



## Women's Studies Section Newsletter

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Spring 2004

*Issued by the Women's Studies Section,  
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### **“Telling Our Stories Now: Women’s Archives in the Digital Age”**

How have digitization projects and the Internet opened archival and primary source collections to a worldwide audience? What new opportunities and challenges do these developments bring to libraries, special collections, and archives? Join us for this year’s WSS Program to hear more.

Ellen Broidy, Young Research Library at UCLA, will moderate a panel discussion on how women’s stories are being told through new electronic projects and how these projects impact collections.

The panelists are:

- ◆ Sherrill Redmon, Director of the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College, an internationally renowned collection consisting of manuscripts, periodicals, photographs and other primary sources dealing with women’s history from the colonial period to the present;
- ◆ Stephen Rhind-Tutt, President, Alexander Street Press, an academic publisher of electronic full-text databases in the humanities and social sciences, including women’s studies;
- ◆ Laura Micham, Director of the Sallie Bingham Center for Women’s History and Culture in the Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library at Duke University. The Bingham collection includes a wealth of primary documents ranging from plantation diaries to papers of contemporary feminist activists.

“Telling Our Stories Now: Women’s Archives in the Digital Age” will be held during ALA’s Annual Conference in Orlando on Monday, June 28, starting at 9:15am (following the WSS Awards Ceremony). The program is being co-sponsored by ACRL’s College Libraries Section, Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, and University Libraries Section, as well as RUSA’s History Section.

–Cynthia Johnson

#### **Welcome New Members!!**

Kimberly Black-Parker  
Daren Callahan  
Marilyn Carbonell  
Amy Chamberlain  
Colleen Dippold  
Nancy Godleski  
Jessica Goodman  
Curt Holleman

Charlotte Innerd  
Linda Irmen  
Beth Kattelman  
Rebecca Kelm  
Jo Kibbee  
Angelynn King  
Holly Kwartler  
Sharon Ladenson

Elizabeth Leschinsky  
Monette Matthew  
Deborah Richards  
Dominique Turnbow  
Sarah Woolf

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The *WSS Newsletter* welcomes contributions from readers. Send articles, items of interest, and news to the editors, preferably in electronic format.

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**WSS Officers 2003/04:**

Sandy River, Chair  
Ruth Dickstein, Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect  
Kayo Denda, Secretary  
Cindy Ingold, Member-at-large  
Kelly Hovendick, Member-at-large

***Spread the word to colleagues, students and faculty — The Women's Studies Section website contains invaluable information for those building collections and teaching women's studies. Find instruction guides, core journals and books, videos, database comparisons and more...***

**Notes from the Chair**

I was certain that the memory of glorious San Diego would never fade, but now it's the windy season in Lubbock, and I'm turning my thoughts to Orlando. Never having been to Florida in the summer, I'm not among those who are less than enthusiastic about the trip. I hope that many of you will be able to join your WSS colleagues in June. We've had good attendance at recent General Membership meetings, but there's always room for more.

This spring the WSS officers and other members of the Executive Committee are revising the online "Orientation Guide for Committees and Officers." If you've ever thought about getting more involved in the Section but weren't sure what that might require of you, this guide will detail the responsibilities of committee members, chairs, and section officers. And to share a sentiment expressed in San Diego, ACRL has developed a number of mechanisms to help sections keep up with the ACRL and ALA calendars. That makes it much easier for us to stay on the good side of the folks who are keeping track of the many ACRL groups. Please take a look, and we invite you to sit in with committees during the All-Committee session on Sunday morning.

Looking ahead to Orlando, our program on Monday, June 28, (described elsewhere in this newsletter) will once again give us a chance to recognize the contributions of two women's studies librarians. The presentation of the awards will take place at 8:30 before the start of "Telling Our Stories Now: Women's Archives in the Digital Age." In San Diego we made up for the missed opportunity in Toronto and recognized Ruth Dickstein for her career achievements and Sherri Barnes for her significant achievement in creating the web site, *Black American Feminism: A Multidisciplinary Bibliography*. Thanks to the generosity of Greenwood and Routledge, we are able to present these awards each year. When the next call comes next fall, please don't be shy about nominating people who you believe deserve this recognition.

