

ACRL WOMEN'S STUDIES SECTION NEWSLETTER

Vol. 8, No. 1 & 2, June 1993

Wendy Thomas, Editor

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WOMEN'S POPULAR LITERATURE: CHALLENGES TO THE CURRICULUM AND LIBRARIANS

WOMEN'S STUDIES SECTION ANNUAL PROGRAM
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

MONDAY, JUNE 28, 1993

9:30 am - 12:30 pm

Join the Women's Studies Section for a panel discussion on the challenges presented to librarians and academics by women's popular literature. How do we distinguish between popular and scholarly women's literature? Does popular literature fit into the curriculum for women's studies? How do we achieve academic recognition for women's popular literature and overcome resistance from colleagues? What are the selection and collection development issues for popular literature? Does this genre present problems for public service librarians?

Our Annual Program will focus on these questions and address issues such as the rising interest in multicultural writing, the differences between alternative and mainstream literature, feminine vs. masculine voice, etc. Featured panelists and their topics are Emily Toth, Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge, "Women's Popular Literature: Challenges to the Curriculum," and Bonita Corliss, Seattle Public Library, "Lesbians' Popular Literature: Challenges to the Curriculum and Librarians." 2-3 additional panelists (to be announced) will join the discussion.

Please try to attend what promises to be another exciting WSS event. Check your ALA Annual Conference Program for location.

-- Sally Willson Weimer, Co-chair, 1993 Conference Program Planning Committee

WSS CELEBRATES 10TH BIRTHDAY!

Ten years ago this spring, at ALA's 1983 Annual Conference, a group of women got together and started the discussions that led to the formation of the Women's Studies Discussion Group. In 1987, through a lot of hard work and toil on the part of many women, the Discussion Group became a full-fledged Section. To help celebrate the remarkable achievements and progress made in the WSS over the last decade, we asked past Chairs to contribute their thoughts and remembrances about their years of service.

Joan Ariel, WSS Chair, 1983-85

The setting was San Antonio, January 1983. A small group of feminist librarians interested in women's studies talked about creating a place for this dynamic, still new discipline in our libraries and in our professional associations. We wanted to provide a forum for librarians across professional specialties to discuss women's studies within the specific context of academic and research libraries. At the same time, we sought to reaffirm critical mutual support and collaboration with feminist and other ALA groups working to promote library and information service to all women. Our vision seemed to be more widely shared than even we had anticipated and our petition to form a Women's Studies Discussion Group in ACRL was signed and approved with enthusiasm. I remember most the sense of exhilaration in finding our voice and making a difference in women's studies in ACRL and ALA. This remains with me each day in my work, and, a decade later, as we celebrate our 10th anniversary, it's how I "remember the Alamo." (cont. on p. 2)

WSS 10TH BIRTHDAY (cont.)

Sarah Watstein, WSS Chair, 1985-86

Red tape, red tape, and more red tape! That sums up my memory of the primary challenge of my term as Chair of the then Women's Studies Discussion Group, 1985-86. Navigating the "DG" to Section status was a collaborative venture (adventure!) that we accomplished without some of the "assists" taken for granted today-- e-mail, FAX, and word-processing. Only a few of us were lucky to have access to those systems or services then. But we did it, revising, retyping, and recirculating drafts of by-laws not once, not twice, but umpteen times! Today, when I see the list of WSS meetings at Midwinter or Annual, I realize how far we have come. There is no better benchmark of success than to take stock of attendance at our programs. The red tape still exists, but some of us have learned, or are learning, how to cut it with more knowledge, skill, experience, grace, and, yes, humor.

