



# Women in Libraries

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## Philadelphia New Location for Midwinter 1995

The American Library Association has chosen Philadelphia as the new site for the 1995 Midwinter Meeting. The meeting was moved from Cincinnati because of a recent amendment to a local Human Rights Ordinance barring the City Council from enforcing laws that give legal protection to lesbian, gay, or bisexual citizens. The decision to move the Midwinter Meeting took place in November 1993, and the new location was selected at Midwinter 1994.

ALA has a long tradition of support for equal rights, according to ALA President Hardy R. Franklin. He also said that "the passage of Issue 3 in Cincinnati violates basic human rights issues." One report said that the cancellation would cost ALA \$200,000 in hotel contracts. Franklin argued, however, that human rights were priceless. "The issue," he said, "is not special rights for a few, but equal rights for all."

Cincinnati's amendment, passed in the November 1993 election, removes "sexual orientation" from a 15-page document that prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices in Cincinnati based on "race, gender, age, color, religion, disability status, marital status, and ethnic, national, or Appalachian origin." It became effective five days before the Board voted to pull out.

Two ALA policies formed the basis for the action: ALA Policy 54.17, which states that ALA will provide "support for equal employment opportunity for gay librarians and library workers," and ALA Policy 54.3, which says ALA "to equality of opportunity for all library employees or applicants for employment, regardless of age, color, creed, sex, age, physical or mental handicap, individual lifestyle, or national origin."

The move follows a similar problem in conjunction with the Midwinter Meeting 1993, when Denver

passed a law similar to Cincinnati's. Denver passed its law too late, however, for the ALA Board to act. A number of librarians decided not to attend that meeting, some because of the new law.

The annual ALA Midwinter meeting draws some 10,000 participants. The cities of Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC, were all under consideration as alternate sites.

### Inside:

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## Coming Up

**March 6, 1994.** For four weeks, U.S. NEWS Online, the interactive extension of *U.S. News and World Report*, is hosting an international online symposium to discuss issues facing women around the world. Participants tentatively include a broad range of experts including Jane Dobjla, Warsaw Journalism Center, Susan Faludi, USA, Betty Friedan, USA, Susan Davis, Women's Environmental Association, and others. The symposium is accessible through CompuServe. For more information, call 800-510-4247, or send an e-mail message to WOMEN at 71154.1007@compuserve.com.

**May 1-4, 1994.** Women in Library Leadership, a 3 1/2 day institute, is being offered by the ARL Office of Management Services. It is designed to provide women leaders an opportunity to explore strategies to enhance their professional lives. Participants will explore personal values, leadership challenges, developmental needs and life goals, and the similarities and differences in the ways women and men lead. The cost is \$490. For information, call Gloria Haws at 202-296-8656, or write her online at gloria@cni.org.

**June 17-21, 1994.** A conference on "Women, Information, and the Future" is scheduled to be held at Radcliffe College. Attendees from organizations and institutions around the world that collect, classify, and redistribute information on women will meet to share their ideas and expertise, discuss common problems, and establish networks for continuing communication.

Keynote speakers will address how access to information empowers women in their struggles for human rights, democracy, and development. Sessions will focus on grass-roots organizing, institution-building, women's studies, archival collecting, archival administration and information technology. One hundred speakers and panelists come from fifty nations. Registration will cost \$275. For more information, write International Conference, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Ten Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA, or fax 617-496-8340.

## Call for papers

A collection of articles on lesbian and gay language is being edited by Anna Livia and Kira Hall. Because feminist discussions of language have brought the issue of gender to recent linguistic analysis, Livia and Hall "seek to extend this analysis to include sexuality and gender identity." They hope to explore gender and language in several cultures and language groups. For more information, write Anna Livia, Department of French, 4125 Dwinelle Hall, University of California at Berkeley, 94720; e-mail livia@uclink.berkeley.edu; fax 510-642-2194; or phone 510-658-4192.

## FTF endorses Turock, others

The Feminist Task Force voted to endorse several candidates for ALA office this spring. First among them is Betty Turock, who is also endorsed by SRRT and REFORMA. She is a SRRT member of long-standing, who says, "the things that I say and the things that I believe in are the things I act on." She has been active in seeking equal access and opportunity for minorities and women for many years.

FTF also endorsed, for positions on ALA Council, Kay Cassell, Sarah Pritchard, Susana Hinojosa, and Sarah Barbara Watstein. These women are well known for their activity on behalf of women and minorities within ALA and in their lives.

Remember, when you vote for ALA Council members, the fewer votes you cast, the more your vote will count. Vote only for the candidates you feel strongly about.