See you in Orlando!

-Sandy River  
sandy.river@ttu.edu

**<http://www.libr.org/wss>**



### WSS Awards Honor Exemplary Librarians

It is always a pleasure to be able to recognize the achievements of our colleagues and this year's Awards Committee was delighted to be able to choose recipients who serve as shining examples for all of us.

The Women's Studies Section Career Achievement in Women's Studies Librarianship sponsored by Greenwood Publishing Group will be presented to Phyllis Holman Weisbard, Women's Studies Librarian for the University of Wisconsin System. Phyllis' leadership in the area of women's studies resources in technology, particularly through the University of Wisconsin Women's Studies Librarian's Office web site and its accompanying resources, along with her recognized contributions to the discipline of women's studies, both in and outside of libraries, made her an obvious choice. For those of us who have worked with her in the Section, it is a chance to truly honor one of our foremothers and to say "thank you" for all she has contributed, not only to the section but to our profession.

The Women's Studies Section Significant Achievement in Women's Studies Librarianship sponsored by Routledge Press will be presented to Donna M. Roe, Senior Librarian/ Head of Cataloging/Database Management at University of Detroit Mercy. Donna Roe is an example for all women's studies librarians. She has brought women's studies into the forefront of her institution, creating a web site, advocating for budget funds for disciplinary resources, and supporting faculty in many ways. This is especially meaningful in light of the fact that she is not in a traditional public service position. Her accomplishments give us all encouragement as we seek to be advocates for those we serve in women's studies libraries.

The awards, both consisting of a \$1000.00 cash prize will be presented on June 28, 2004 at the beginning of the Women's Studies section program in Orlando. We hope that you can join us as we honor these two outstanding women!!

-Dolores Fidishun

*And speaking of stars....* Let's hear it for Cindy Ingold and Linda Krikos, editors of the soon to-be-published *Women's Studies: A Recommended Bibliography (Libraries Unlimited, Spring 2004)*. Way to go, ladies!

### Core Books Update

The WSS Core Books Database is now accessible at <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/ACRLWSS>. This is the culmination of a project of the Collection Development committee to convert the Core Lists into a bibliographic database that is searchable. A big thank you to the staff of the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections who developed the database structure and entered all of the data from the previous lists and to co-editors Cynthia Johnson and Carrie Kruse for all

### History of the Women's Studies Section

The WSS turned 21 years old at the Midwinter Meeting in San Diego, a milestone of sorts. For the older ones among us, 21 was a magic age, when we "achieved majority" as they said. So, we can drink, we can vote, and we can continue to make an impact on the profession, which is why we started in the first place.

The history of WSS comprises two periods: the Discussion Group period, 1983-1987, and the Section period, 1987 to date. At the 1983 ALA Midwinter conference in San Antonio, several women involved in other ALA women's groups (like the SRRT Feminist Task Force) decided that a forum was needed to discuss women's studies within the specific context of academic and research libraries. We also felt strongly that women's, even feminist, voices were sorely needed within the male-dominated ACRL. We garnered support among many colleagues and successfully petitioned the ACRL Board for the establishment of a Women's Studies Discussion Group (WSDG). An organizing meeting was held at the following Annual Conference in Los Angeles and by 1985, the Discussion Group had grown to nearly 200 members.

With the growth of the Discussion Group and the proliferation of projects members sought to undertake, it soon became apparent that section status would be beneficial especially in terms of improved visibility and access to resources to better advance women's studies collections, services and personnel in academic libraries. In 1986, we petitioned once again and with the 1987 membership year became a formal ACRL Section "to represent librarians and others who specialize or are otherwise professionally involved in the cross-disciplinary field of Women's Studies."

