women's Studies Interest

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Sexual Harassment Task Force for New York State

Governor of New York, Mario Cuomo, has appointed a special Task Force to explore the issues of sexual harassment. The Task Force, chaired by Judith Avner, Director of the New York State Division for Women, will submit a comprehensive report, with recommendations, to Gov. Cuomo by December 1, 1992. Thomas Stuart, a public librarian, is part of a subcommittee of this Task Force whose role is to make recommendations to the Governor regarding effective public education efforts, to educate the public and raise awareness of the issues, as well as to facilitate public participation. He has contacted *Women in Libraries* with the hope that librarians will play an active role in identifying some of the sexual harassment issues encountered in a stereotypically "female profession" and will share ideas and/or concerns which the Task Force should examine.

The Task Force would be glad to hear from any librarian/library which has sponsored or hosted a sexual harassment program, designed pathfinders or special exhibits, or has written specific sexual harassment policies or conducted studies or surveys.

Mr. Stuart envisions New York State libraries helping to reach the general public by providing meeting places for discussion groups and by hosting sexual harassment awareness forums. Librarians in New York State wishing to participate in the Task Force's public hearings and community forums should notify the Task Force as soon as possible.

Any ideas to be shared can be directed to: Governor's Task Force on Sexual Harassment, c/o New York State Division for Women, Executive Chamber, State Capitol, Albany, NY 12224. Attn: Public Education Sub-committee. Ph: (518) 474-3612. TS/JP

Women's Studies Indexing Project

A group of librarians with a concern for improving access to research in women's studies, led by Judy Hudson (SUNY-Albany), have investigated the coverage of women's studies journals in existing indexing and abstracting services.

Indexes (online and print) were searched for entries for articles from eighty-six journals. The journals covered a wide range, including such titles as *Signs*, *Lesbian Ethics*, *Women of Power* and *Women's Sports and Fitness*.

As a result of their work, the group has identified a number of journals that are indexed adequately (38.4%) and a number that are indexed inadequately or not at all (61.6%). In general, humanities journals seem less well indexed than journals in the social sciences; lesbian journals as a group were the least well indexed.

Titles that are inadequately indexed need to be added to the existing indexing and abstracting services, and a list of specific recommendations has been prepared. In many cases, just one or two titles are recommended for a service. Although *Women Studies Abstracts* and *Women's Studies Index* are already strong indexes, each lacks coverage of a number of titles that contain important materials for researchers.

Results of the study were presented to the ACRL Women's Studies Section board last summer in Atlanta. The board agreed to endorse the groups's recommendations to the producers of the indexing and abstracting services. The Section's Collection Development Committee will be working on the education and lobbying effort. Articles have also been prepared by librarians involved in the study.

At a time when emphasis on the inclusion of women's studies in the curriculum seems to have diminished, the availability of women's studies research becomes more critical. It is our hope that indexing and abstracting services will implement our recommendations and that access to the literature of women's studies will improve.

For more information, contact Judy Hudson (jh492@albnyvms.bitnet) or Kris Gerhard (jl.khg@isumvs.bitnet). KG

Editor's Note: So far, the only indexer to respond to the recommendations has questioned the accuracy of the study.

San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Center Archive

The groundbreaking of San Francisco's New Main Library on April 23, 1992 was marked by two generous contributions. The first was a monetary gift of \$500,000 made by James Hormel, a San Francisco civic leader. The second contribution was that of the extensive personal library amassed by Barbara Grier and Donna McBride during the last forty-two years. Their twenty-year relationship has produced the successful Naiad Press, the largest publisher of lesbian materials in the world.

The gift of more than ten thousand titles, including works from several publishers as well as photographs and personal correspondence, will serve as the backbone of the Gay

and Lesbian Center archive and is particularly remarkable as it is the first of its size to be housed in a public library. The Grier-McBride collection follows gifts made by Randy Shilts, author of And the Band Played On; Peter Adair, filmmaker whose works include Word Is Out and Absolutely Positive; and Rob Epstein, recipient of two Academy Awards for Best Documentary Feature.

Also currently under consideration is the housing of the

vast collection belonging to the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California in the public library's Gay and Lesbian Center. The Gay and Lesbian Center is scheduled to open its doors in 1995 and the remaining time, it is hoped, will bring additional financial support in order to meet the Center's two million dollar budget requirement. Hormel called for support of the new Center where, as he put it, "the lesbian and gay past can be preserved and the future shaped." SD

Three Major U.S. Women's Presses to be Represented by Inland Book Co.

Since the spring of this year, Cleis Press, along with Firebrand Books and Spinsters Book Company, are being distributed by InBook, the trade sales division of Inland Book Co.

The three women's presses signed on with InBook after weighing the benefits and costs of joining an exclusive distribution group for more than a year. They expect their collective influence at InBook to insure a strong feminist and lesbian presence.

Cleis Press expects increased visibility and increased sales as a result of the move. They cited InBook's U.S. and Canada sales reps, their familiarity with progressive women's books, and the increasing centralization of the book industry as deciding factors.

Questions about Inland's discount schedule and order fulfillment may be directed to Lorrie, InBook 1-800-253-3605.

Deadline for Next Issue

Please submit articles, announcements, etc. by July 22nd for inclusion in the next issue of *WIL*.

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