### Women in Libraries

*Women in Libraries*, the Newsletter of the American Library Association's Feminist Task Force, is published four times a year.

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# Review: Queer and Pleasant Danger

Louise Rafkin

*Queer and Pleasant Danger: Writing Out My Life*  
1992. Cleis Press, P.O. Box 8933, Pittsburgh, PA  
15221.

"About my stories I'm often asked, Did That Really Happen? I usually dodge the question. But yes. To me, or to someone, somewhere ..."

Louise Rafkin's stories and essays, though neatly divided in the book, blur the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, ignoring those artificial lines between "your stories" and "my stories", between true and made-up. Stories—those anecdotes told over coffee, the gossip at the office—help us make sense of our lives, and by writing out her life, Rafkin grants us access to her wealth of stories. Whether the names she uses are real or the events she describes actually took place is less important than the way those stories ring true for so many lesbians and their friends. These stories are all very possible, and thus very real.

In the title essay, "Writing Out My Life," Rafkin describes reading *Harriet the Spy* as a young girl and the journals she was inspired to keep. I too aspired to be Harriet, albeit with much less success than Rafkin. She filled notebook after notebook with observations and drawings and bad poetry. Her descriptions of her working life as a writer in this and other essays (particularly "Provincetown Diary," which details her experience at a residential arts center for writers and visual artists) remind me of a more contemporary May Sarton, and I am as inspired and dismayed by Rafkin as I have been by Sarton. Fledgling writers (a dime a dozen, these days) often hope for that blinding flash of inspiration which will fill them with that drive to write, that incessant need to express oneself that overcomes all more mundane needs (like eating or paying the rent). Rafkin quickly dispels that myth when she talks of the work, both on herself and her craft, that writing entails: "Sometimes writing makes me happy. Sometimes I'm incredibly uncertain about what I'm doing." Apparently occasional dissatisfaction with one's job isn't limited to library work.

The final essay of *Queer and Pleasant Danger* is one I find perhaps the most intriguing. "Dykes and Fags, What's Going Down" demonstrates the great cultural gulf that exists between lesbians and gay men (when asked what "Michigan" means to lesbians, her friend Tom replies, "Something about the lakes? Water? Wetness?") and the great possibilities for alliance. While the battles against AIDS and anti-gay legislation have allied queers of all sorts, these alliances are often tentative. The question arises, what will it take to move beyond political exigency to real understanding? As Rafkin suggests, the spread of AIDS in a "sex-positive" (but not always safe-practicing) lesbian

community may require that we learn some hard lessons from our brothers. And our emphasis on relationship and communication (and, yes, therapy) may offer hope to men with a growing awareness of their own emotional damage as survivors of abuse and homophobia. (SMA)



## Women's BBS starts

A new electronic bulletin board service offers one more place for women to connect with each other, assuming they have access to a computer and a modem. The Women's Worldwide Information Resource & Exchange (Women's WIRE), began operation in October 1993 and currently has several hundred subscribers. This is the first-ever commercial conferencing system created specifically for women, though some Internet listservs predate this system (a short list follows this article). Even though WIRE has an Internet address (telnet WWIRE.NET and login as WIRENEW to join), the owners require Internet users to pay a monthly subscriber fee of \$15 a month.

This includes two hours of online time with additional hours at \$2.50 each. Those who do not yet have Internet accounts may find WWIRE especially attractive since it offers Internet email (including listservs), UseNet newsgroups, and UPI Newswires. WWIRE supplies Macintosh and Windows users with a free Graphical User Interface software package which provides point and click access through a dialup connection. Internet users are limited to a command line interface unless they have a Mac with its own IP address.

WWIRE provides its subscribers with access to databases, discussions, resources, and experts on a variety of topics: education, health & fitness, news & politics, careers & finance, parenting, arts & leisure, technology, Sappho & friends, and the environment. Content is drawn from "media, newswires, women's organizations, government sources and, most importantly, from its subscribers—offering a central source for the latest women's news and information." According to Ellen Pack, co-founder and President of WIRE, "WWIRE is providing a place for women around the world to get connected to what's happening and to each other." (*Boardwatch Magazine*, January 1993) For more information, write WWIRE at 435 Grand Avenue, Suite D, South San Francisco, CA 94080; call 415-615-8989, or e-mail info@wire.net (Internet).



*No! We have not been on strike. We had a little trouble getting the newsletter on track this year. With a new editor in place, and with numerous apologies from all of us, we will be working to catch up as quickly as possible. It's good to be back!*

*Art by Rini Templeton.*

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