Our objectives at the time, which pretty much continue today, were:

- ◆ To discuss, promote, and support women's studies collections and services in academic and research libraries.
- ◆ To foster the development of bibliographic instruction, faculty liaison, and database searching in the cross-disciplinary field.
- ◆ To encourage cooperative collection de-

velopment and access to women's studies materials.

- ◆ To foster cooperation among women's studies librarians, scholars, students, and publishers.
- ◆ To work with other ALA groups to promote library and information service to women.

We have initiated, accomplished, and contributed to numerous projects including the RLG Conspectus for Women's Studies, the NCRW Thesaurus, the early "checklist" for building women's studies collections, numerous articles in professional journals, core lists of books and journals, database instruction guides, and, more recently, many web-based resources in support of women's studies in academic libraries.

Our conference program and discussion topics over the years have been exceptionally diverse and thought provoking, including Women's Popular Literature; Women in Third World Countries; Funding Strategies; Technology; Women's Studies and Ethnic Diversity; Refugees and Resources; Information Suppression in the Information Age; and many others.

Throughout our history we have tried to stay true to the spirit and culture of the initial discussion group: emphasizing a collegial/feminist atmosphere; encouraging wide participation among members, new and long-standing; providing multiple opportunities for information sharing and discussion; and mentoring librarians new to the profession or to women's studies as well as developing leadership among our members.

*-Joan Ariel*

**The Instruction Committee has created several database instruction guides to assist librarians in teaching students and faculty how to more effectively and efficiently use women's studies databases. Currently, there are nine instruction guides for databases where the content is primarily related to women, gender, sexuality, and/or feminist studies. The guides are in .PDF format so that you can easily print them as class handouts. The Database Instruction Guides are located on the WSS web page, under *Publications and Resources*. Consider linking to these guides from your local web pages.**

### Discussion Meeting Focuses on Serials Issues

Each year the discussion meeting held at Midwinter provides WSS members with a chance to share ideas and learn about topics which affect women's studies librarianship. This year's session was no exception with Ruth Dickstein leading a discussion on serials issues. She began the session by asking some overall questions:

1. How is your institution dealing with serials cuts?
2. Are faculty involved in cancellation decisions?
3. What strategies are you using to control costs?
4. Are women's studies journals particularly at risk?
5. Is there any way to evaluate aggregator packages?

In response to these questions, several themes emerged. As expected, many libraries are dealing with serials cuts and are having to decide whether to cancel journals. Most are trying to involve faculty as much as possible.

As libraries begin cancellation, issues such as on-line access and canceling print are examined. A concern remains though as to whether aggregators will keep their content intact. Some libraries are canceling titles in JSTOR and Project MUSE. In some systems they are canceling all but one copy of JSTOR and MUSE titles and archiving that one print copy.

Other strategies include asking librarians in other disciplines that may have more money in their purchasing budgets to purchase women's studies titles that are appropriate for their area. In addition, there are a number of collaborative collection developments projects considered including those within the University of California system and the CIC.

At least one library has been able to argue that serials funds need to be subsidized out of special funds received by the institution.

The largest discussion centered around how libraries are trying to find ways to get publishers to adjust prices on packages. As expected, the most frequently mentioned company was Elsevier.

Among the strategies discussed was contacting journal editors who work at your institution to ask them to advocate for better access from their publisher. Another idea was to think about whether we, as librarians, can encourage those publications that give better access by choosing those journals as venues for our publication efforts. *portal: Libraries and the Academy* was mentioned as an example because of their "library friendly" access policies.

Finally the group talked about ways that librarians, institutions and the Women's Studies Section can assist in this situation. First, was the notion that some of the larger units, for example, the CIC and University of California system should keep pushing vendors to be more responsive to libraries' situations. In addition, the following strategies were suggested as possible actions for WSS:

- ◆ Women's studies selectors can communicate about cancellations so that a core collection exists across the country
- ◆ Targeting the NWSA and other women's studies organizations to ask them to become advocates in this struggle
- ◆ Present a panel at NWSA that focuses on such issues as well as WSS projects
- ◆ Identify librarians who have access to women's studies journal editors so that we can lobby for reasonable access to their journals

Although, as expected, we found no magic answer to making journal prices more reasonable we were able to share information and develop some strategies that individual librarians and the Section can implement to help with the situation.