Sue Searing, WSS Co-chair, 1986-87

What I recall from my year as the head of the ACRL Women's Studies Discussion Group was how pleasant it was to Co-chair the group. 1986-87 was the year that the Discussion Group "flew up" and became a Section, and it was the only year that we had two people sharing the duties of Chair. As I remember, both Lori Goetsch and I volunteered to serve as Chair, so in the loose, consensual mode by which the Discussion Group operated, we were anointed Co-chairs on the spot. Between us, and with lots of help from WSS members and ACRL staff, Lori and I managed to run the bureaucratic obstacle course, present the proper forms to the proper people, get approval for the bylaws, and see the Section take on a new prominence within ACRL and ALA. During the preceding year the members had discussed with considerable passion the pro's and con's of entering the ACRL mainstream as a Section. We worried that we'd lose the spontaneity and informality that characterized our open forums. We fretted that we'd be forced into timetables for program planning, budget requests, and the election of officers that could undercut our ability to respond to pressing issues. Could we sustain a grassroots, feminist spirit within the structure of a Section? There were times during the transition year that Lori and I wondered! Today, I'd point to the WSS as proof that feminists CAN work successfully within the system. We've continued our commitment to holding open discussions; we've established a tradition of informal Friday night social hours; and we've taken visible stands on important political/professional issues like the Utah boycott. Looking back on a decade filled with

accomplishments, I'm glad I got to be part of the "transition team."

Lori Goetsch, WSS Co-chair, 1986-87

Sue Searing and I were Co-Chairs during the transition from Discussion Group to Section. I was relatively new to the group at that time and remember being impressed with the thoughtful and insightful discussions we had surrounding the pro's and con's of seeking Section status. Once the decision was made, Sue and I were among the first to experience the red tape of "sectionhood." I'm sure there were times when we wondered if we were doing the right thing for women's studies librarianship-- there were mounds of forms to fill out, meetings to attend, bylaws to be written. I remember, in particular, shepherding the bylaws through the ACRL bureaucracy as we tried to walk the fine line of meeting the Association's requirements while still reflecting a feminist approach to the Section's organization. Looking back, I think our fears of being subsumed into the machine of ACRL have been unfounded, due almost entirely to the dedication of the Section membership and leadership to feminist principles of collaboration and inclusiveness. A more personal part of the experience for me was working with Sue. No one could have had a more supportive partner than I had that year, and it is particularly pleasant to look back on that experience as the start of a professional relationship, and, more importantly, a warm friendship that continues today.

Ellen Broidy, WSS Chair, 1987-88

Three things stick out in my mind about my tenure as chair of the Section. First, the year I was elected the vote was so close that had I not heeded my mother's advice (proffered at some point during my elementary school political career) to cast a vote for myself, I probably would not have had the honor of chairing the Section. Second, the excellent groundwork laid by the Discussion Group chairs made the task of chairing the Section a breeze. Everything was in place. We hit the ground running as a Section (and haven't stopped moving yet). Third, I distinctly remember the ACRL New Chairs Orientation breakfast. I did not want to attend. Chairing the WSS was one thing; being an ACRL socialite was another. At any rate, Pat Kreitz and I went to the breakfast. Each section chair was asked to introduce her/himself and say a few words about their section. We were called on to speak in alphabetical order, so naturally, we were last. The assembled throng listened politely to each speaker, congratulated new chairs on their election, and asked one or two questions about section plans. When our turn came, we were introduced as an im-

WSS 10TH BIRTHDAY (cont.)

portant addition to ACRL -- and as a significant marker of critical changes in academia (and librarianship). I stood up to give my little thirty second rap and the entire group broke into applause and "shouts" (academic librarians don't really raise their voices) of congratulations, welcome, it's about time. The croissants were also pretty good. That's all from my stroll down memory lane.

Sarah Pritchard, WSS Chair, 1989-90

My term as Vice-chair and then Chair of WSS (the two years blend so much that it is easier to think of it as a continuous period) stands out in my mind for two reasons. First, we planned and put on the tremendously successful program with keynote speaker Catharine Stimpson; serving on the panel with her was an exciting privilege for me, and the whole program brought great recognition to WSS. Second, we really hit our "structural" stride as a Section within ACRL in those years: the five-year review was submitted to acclaim from the Planning Committee, we issued the WSS Section Manual and the Program Planning Manual, and we pushed for changes in ACRL policy such as the broadened mechanism for funding conference programs. The Women's Studies Conspectus having been completed (one of our earliest initiatives as a Discussion Group), we incorporated the Ad Hoc Conspectus Committee into a standing Collection Development and Bibliography Committee. We responded to members' needs and established the conference pattern of one time-slot for a membership or orientation meeting, and one for a topical discussion meeting. It was a dynamic year that drew on the talents of many long-time and new WSS members.

