COORDINATOR’S MEMO

To: SRRT members

From: John Sheridan, Action Council Coordinator

While Action Council meetings are open (wide-open, some might say), the membership meeting is still an important forum for members and non-members to find out more about SRRT. This year’s membership meeting had the best attendance in several years. Some of the ideas offered included the scheduling of a task force fair, ways of making SRRT better known to students and new members of ALA, and the need for SRRT members to run for ALA Council. Resolutions dealing with the Alternative Press Collection at Temple University, the detaining of gay and lesbian publications by Her Majesty’s Custom and Excise department, and the support of children’s libraries in Nicaragua were passed. A complaint about the location of SRRT’s and other ALA units’ exhibit tables will be forwarded to the director of conference arrangements. A busy and productive meeting, as you can see.

Action Council members Joan Goddard, Jean Kocsis, and Dave Vespa, whose terms were expiring, were thanked for their contributions. New officers were elected; a complete roster of the Action Council will appear in the next newsletter. Action Council members were encouraged to read the Report of the Commission on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information, a.k.a. "The Lacy Report." The newsletter continues to be an effective means of communicating news among the members but there was some sentiment that it consider again including articles on issues of social responsibility. One supplemental budget request was approved with a reminder to all task forces that it is risky business to incur costs greater than budgeted, since SRRT rarely has a surplus. A resolution was passed to endorse in principle the Gay History/Lesbian History International Microfilming Project, which aims to preserve the periodicals, magazines, and newsletters of the gay community. Because of the homogenizing effect and tightly hierarchical approach of the Strategic Long-Range Planning (SLRP) process, SRRT will try to organize other units within ALA whose activities may be questioned because they don’t neatly fit. ALA must recognize the importance of special interests and voices crying in the wilderness. We will not be crucified on a cross of plain vanilla when there are committed members who like Rocky Road and jamoca almond fudge and strawberry yogurt!

Speaking of rocky road, elsewhere in the newsletter you will find a resolution concerning the Alternative Press Collection at Temple University and a response to it. This brings up a good question. How far should SRRT go in investigating a proposed resolution before acting on it? I believe that we acted correctly in this case. As a volunteer group which meets twice a year, Action Council must
decide whether the opinions offered and the confidence we have in those presenting them warrant action. I did not view this resolution as an ad hominem attack nor do I think it would be effective if we left it very vague. We are not objective reporters doing a story. We have a long tradition of supporting alternative presses and acting as their advocates. Yes, we take sides. Yes, we act based on what people we trust tell us. If an objective source thoroughly researches all sides and proves to us that information we acted on was wrong either by accident or design, we'll apologize. But in the meantime, we take stands and the slings and arrows that may come along.

As always, everyone on Action Council longs to hear from individual members. Tell us if you think we're going too fast or too slow or in the wrong or right direction.

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ALTERNATIVE PRESS COLLECTION AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY ENDANGERED

The SRRT Action Council voted on July 7 in Chicago to urge Temple University Library to restore full funding and support to one of the nation's preeminent collections of the alternative press. The Contemporary Culture Collection, one of the largest, most visible, and active of the special collections of women's, gay, third world, special, and small press publications, has been the site of major publishing, outreach, and bibliographical projects since its inception in the early 1970s. These projects have benefited the reading public, the publishing world, and the larger library community.

Recent decisions by the Temple University Library administration, including the elimination of the position of curator of the collection by "reassign-<ing> the position elsewhere," a position most recently held by two SRRT members, Pat Case and Elliott Shore, suggest a serious devaluation of the operation and a failure to recognize the worth of the collection to the larger national and international library community and its salutary impact on alternative publishing itself. The Action Council urged the new director of the Temple University Library, James Myers, to rethink his decision which appears to be short-sighted since it may be interpreted as a lack of political resolve and may have a destructive effect on both the Temple University community and the larger library world.

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RESPONSE FROM TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

On July 7, 1985, SRRT published a news release on the endangerment of the Contemporary Culture Collection at Temple University. Other than the fact that there was a search canceled and a position removed from the Special Collections Department at Temple, the document contains no facts. The collection is fully
staffed and will remain so. It is as fully funded as ever and will remain so.

What really concerns me about this release is that it comes from a part of my national organization. Where was the responsibility of SRRT? <It> failed to check the information with anyone in authority at Temple. <The release> attempts to damage the reputation of my university. It is full of innuendo about my administrative style, my intelligence and my political resolve. These are the weapons of bigots and totalitarians, not of those who defend human rights.