-Dolores Fidishun

## Women's Studies Section Committee Reports

### Instruction Committee

At the midwinter meeting in San Diego, the Committee discussed ways to publicize the Database Instruction Guides. The guides are currently linked off the WSS web site under "Publications & Resources". The Committee will write a "press release" describing the purpose and intent of the guides, which various Committee members will then forward to listservs. We also will investigate having the guides linked from the WSSLinks page, as well as sending the press release to various print publications, such as *Feminist Collections*. Finally, the Committee will contact vendors of the databases asking them to link to the guides for their product. The Committee is working on several new guides. Future possibilities for either a Midwinter discussion or an Annual program on information literacy and feminist pedagogy were discussed as well as writing brief reviews of articles on this topic that could appear in the newsletter. The Committee considered the issue of facilitating access to women's studies materials in collections of broader scope, such as government documents collections or archival resources, which often do not have adequate indexing or finding aids.

### Electronic Resources

The WSS Electronic Resources and Access Committee is analyzing the women's studies content in open access digital archives on the Internet that are not women's studies specific. Although the committee has not determined how the information will be disseminated - online, in an article, conference program, etc. - the objective is to give women's studies researchers an idea of what type of materials, concerning women, feminism and gender, are available in these archives. The committee has already begun reviewing archives, but is also soliciting recommendations for additional archives to examine. Please email Sherri Barnes ([barnes@library.ucsb.edu](mailto:barnes@library.ucsb.edu)) if you are aware of archives that we should evaluate for coverage of women's studies issues. Currently, criteria for inclusion in the project includes: free accessibility via the World Wide Web; the archive can't be a women's

studies specific resource; at least half of the content must be primary source material; and at least half of the content must be in English. The size of the archive isn't significant.

### Communications Committee

The Communications Committee began by discussing ways to improve communication within the WSS section. Suggestions included 1) posting room locations for meetings prior to conferences 2) encouraging new librarians to attend the discussion meeting, general membership meeting, and committee meetings 3) publicizing the homepage and its links to resources and information 4) and contacting new, dropped, or reinstated members just prior to ALA to encourage them to become more involved in WSS. Revision of the WSS brochure was discussed, and a new draft brochure will be produced for Annual in Orlando.

### Research Committee

The Research Committee is delighted to announce that we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel with regard to our project to create a research agenda for women's studies librarianship. To date, we have accumulated a bibliography of research already done, and each item in that bibliography has gone through readings by two committee members to determine the nature of the article and what its principal topic is. Committee members pulled out the research question of those articles. Our next step is to group these research questions by topic so as to get a well-defined glimpse of what research has already been done. These questions will then serve as a springboard to generate ideas for new areas of research or old questions that need revisited. Our goal is to produce an article outlining a research agenda for women's studies librarianship that will serve as a stimulus for all of us to get busy with that research!

**2005 Program Committee**

Plans were made to present the canceled 2003 program at the Chicago 2005 conference. The original title was "Getting the Word Out: Publishing in Library Science and Women's Studies?" but this may change for 2005. Two of the speakers originally slated for the 2003 program, Sandra Harding and Gloriana St. Clair, are being contacted to check their availability for the program. The same roundtable categories will be used. These including: Getting Started in Publishing; An Editor's Perspective on Publishing; Finding Opportunities to Publish or Collaborate; Revisions and Turndowns: Writing a Book; and Moving from Presentation to Article. Committee members volunteered for various tasks including assessment, a bibliography, publicity, and coordination of roundtables.