Patricia Kreitz, WSS Chair, 1990-91

In the space of a paragraph, I could not begin to cover all the memories gained and friendships made during my year as Chair of the Section. I worked with so many admirable colleagues whose accomplishments that year contributed significantly to women's studies and librarianship. However, one of my most powerful memories is of the open meeting I chaired in which the Section debated the stand it would take on the planned ACRL Conference to be held in Salt Lake City, Utah. At the end of this meeting, it was concluded that we would show our opposition to the ACRL Conference location by formally notifying the ACRL Board that the WSS would not participate in the Conference, but that we would not forbid individual Section members to participate. This was a very difficult decision to reach because there were many

unresolved issues about the organization's social responsibility and because the membership was divided about what the Section should do. What I cherish the most is the memory of a room of colleagues who were able to argue passionately yet treat each person's point of view with tolerance and who were able to achieve a resolution that respected individual opinions and rights while affirming the Section's core values.

Jacquelyn Marie, WSS Chair, 1991-92

Most of my memories as Chair of WSS had to do with what I termed the "ACRL Flap." What to do with the ACRL Conference in the highly anti-feminist, anti-abortion, anti-information state of Utah. a great deal of individual and group discussion on social concerns, conversations with the presidents of ACRL and ALA and the Racial and Ethnic Diversity Committee (who also pulled out of the Conference)- - life was interesting! My file folder was full of notes, resolutions, e-mail messages, articles mentioning our stand and many more which did not. What a boost to talk to a founder of women's studies, Catharine Stimpson, who understood our position thoroughly and read me the statement she would make at the Conference in strong solidarity with our position. All of this political and social issues work culminated in our excellent program on the "PC" backlash and women's rights at ALA Annual in San Francisco. And a professor of mine, Akasha (Gloria) Hull as keynote speaker! All this would have been impossible without my socially concerned, hard-working, Executive Committee! Thanks to all you fantastic women for guiding us through a difficult but rewarding year!!

YOU'RE INVITED...

WSS 10TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

AT ALA IN NEW ORLEANS!

FRIDAY, JUNE 25, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

**ANNA MANY LOUNGE, NEWCOMB
CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN,
TULANE UNIVERSITY**

The Women's Studies Section will celebrate its 10th birthday at its Social Hour during the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans. Come relax, network, and socialize with members of the Section. Previous Section chairs will be especially invited to attend and will share memories of the Section with us. Local authors and representatives from local presses will be asked to attend the event and to display/sell their books. We will have a cash bar, light refreshments, and, of course, a birthday cake!

-- Bonnie Cox, Chair, Communications Committee

☞NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

This year has been a real roller coaster ride for the Section. Membership has surged to a record high while the ACRL budget crisis threatens the continuation of the newsletter and program funding; committee activities have flourished while ALA conferences in states that are legal "hot potatoes" challenge Section attendance and energies. Celebrating the Section's 10th anniversary allows us to take stock of our path up to this point and provides some perspective on this year's experiences and endeavors.

It has never been easy to do women's studies librarianship. Ten years ago, few of us had the title, the budget line, or the visibility on the reference desk to provide the kind of library support that other disciplines enjoy. Our Midwinter discussion on the liabilities of women's studies librarianship in the 1990's brought home the fact that many of us are still struggling for credibility and viability among our colleagues and supervisors. We talked about instances where women's studies librarianship was devalued, promotions were denied, funding was drained. Yet we also shared strategies for getting women's studies titles, gaining visibility and clout, creating useful alliances with faculty, and planning support from the Section.

Women's studies librarianship will always be difficult because of its interdisciplinary nature. This year, various committees' activities are successfully confronting this multi-faceted field. The Collection Development and Bibliography Committee has produced a series of core bibliographies intended as a resource for smaller libraries and resource centers. *Women's Studies Collection Development Policies*, which was produced by the Section and published by ACRL, has sold over 200 copies in just six months! Both the Technical Services and Collection Development Committees are working on various projects examining periodical indexing, use of LC subject headings, and a proposed joint endeavor with the NWSA for a women's studies database.