For all of these things, I believe that we deserve <SRRT's> apology. I also believe that <it> should reexamine <its> way of doing business, in order to avoid having SRRT used, as I believe it was in this case, by its own members to grind their own axes.

Temple and its libraries continue to devote an unusually high percentage of their efforts to socially important causes. I believe that we will always do so.

James Myers
Director of Libraries
Temple University

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DRAFT RESOLUTION ON ANTI-SEMITISM AND RACISM IN THE INTELLECTUAL ATMOSPHERE

This proposed resolution arose out of the McCalden case and out of the earlier problem of "The Speaker." It is offered as a working document to alert first SRRT and then the profession to the dangers of uneducated and uncritical thinking. It was prepared by Noel Peattie, member of SRRT Action Council.

WHEREAS, libraries are committed to the free dissemination of ideas, and WHEREAS, libraries are information centers, of which the validity and credibility depend on the accuracy of the information provided, and

WHEREAS, the recent appearance of "Holocaust revisionist history" together with genetic theories of dubious accuracy have lent credibility to doctrines of anti-semitism and racism, and WHEREAS, the appearance of such theories, and their uncritical adoption or promotion by intellectual workers, is frequently followed by their acceptance by the larger society, resulting in discrimination and oppression of Jews and other peoples of distinctive genetic heritage, now THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Social Responsibilities Roundtable emphatically opposes anti-semitism and racism, urges the American Library Association to write and publish a position paper, of a historical and theoretical nature, on how anti-semitism and racism corrupt a culture, and offers its own help in writing such a paper.

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ALTERNATIVES IN PRINT

Librarians and booksellers packed an ALA meeting room at Chicago's Americana Congress Hotel on 7 July for a discussion on how alternative publishers and bookstores are surviving and even flourishing, despite these repressive times.

Billed as a "hot topic" by Library Journal, the program began with a memorial tribute to Brad Chambers, who edited Interracial Books for Children Bulletin. "He simply did not spare himself: he worked around the clock" for civil rights, recalled Donnarae MacCann, who succeeded Brad as coordinator of SRRT's Civil Rights Task Force. "If he were here with us in the human sense, he would be talking about equality and well-being, and I hope we continue talking about that," she added.

Haki Madhubuti, editor and founder of Third World Press in Chicago, was the first panelist. Madhubuti, a poet
and English professor who also founded the Institute for Positive Education, said he preferred to define people culturally rather than racially. "Our whole approach is essentially to move toward developing the consciousness among black people where we understand from where we've come and at the same point begin to move toward shaping the future."

He criticized the negative influence of the mass media: "The popularity of misinformation is just phenomenal in this country, and people believe that stuff." A major reason, he argued, is that "we have not developed a serious critical consciousness, critical mindset. We don't question anymore. We don't teach our children to question. One of the things we push at the press and we push in our home is that homes have got to become mini learning institutions. We cannot depend on the state to teach our children." Madhubuti said his involvement "stems essentially from trying to get information, to develop consciousness of self-reliance, a consciousness of worth."

"We're trying to build and leave a legacy." *Black Books Bulletin*, which he edits, resumes publication in November as *Culture: a Black Holistic Journal*. He stressed the importance of librarians supporting what he called the "affirmative press that is there."

"For us, we are thriving," said Ellen Sawsislak, from New Society Publishers (Philadelphia), "the only press in the country that exclusively publishes books on non-violent social change." Three years old, it grew out of the Movement for a New Society. This year it will have published some forty titles and expects to do $300,000 in business. The press is collectively run (four members) by worker self-management.

Investigative reporter Chip Berlet, who edits *Public Eye*, an anti-repression journal based in Chicago, discussed how libel suits can threaten the very existence of an alternative publication. When such a publication gets hit with a libel suit, it can easily put the organization out of business within a few months. It costs a minimum of $5000 in legal work just to deal with answering a libel action. "You don't have to have any factual evidence to file a libel action," Berlet explained, adding that there's virtually no court in the land which will punish a fraudulent suit.

