

In this issue:

Organizing a Women's Studies Library	65
ACRL 1978 National Conference	68
News from the Field	69
People	77
Publications	79
Classified Advertising	81

COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES *news*

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Organizing a Women's Studies Library

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Since the first women's studies courses were taught in 1969, 152 programs have been established at colleges and universities throughout the country. Ninety of these programs grant degrees, including 3 that grant a doctorate.¹ A National Women's Studies Association was formed in January 1977 to promote the development of "non-sexist, non-racist, feminist education in both traditional and non-traditional areas of education."²

"The central idea of women's studies is sex bias and the status of women."³ Women's studies provides a multidisciplinary framework for exploring the lives and accomplishments of women while examining the assumptions of our society about the roles of men and women.⁴ Multidisciplinary means "the use of methods and information from the research of multiple disciplines. It might also mean designing curriculum from a new pattern rather than blending one or more traditional disciplines Women's Studies is not an objective science, but one of the objectives it may bring to the university is the rediscovery that nothing is."⁵ The feminist perspective provided by many of the women's studies programs ameliorates the male orientation of scholarship so long considered objective in our society.

Definitions of feminism abound. The Office of Women's Studies at The Ohio State University developed a definition of feminist perspective, which is used in this discussion: "This [feminist] approach to academic study challenges all think-

ing and action which have encouraged the differential allocation of material resources, occupations, power, other opportunities for advancement and affection solely on the basis of sex."⁶

APPROACHES EMPLOYED

The demands for support of the curricular and research needs of women's studies programs have been met in various ways by academic libraries. At the University of Kansas Libraries a staff member provides bibliographic assistance and serves a liaison function; the University of California, Santa Barbara, Library publishes a bibliography; the women's studies program at Indiana University has funded a resource guide prepared by a librarian in the Undergraduate Library; a system-wide women's studies bibliographer/coordinator for the University of Minnesota has now been advertised; and Northwestern University Library created a separate women's collection in the Special Collections Department.⁷

In addition to the well-known Sophia Smith Collection and the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, collections to support curricular and research needs have been provided by smaller archival collections, such as the Ida Rust McPherson Collection at Scripps College, Claremont, California; by private libraries, such as the Women's History Research Center in Berkeley, California; and even by publishing houses like the Feminist Press.⁸

THE EXPERIENCE AT OHIO STATE

The Ohio State University is in the process of establishing a women's studies library that has re-

sponsibility for the development of adequate library resources to support the women's studies curriculum, consultation on the development of programs for women students, and reference assistance and bibliographic instruction for women's studies students.

GETTING STARTED: PUBLICATION OF *Women Are Human*

In 1972 women on campus first asked for a separate library. At that time three feminist librarians began preparation of a bibliography of the libraries' holdings as an alternative. As the boxes of bibliography cards grew, we began to question the usefulness of one published list, out of date before it was available. What would be most useful, it seemed to the group, was an annotated list issued more frequently, with news of upcoming events, since no local women's newspaper existed at that time. With the assistance of a computer program for formatting the copy, *Women Are Human*, a weekly mimeographed annotated list of publications in the OSU Libraries by, for, and about women, with information about groups and meetings of local interest, was begun in May 1972.⁹ Most of the reviewers who write for *Women Are Human* are feminists, and the materials are reviewed from that perspective.

As a resource guide, *Women Are Human* is oriented toward the OSU community. It provides access to materials in a complex system of departmental libraries throughout the campus. A multidisciplinary program scatters courses in the university's many colleges. Each departmental library selects those women's studies titles that serve its own curricular needs.

BUILDING A COLLECTION

After publication of *Women Are Human* had begun, it became obvious that there was a need for sources of funding to expand the scope of the collection being reviewed. Several small donations from sororities and women's honorary societies were used by the Undergraduate Library to begin a women's studies collection. To provide adequate support for building a comprehensive collection, both a cohesive academic program and a separate budget for library support were required. That same year marked the beginning of a three-year effort to create a feminist program at Ohio State that would include a women's studies library.

CREATING A FEMINIST PROGRAM

On October 31, 1972, the author attended a workshop on women's studies at OSU, sponsored by the Division of Comparative Literature. Women's studies courses had been taught at Ohio State since the fall of 1970. These courses were developed and taught by graduate teaching associates and women faculty in many different departments; most of these women had never met

with each other before. During an afternoon session a call was issued to form a committee that would develop a proposal for a women's studies program to be funded by the university.