The Section continues its struggle to balance the interplay of the personal, political, and professional, particularly in terms of official ALA conference locations. The passage of the discriminatory Colorado Amendment 2 hit us broadside just before the Midwinter Conference. Many Section members boycotted the Conference and many of us who attended were visible in our protests. The Section joined other ACRL sections in asking that ALA not meet in Colorado as long as such a law was in effect. We participated in the Gay & Lesbian Task Force's rally with Sue Searing eloquently addressing the relativity of such a law to both women's issues and library issues. An ad hoc committee on Social Issues and Education drafted letters of praise to ALA officials for their decision to move the 1998 Conference from Denver and to conference exhibitors who protested the amendment, and wrote letters of protest to Colorado officials.

The Colorado situation demonstrated how we can be faced with tough administrative decisions seemingly overnight. The Social Issues and Education Committee will provide us with a core of women interested in reacting quickly to hot topics. I don't envision this committee simply working around the politics of future meeting sites. There is a full agenda of broader social and educational issues that this committee can address: tenure and promotion for women's studies librarians, cultural diversity and women's studies librarianship, the implications of emerging technologies to women's studies resources and scholarship, etc. The work of this committee can then provide a springboard for Section programs, workshops, projects, and publications. Vice-chair Betty Glass is making formal appointments to this new committee now, so please contact her if you are interested in working with this group. [Editor's note: see related notice in this newsletter.]

The ACRL cutback of newsletters provoked passionate discourse in most ACRL sections and general meetings at Midwinter. Discussions about the importance of section newsletters and the recommendation that sections move to electronic publication triggered intense debates about everything from the future of ACRL publications to an evaluation of membership benefits to a plea for greater autonomy for the various sections. The cry to restore the section newsletter budget was heard by ACRL and, at the time of this printing, section newsletters have been restored to two issues for 1993/94.

But the handwriting is on the wall. It has become clear that ACRL support for section activities and projects will continue to shrink without a dues increase (which no one favors) and that we must utilize emerging technologies to carry out Section business, projects, and communication. In discussing this issue, the Executive Committee has affirmed its commitment to ALL Section members and is extremely concerned that we maintain a balance between electronic and print mediums so that no members get "teched out" of the loop. Consequently, I urge everyone to fill out the enclosed questionnaire as it will provide us with the data that we need to face some of the tough financial and communication decisions that are heading our way.

We can look at what this Section has done over the past 10 years and see the milestones that women coming together can accomplish. But we don't have time to rest on our laurels. This is the year to get a critical foothold on changes and challenges that were inconceivable a decade ago. I invite you all to get involved in Section activities and help shape the future of women's studies librarianship. Hope to see you all at the 10th birthday party/celebration/social hour in New Orleans!

-- Ginny Daley, WSS Chair

ELECTRONIC MAIL ACCESS AND USAGE
A SURVEY OF WOMEN'S STUDIES SECTION MEMBERS

Please take a minute to complete the following survey on your electronic mail (e-mail) access and usage. Your response is needed in order to help us plan for the future of communication within the Women's Studies Section.

1. Do you have easy access to an e-mail account?

2. Do you send and receive e-mail now?

3. If you answered no to the above questions, do you think you will have access to e-mail in the near future? If so, when?

4. Do you belong to any electronic discussion lists/bulletin boards or subscribe to any electronic journals?

If yes, which lists, boards, or journals do you subscribe to, monitor, or participate in?

5. If you are an e-mail user, would you find it satisfactory to receive the Women's Studies Section newsletter electronically, or would you prefer a paper copy?

Optional:

Name _____

Address _____

Thanks for completing this survey. Please fold, staple, and return this form by June 20, 1993 (address on reverse).

WSS MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

Sarah Pritchard is the new Director of Libraries at Smith College, Northampton, MA, as of August 17, 1992. Her new job includes responsibility for the main library, the Sophia Smith Collection, and other branches.