**Publications Committee**

The Committee discussed the Publications Manual and floated new ideas for publication projects. Everyone agreed that the manual needed both revising and publicity. Our sense was that most WSS members had never read the manual and were unaware of the reporting requirements outlined in the document. We decided it was time to redo the PIF (Publications Information Form) as a web document and to add an update section to the form. A PIF should be submitted to the chair of the Publications Committee when a committee begins work on a future WSS publication. For more information on what types of documents need to be submitted, please review the "Definitions and Types of WSS Publications and Documents" section of the manual. After discussion with the Executive Committee, it was decided to update the charge of the Publications Committee. One change will be the ability to create publications. Publications approved the suggestion to write a history of the section as one of its publications, and may take over publications currently done by the Communications committee, such as the WSS brochure and oversight of the Newsletter.

**Collection Development Committee**

The Collection Development and Bibliography Committee celebrated the database implementation for *Core Lists in Women's Studies*, nearing completion under the leadership of Carrie Kruse and Cynthia Johnson, and hosted by the University of Wisconsin. Renamed to the more descrip-

tive title *Core Books in Women's Studies*. The Committee recommends that the Core Books Project be maintained independently within WSS, analogous to WSS Links. The Committee also worked on further development of the WSS Collection Development Resources web site. An initial list of women's studies collection development policies available on the web was created and will be added to the site after Committee review. Beyond promotion within WSS, the Committee plans to explore ways to publicize the Collection Development Resources site among WS faculty to highlight contributions of librarians to the field and promote resources of potential use to faculty.

Looking toward possible future projects, the Committee discussed library organizational models for collection development and identified the following issues: reduced time and staffing; extra effort required for collecting in interdisciplinary fields; increased attention and essential firm ordering in women's studies; significant dangers of emphasis on "core materials," resulting in increasingly homogeneous collections; and how campus academic programs define women's studies -- e.g., women's studies, gender studies, feminist studies -- impacts collection development. The committee is exploring ways to address these issues through discussion in WSS and perhaps with an ARL Spec Kit, article, or section survey.

**Core Books**

16 of the contributors to the Women's Studies Core Books project (formerly called Core Lists) met at Midwinter to discuss the next step in the migration to the database created and maintained as a part of the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections. The steps for updating, deleting, and adding new records were reviewed. February 20th was the deadline for updating and adding new records. The 2004 Core Books database will be promoted as a pilot database to WSS-L and WMST-L, asking for feedback. Also, after the February 20th deadline, the editors, with help from the WSS Collection Development Committee, will double-check the titles input from the 2003 Core Lists to assure accuracy of information.

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**New Book Review**

The newly released *Indigenous Women's Health Book, Within the Sacred Circle* offers a comprehensive new vision of healthcare choices and information for all women. This benchmark publication weaves the body, family and environment into a holistic unit to describe and evaluate Native remedies as well as mainstream medication and treatments. The authors use a collective approach to address a range of cutting-edge women's health issues. Discussions of teen pregnancy, traditional midwifery, domestic violence, health effects of environmental contamination, reproduction, abortion and sterilization are accompanied with the social and political analysis that is vital to communities that have been historically marginalized. The authors also offer up-to-date information on the use of Mifeprex (non-surgical abortion, RU-486) in the United States. This book imparts complex medical information in an accessible style, enabling readers of all ages to use it as a tool to inform themselves of the complex and available options involved in all aspects of women's health. As a unique clearinghouse of Western and Indigenous wisdom, *Indigenous Women's Health Book, Within the Sacred Circle* combines both these vital elements to bring knowledge and power to women. This book is about real choices and real information. Many of the contributors are leading experts in the field of women's health with strong feminist perspectives and commitments to address all stages of our lives as equal and powerful. The Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center presents *Indigenous Women's Health Book, Within the Sacred Circle* as their way of encouraging Native women to take charge of their own health. It is a welcomed and traditional concept of the Native view of health and life for women of all ages.

-Katrina Cantrell, Shoshone  
Women's Health Specialists, formerly *Feminist Women's Health Center*  
To order: visit [www.nativeshop.org](http://www.nativeshop.org) or call (605) 487-7072

