

# SRRT Newsletter

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of the American Library Association

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## COORDINATOR'S MEMO

To: SRRT members

From: Gail P. Warner, Action Council  
Coordinator

Action Council meetings in New York were lively and rewarding. SRRT co-sponsored membership resolutions on access to information on national security in the nuclear age, a resolution condemning the abridgement of human rights in South Africa, and a resolution concerning literacy, literature, and libraries in Nicaragua.

Vincent Jennings from Citizens Against Nuclear War would like to have a SRRT member attend monthly meetings in the Washington area. If you are interested, contact me for an address (see the listing in this issue).

Looking ahead to Midwinter, SRRT will be sponsoring a forum for the presidential candidates. Task force coordinators and all SRRT members are encouraged to prepare questions for the candidates on social issues. If you have a question for the candidates, please send it to me.

Action Council's tentative schedule for Midwinter meetings is: Saturday 9:30-11:00; Sunday 2-4; Tuesday 11:30-12:30. Action Council meetings are open meetings, and all SRRT members are invited to attend.

After this issue the *SRRT Newsletter* editorship will pass from the capable hands of John Hostage to those of Jeanne Kocsis. Thanks to John for a great job. Thanks also to outgoing SRRT Coordinator John Sheridan and to Barbara Levinson, whose term on Action Council just ended. If you are interested in running for Action Council, come to our meetings. We need capable, dedicated workers.

As the new SRRT Coordinator, I'm looking forward to working with all of you. If you have questions or concerns, bring them to an Action Council meeting at Midwinter, or contact one of the members of Action Council.

In the meantime, here's a gem from Flo Kennedy's program sponsored by the Feminist Task Force in New York: "You are allowed to be crazy as long as you are irrelevant."

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## AUTHORS OF COLOR IN THE MAINSTREAM: WHERE IS THE RAINBOW

A panel with the title "Authors of Colors in the Mainstream: Where is the Rainbow?" was held on Sunday, June 29, at the ALA Conference in New York. The event, co-sponsored by the SRRT Alternatives in Print and Civil Rights Task Forces, featured John O. Killens, Walter Dean Myers, Sonia Nieto, Eleanor Wong Telemaque, and Rosebud Yellowrobe as

speakers.

The presentations and discussion centered around the issue of increasingly limited access of authors of color to mainstream publishers. Dr. Killens, noted African-American author, called for a forum of African-American publishers, politicians, and other leaders to develop strategies to publish and disseminate materials to the black community. He stressed that authors who promote positive, non-stereotypical images largely go unpublished, and he noted as an example the resistance of mainstream publishers to his manuscript on the great black Russian, Alexander Pushkin.

Walter Dean Myers, noted children's book author, shared conversations he has had with editors of major publishing houses who say they have not been approached by black authors, a claim Mr. Myers stated was ludicrous. He stressed that for a book to be considered successful, six to ten thousand copies must be sold in the first printing. He pointed to the over 25,000 libraries in the U.S. which should provide an ample market for black books--if they are marketed well and if librarians generate orders.

Sonia Nieto from the University of Massachusetts said that in a survey of one hundred books on Puerto Rican themes, only eight were written by Puerto Ricans, and stereotypes abounded in those written by non-Puerto Ricans. Eleanor Wong Telemaque reported on an alliance of Asian authors who pressure publishers to produce Asian works and urged that networks be developed in other groups. Rosebud Yellowrobe noted that most Native American books focus on folktales and not on present-day realities, and she finds stereotypes of Native Americans rampant in children in elementary schools.

The librarians attending and the speakers agreed that librarians had a responsibility to pressure publishers to produce works by authors of color and

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Editor.....John Hostage  
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Linda Pierce  
John Sheridan

Deadline for next issue is November 1

to support books already published. They also stressed the need for alternative presses to reprint some of the classics by authors of color which are rapidly going out of print.-- *Kate Shackford, Coordinator, Civil Rights Task Force*

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#### GAY THESAURUS

At a meeting on June 30, 1986, at the New York conference, members of the Gay Task Force's Working Group on a Subject Thesaurus dealing with homosexuality were presented an interim report on the progress of the project by its coordinator, Joe Gregg. The report advised that the first phase of the project--collecting any previously devised subject lists--had been completed. Sixty English-speaking lesbian and gay libraries and archives had been

contacted (including several outside North America) and 104 U.S. and Canadian publications and organizations had also been approached. The former probe netted three thesauruses which, together with five previously collected by Gregg and working group member Bob Ridinger, bring to eight the total number of subject lists in the group's possession. Although the press/societies mailing did not turn up any lists, it did serve the useful purpose of creating an awareness of the Group's work among those contacted.