Daniel Tsang, Alternatives in Print Task Force co-coordinator, a librarian at the Free Library of Philadelphia, and editor of *Gay Insurgent*, spoke about the vulnerability of lesbian and gay bookstores. Gay's the Word, in London, has had all of its books that were imported from the U.S. seized by British Customs and Excise, which is charging the store with importing "obscene and indecent" literature. Apart from one article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, there has been no straight press coverage in the U.S.

Tsang also described how political differences within the lesbian and gay movements have caused Giovanni's Room, the Philadelphia bookstore that exported the books to Europe, to come under attack for carrying material on pedophilia. As a result, in addition to bomb threats, the store became the target of local, state, and federal investigation. Some feminist stores have also refused to carry lesbian-produced erotic magazines, such as *Bad Attitudes* and *On Our Backs*.

Lesbian and gay bookstores are important to librarians because they serve a function usually neglected by libraries--they provide not only publications, but also information and referral, Tsang stressed.

An update on task force business: Jim Williams, after some wonderful work as co-coordinator, has now passed the job on to Cathy Seitz, a librarian at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Jim continues to be active in the task force.
In three business meetings at ALA, some task force members appeared interested in resurrecting *Alternatives in Print*, either as a comprehensive volume or in a series by topic, while others argued in support of writing bibliographic essays covering a particular issue that could be published as pamphlets or journal articles.

What do you think? Let us hear your views. To volunteer to work on a future AIP in whatever format, write, specifying your area of interest, to: Daniel Tsang, co-coordinator, P.O. Box 29627, Philadelphia, PA 19144; telephone (215) 686-5363 (work). To volunteer to work on bibliographic essays, write to: Cathy Seitz, AIP co-coordinator, Social Science Dept., King Library, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056; phone (513) 529-4141 (work).

For Midwinter, again in Chicago, our tentative business meeting dates are Sunday, 19 January, 4:30-5:30; Monday, 20 January, 11:30-12:30; and Tuesday, 21 January, 2-4. Give us also your suggestions for the New York City 1986 conference program.

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NATIONAL SERVICE FOR ALL U.S. CITIZENS: A PERSONAL VIEW

Social responsibility has many forms: defending the rights of all persons, fighting censorship and the abridgement of liberties, voting in elections, working in community groups, etc. One of our obligations to society should be to give service to our country. In the past, service to the nation has usually meant being a member of the armed forces. But military service is an extremely limited view of national service. In addition to the philosophical objections of many to war and the draft, there is the practical consideration that only a portion of our youth can be accommodated in the military sector.

SRRT BUDGET

The following summary of the SRRT budget for 1985-1986 is presented for the information of the membership.

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Universal national service is a much broader concept. Such responsibility should apply to all persons, without exception, unless they are truly severely handicapped. The program should be flexible in administration, wide in scope, and meaningful in results. The activities should be of many types, including rebuilding inner cities, working in national parks, teaching the illiterate, assisting in poor rural areas, participating in cultural activities, serving in the Peace Corps, and serving in the armed forces. If all persons were required to give one or two years to their country, in one time segment or in several, between the ages, for example, of 16 to 30, both country and individual could greatly benefit.

For the country, at the local, state, and federal levels, there probably would be a significant improvement in human services, in economic infrastructure, in the quality of life overall, and in pride of community and country. For the individual, there would be a sense of

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accomplishment, the gaining of valuable experience, the expansion of horizons, the possibility of making new friends, and the avoidance of unemployment, at least for a while.

Universal national service has been used in other countries throughout the world. Perhaps it is time for our nation to consider such a program. This idea is totally consistent with the late President Kennedy's plea to ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country.

William Studwell
Northern Illinois University

BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Bleue Benton, Eisenhower Public Library District, Harwood Heights, III.

Despite constant media attention and a presidential obsession, books on Nicaragua have surfaced slowly. Nicaragua under Siege follows The Nicaraguan Reader as a collection of articles, speeches, and interviews that accurately reflects the current Nicaraguan situation. The latter should be a fundamental volume in any public or academic library and its mainstream sources will allow some people to use it more comfortably. Nicaragua under Siege, however, emphasizes the passion felt by so many Nicaraguans. This is a very forceful book and it details the widespread trauma created by Reagan's war on this struggling country. It documents this country's business and political interests in Central America, the manipulation of Honduras by the U.S., and concisely lists the atrocities committed by our government under the pretense of helping the contras.