Gail Schlachter, President of Reference Service Press, has been chosen by the Reference and Adult Services Division (RASD) of ALA as the 1992 recipient of the Isadore Gilbert Mudge Citation, to honor her achievements and accomplishments in the field of reference librarianship. Past recipients of the award include Constance Winchell, Thomas Besterman, and William Katz.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ON ACCESS TO WOMEN'S STUDIES MATERIALS

The WSS Technical Services Committee has prepared a bibliography of library literature on access to women's studies materials. It will be distributed at Annual in New Orleans. If you would like to receive a copy before then, request one from Kris Gerhard, 204 Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011. Bitnet: jl.khg@isumvs.bitnet. Internet: jl.khg@isumvs.iastate.edu.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Women's Voices in the Southern Oral History Program Collection

Kathryn L. Nasstrom, editor.

(xv + 178 pp. Indexed. \$17.00)

The Southern Oral History Program and the Southern Historical Collection announce the publication of the above guide, containing abstracts of over 300 oral history interviews with southern women, grouped together by topical series, with an introduction describing each series. Explanatory notes follow each abstract with information on other material available on the interviewee, reference to related manuscript collections in the Southern Historical Collection, and an indication of any restrictions placed on the use of the interview. An extensive index allows access to the interviews by subject headings. Women's Voices can be ordered from the Southern Oral History Program; CB# 3195, Hamilton Hall; UNC-Chapel Hill; Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3195; (919)962-8076.

WSS APPOINTMENTS

If you are interested in serving on one of the Section's many committees, contact Vice-chair/Chair-elect Betty Glass. To find out more about specific committee activities, refer to the Section's brochure, or contact the committee chair directly. All of the committee meetings (except

nominations) are open, so you can attend any meeting at Annual to get a feel for the group.

If you want to get involved with WSS, let Betty know! She can be reached at University Library, University of Nevada; Reno, NV 89557. Phone: (702)784-1604. Internet: glass@equinox.unr.edu.

GET INVOLVED NOW!

EDITOR'S NOTE

As many of you now know, budget problems at ACRL necessitated cuts in the section newsletters this year: ACRL sections were limited to one 8-page newsletter in 1992/93. Funding for 2 newsletters has been tentatively restored for 1993/94, but the long-term future of the section newsletters is uncertain. ACRL has formed a Task Force on Membership Communications to gather and discuss information on how librarians use the Internet, and to recommend a plan to use electronic communication to replace ACRL printed publications as appropriate. The WSS would like to know how YOU feel about the section newsletters. As a way of generating feedback and discussion on this issue, we have included an electronic mail survey in this newsletter (pages 5 & 6). PLEASE FILL OUT AND RETURN THE SURVEY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. We suspect that although many members are connected electronically, the paper newsletter is still a valuable source of information. Let us know what you think! If you are looking for a fun way to get involved with WSS activities, here's your chance! We need an assistant editor for 1993/94. For more information, contact Jessica Grim at the address below.

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ACRL WSS 1993 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AGENDA

Please note that meeting times are tentative as we go to press.
Check conference program for locations and possible time changes.

Friday, June 25

2:00-5:30 pm Miami 1994 Program Committee
5:30-7:00 pm Social Hour (WSS 10th Birthday; see newsletter for location)
8:00-10:00 pm Executive Committee

Saturday, June 26

9:30-11:00 am New Orleans 1993 Program Committee
9:30-11:00 am Social Issues/Education Committee
9:30-11:00 am Technical Services Committee
11:30 am - 12:30 pm Intro to Women's Groups at ALA (WSS, FTF, COSWL)
2:00-4:00 pm Membership Meeting

Sunday, June 27

2:00-4:00 pm Collection Development Committee
2:00-4:00 pm Communications Committee
2:00-4:00 pm Publications Committee
2:00-4:00 pm 1994 Nominating Committee

Monday June 28

9:30 am - 12:30 pm WSS Program (see newsletter for description)
2:00-4:00 pm Miami 1994 Program Committee
2:00-4:00 pm Publications Committee
2:00-4:00 pm Communications Committee
2:00-4:00 pm Collection Development Committee

Tuesday, June 29

8:30-11:30 am Executive Committee
9:30-11:00 am COSWL Program, "Getting Women into Print" (co-sponsored by WSS)

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