The next phase of the project, merging the several lists, has begun with the assistance of the computer facility of the Museum of Anthropology at Northern Illinois University under the direction of Bob Ridinger. The resulting master list of raw terms will require review and editing by members of the working group and organizations directly involved in library services and research in the lesbian/gay community (e.g. Canadian Gay Archive, Toronto; Gerber-Hart Library, Chicago; International Gay and Lesbian Archive, Los Angeles; Lesbian & Gay Rights Centre, Wellington, New Zealand; Lesbian Herstory Archive, New York). The group plans to have a preliminary draft available for examination at Midwinter.

Although the group's focus is presently placed upon the successful completion of a subject thesaurus, significant work has begun in preparing a union list; Bob Ridinger has completed a "Preliminary Periodicals Listing" (36 p.) of the titles in the International Gay and Lesbian Archive and is completing a similar list of the Gerber-Hart Library collection. Capturing the titles in these two major U.S. collections is the beginning of what the group plans to be a comprehensive international union list of gay and lesbian periodicals. Ridinger will present the two lists at Midwinter.

Questions about the project may be directed to Joe Gregg, 55 W. Chestnut St., Apt. 3008, Chicago, IL 60610. Inquiries regarding union lists of lesbian/gay periodicals should be directed to Bob Ridinger, 1305 Glidden Rd., Apt. 403, DeKalb, IL 60115.

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#### SRRT ACTION COUNCIL 1986-1987

The terms of elected members of Action Council expire at the end of Annual Conference in the year shown following each name. The newsletter editor and task force liaisons are members ex officio.

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INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

This was a most important conference for the cause of international human rights as it relates to librarians and for this task force. Accomplishments include the drafting and passage by ALA membership of a set of resolutions on the abridgement of human rights in South Africa, liaison with several other units of ALA, and our support for efforts to revise ALA Policy 57.3 procedures.

Special thanks must go to Lee Regan, Sandy Berman, Elliott Shore, and Diana Vincent-Davis, who worked for several hours on the wording of the South Africa resolution. The resolution was accepted by SRRT Action Council on Sunday. A revised resolution was the first order of business at the second ALA membership meeting on Wednesday, July 2. Surprisingly, there was no dissent nor attempts to delete sections or to change the wording. One member asked if only the Dewey schedule were to be questioned, and President Lynch replied, "Yes." Later, we were asked to look into LC schedules as well. The vote followed and the resolution passed. The text is reproduced below.

By way of background to the resolution, the South African Library Association was ejected from IFLA because membership was limited to whites. A new organization, SAILIS, was formed. Its Constitution makes all members of SALA members of SAILIS and requires new members to be proposed by two professional members of SAILIS.

The Dewey revision provided to Forest Press by SAILIS involved only a few catalogers in South Africa and has many flaws that led to protests by Africana catalogers. The published area tables on display in New York included the independent countries of Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland among the provinces like Transvaal. The homelands, however, were set apart as national states. The history schedule is planned for publication in a few months, and according to catalogers who have seen the draft, places South African white history in 968 but relegates much of black history to social problems in the 300s.

I would like to express my gratitude to outgoing chair Lee Regan, who organized the International Human Rights Task Force in 1982. The statement of purpose, functions, and goals developed then clearly tell us our role in ALA. What we must do now is to take another

step toward filling that role. We do not have a formal structure beyond the position of chair. However, I would like to have the former chair be considered part of our informal executive as Lee will certainly continue to be our mentor. Beyond this I am looking for a program chair for San Francisco in 1987. Any volunteers? --Corinne Nyquist, chairperson

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### SOUTH AFRICA RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states as a basic premise that "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,"

WHEREAS the American Library Association has adopted as policy the principles of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declaring "threats to the freedom of expression of any person become threats to the freedom of all,"