After two years of deliberations, a proposal for a center for women's studies was presented to the Council of Academic Affairs.¹⁰ Among the proposal's provisions were a multidisciplinary major, a library, various service components, and joint appointment of faculty. The Council of Academic Affairs felt the office and the librarian should work toward the development of the major before a center was established or faculty were appointed. The following spring a women's services unit as part of Student Services was established to provide the programs and counseling for women students included in the original proposal.

THE LIBRARIAN'S ROLE

While serving as co-convenor of this ad hoc committee on women's studies at OSU, the author developed a file of materials on women's studies courses and women's issues for the use of the committee and also served as an ad hoc women's studies reference librarian: during 1974-75 and 1975-76 coordinating the acquisitions of library material purchased with funds from the Office of Women's Studies' budget and also writing a selection policy based upon the direction in which curriculum development was proceeding.

Service on the original committee and on the interim governing board for the Office of Women's Studies facilitated an understanding of what materials were needed for collection development. Selection of appropriate materials was assisted by the increase in the number of re-

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viewers who assess the use of materials in a women's studies curriculum.¹¹

SUBJECT HEADINGS

Women Are Human is now published biweekly and is in its sixth volume. The first four volumes included bimonthly author-title indexes, which were helpful in locating reviews as long as one could remember either the author or the title. The inadequacy of standard subject heading lists—especially that of the Library of Congress—for women's studies materials has been documented.¹²

Rather than developing their own list, the editors of *Women Are Human* requested the list developed by HERSTORY Indexing Task Force of ALA/SRRT Task Force on Women. This list was prepared for the purpose of indexing a collection of newsletters, clippings, handbills, and leaflets; but it also served as a basis for developing a list to index a bibliography and announcement sheet.

ESTABLISHING THE LIBRARY

By 1976 there were four offices on campus concerned with women's issues (the Office of Women's Studies, the Women's Services unit of Student Services, Affirmative Action Office, and Women's Programs in the Division of Continuing Education). Each office had acquired a file of journals, newsletters, and pamphlets. Rather than moving these materials to a centralized women's studies library, which did not even exist at that time, it was decided to use the HERSTORY Indexing Task Force list of subject headings to reorganize all of these files.

There is now a master list of subjects included in each office so that referrals can now be made to the appropriate collection. Since all files are prepared by the same method using the same list, we are able to use each other's files and refer students to the office collecting the needed materials.

Until 1976, when an agreement was reached between the library administration and the Office of Women's Studies, collection development, coordination of resources, library instruction to women's studies classes, and the subject indexing of *Women Are Human* had all been carried on by ad hoc and volunteer workers. During the spring quarter of 1976, two librarians were given released time from their assigned duties for a total of sixteen hours per week to provide reference assistance in women's studies three afternoons a week.

A half-time women's studies librarian was appointed in October 1976 to develop the women's studies collection as a member of the Undergraduate Library staff until a separate library could be established. In addition to book selection, the women's studies librarian is involved in curriculum development as a member of the women's studies faculty, serves on the advisory

committee to the Office of Women's Studies, and concentrates her efforts on bibliographic instruction for the students in women's studies courses. For example, the introduction to women's studies course includes a two-hour class in the library and a term project that involves evaluation of a book and the critiques written by reviewers at the time of publication.

In August 1977 the Women's Studies Library moved to separate quarters in the main library building. What had begun as an ad hoc program supported by feminist librarians has become a viable library unit serving the Office of Women's Studies and its faculty and students. Eventually, as the program grows, offers graduate courses, and builds its research components, women's studies will require a departmental library with a full-time librarian and a larger staff. Then, the dream some of us have held since 1972 will be a reality.

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ACRL 1978 National Conference "New Horizons For Academic Libraries"

The Boston Public Library, just two short blocks from the Sheraton Hotel, will be the scene of a reception honoring the fortieth anniversary of ACRL and officially opening the ACRL National Conference in Boston on November 8-11, 1978. This library combines the pure elegance of an older building, erected in 1895 and now a National Historic Site and one of the fifty most important buildings in the history of American architecture, with that of a modern \$22.6-million new Central Library opened in 1972.

The reception is only one of several interludes that will add to this important conference that will focus on the future prospects for academic

and research librarianship in the U.S. There will be both invited and contributed papers, and the overwhelming response to the contributed paper sessions will assure that all major topics will be covered. Ample time will be provided for visiting exhibits as well as libraries and historical sites. Please reserve the dates November 8-11, 1978, now!

Registration information will be mailed later; for further information please contact Julie A. Carroll Virgo, executive secretary of ACRL, or George Parks, conference chair, at the University of Rhode Island. ■■



Boston Public Library, site of 1978 ACRL National Conference.