WHEREAS South Africa's state of emergency and total crackdown on news reporting make imperative our concern for all in that imprisoned country, especially the thousands held in incommunicado detention, while remembering that the record of banning of people and books, of unequal library funding and education, and of aggression and slaughter in South Africa is infamous and of long duration,

WHEREAS the record of human rights violations in South Africa has led ALA to adopt a resolution calling for divestment, which is to the credit of its membership, the time has come for American librarians to put further pressure on Pretoria and

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to support the efforts of South African librarians to resist these oppressive policies,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the American Library Association call on all American librarians to support the struggle for freedom, justice, and equality within a multiracial democratic society in South Africa, and be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA write the appropriate government agency in South Africa expressing opposition to the present system of unequal library service and education and to the widespread censorship of the press and banning of authors and their works, and be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA go on record as opposing any future reentry into the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) of the South African Library Association in its new guise as the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science, until this Institute takes a strong stand in favor of open membership and equality of library service and education, and be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA urge bibliographic utilities, such as OCLC, and other cooperative ventures, not to expand their services or make investments in South Africa under the present regime, and be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA urge the Dewey Decimal area tables and history schedule for South Africa planned for the 20th edition by Forest Press, that were prepared by SAILIS, be revised to reflect the history of all South Africans, and be it further

RESOLVED, that ALA urge American libraries to develop collections on South Africa that reflect the full diversity of viewpoints and experience in that country, particularly to consider securing materials from such alternative and

authoritative sources as the African National Congress, the Africa Fund and the American Committee on Africa, the International Defense and Aid Fund, the South African Institute for Race Relations, and Ravan Press, and these publications be made accessible through library catalogs by the assignment of sufficient and appropriate subject headings, and be it therefore further

RESOLVED, that ALA invite library colleagues in South Africa to tell American librarians how we may help them achieve a free flow of information, open and responsive library service, and a more just and humane society.

Passed at ALA membership meeting II on July 2, 1986.

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#### MINNESOTA SRRT

The July/August *MLA Newsletter* (Minnesota Library Association) reports that the Minnesota Social Responsibilities Roundtable has been resurrected as part of MLA. Interested persons should write to Pamela Towne, c/o North Regional Library, 1315 Lowry Ave. North, Minneapolis, MN 55411, or to Liz Anderson, provisional co-chair, 3142 West Calhoun, Apt. 108, Minneapolis, MN 55416. ALA SRRT applauds this development and Action Council would like to know about any other state SRRT organizations. Illinois is the only other one known to us at this time.

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#### FREEDOM TO READ FOUNDATION

The Freedom to Read Foundation met all day June 26 in New York. The board discussed a report on "The Relationship between the American Library Association and the Freedom to Read Foundation," dated 25 April 1986. Much of the attention centered on communication between

the two organizations.

The Morison case, in which an American was convicted of selling a photograph of a Soviet ship to a British publication, will be appealed, and the FTRF will probably file an amicus curiae brief because the case seems to invite an American version of Britain's Official Secrets Act.

The board plans to have an emergency meeting as soon as possible after the Meese Commission report is released.

The "propaganda films" case, involving three films released by the National Film Board of Canada (*Acid from Heaven*, *Acid Rain: Requiem or Recovery?*, and *If You Love This Planet*) was discussed. Apparently, lists of the number (not the names) of viewers of films deemed "foreign propaganda" are to be sent to the Internal Security Section of the Department of Justice, according to existing law. A Court of Appeals has ruled that how many people saw the film, in what theater it was shown, and who

sponsored it must be part of the report to the ISS. The FTRF board may take an amicus curiae position on any further litigation. (The act in question is the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as amended, according to a letter to Robert Wedgeworth from Joseph E. Clarkson, chief of the Registration Unit of the ISS.)

In Panama City, Florida, a group of parents is demanding the removal of Robert Cormier's book *I Am the Cheese* from Bay County schools. There is no litigation yet, but the superintendent of schools has responded with a "citizens' committee" appointed to review future purchases of reading materials and textbooks. It was suggested that in response to the appeal of the teacher from Mowat Junior High School who brought this case to the foundation's attention, it could use the technique used in the Sallisaw (Oklahoma) case and organize a roundtable with attorneys to settle the disputes peacefully and out of court. --Noel Peattie, SRRT representative to FTRF

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