This book offers both historical and current information on the Sandinistas and provides the background necessary to understand what is happening in Nicaragua and why. The most compelling sections, however, are those which display the strong emotions felt by Nicaraguans. I visited Nicaragua in March, and this intense emotion shocked me. It was unsettling to see people ready and willing to die for their country. Understanding this element is crucial to understanding Nicaragua and it became real to me when one man very calmly told me:

The United States can do to us what they did to Vietnam. They can bomb and bomb but they won't be able to destroy us. We are ready to fight—all of us—men, women, and children. In order to kill our revolution, they will have to kill each one of us. Because if even one child lives, he or she will carry on the revolution.

Nicaragua under Siege captures this passion. It does not use weak words. In fact, the rhetoric is quite strong and may turn off some readers, but don't pass it up. It provides information not found elsewhere and confronts touchy issues such as the conflict within the Catholic Church and the role of women in the new social structure. This book offers a comprehensive view of Nicaragua today and will be a valuable addition to your Latin American titles.

Reviews of other materials of interest to readers of this newsletter are welcome and should be sent to the editor.

GAY TASK FORCE

The Gay Task Force is revving up for lots of activity. During a meeting chaired by Dee Michel at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago, on July 9,
several working committees were set up. They deal with both internal and external issues, from indexing and microfilming lesbian and gay periodicals to reorganizing the Task Force to coordinate new projects.

Following the enthusiastic reception of an earlier program on indexing articles in the lesbian and gay press, the Task Force focused on access to lesbian and gay periodicals as an area where it could use its professional expertise. One committee was set up to pursue grant funding for collecting and microfilming our rapidly vanishing periodicals literature. A thesaurus committee will undertake to combine existing lists of indexing terms by creating an authoritative thesaurus of subject terms for lesbian and gay topics. Once key journals are found and filmed and a thesaurus constructed, it will then be possible to provide access to the hidden wealth of lesbian and gay history and culture in our periodicals through cooperative indexing.

Two other newly created committees will deal with getting lesbian and gay materials into libraries and updating the core list of lesbian and gay books appropriate for a medium-sized library.

The structure committee began to discuss changes in how the Task Force operates. Establishing a coordinating or steering committee for the Task Force, perhaps composed of representatives of the various standing committees, and having regular business meetings were two of its recommendations.

The social committee is planning a social event (perhaps a dance) early in the task force's calendar as part of next year's ALA Annual Conference in New York City, June 28-July 3. Marching as an official contingent in the NYC Gay Pride Parade is also being investigated.

Contact people are as follows:
Microfilming: Elizabeth O'Lexa, c/o Alternative Press Center, P.O. Box 33109, Baltimore, MD 21218; (301) 243-2471 (Wed-Sat 10-4)
Thesaurus: Joe Gregg, 55 W. Chestnut, #3008, Chicago, IL 60610; (312) 787-3450 (home)
Getting materials into libraries: Lee Ash, 66 Humiston Dr., Bethany, CT 06525; (203) 393-2723 (h)
Core list: Betsy Morris, Ref. Dept., New Haven Public Library, 133 Elm St., New Haven, CT 06510; (203) 787-8134 (work)
Structure: Lila Wisotzki, 3020 Barclay St., Baltimore, MD 21218; (301) 338-1047 (home)
Social: Robert Knight, 18 Gilchrest Rd., Congers, NY 10920; (914) 354-0200, ext. 3579 (w)
Future business meetings: Dee Michel, 70 North Stanworth Dr., Princeton, NJ 08540
Task Force in general: Barbara Gittings, P.O. Box 2383, Philadelphia, PA 19103; (215) 471-3322 (h)

GAY ARCHIVES

The International Association of Lesbian and Gay Archives was born July 5. Meeting in Toronto as part of the International Gay Association's annual conference and part of the Sex and the State International Conference on Lesbian and Gay History, over 30 representatives of lesbian and gay archives and libraries and other interested parties from Australia, Great Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, and the U.S. decided to share information on issues of common concern through a newsletter.

Among issues that will be explored in the newsletter and future meetings of the group are sharing lists of holdings, funding, disposition of private collections, preservation and microfilming, and classification schemes and subject terms. Responsibility for the newsletter will be rotated among member organizations. The first issue will consist of a directory of lesbian and gay archives and libraries, produced by the Canadian Gay
Archives of Toronto. Articles of relevance to collecting and organizing materials in lesbian and gay collections will begin with the second issue of the newsletter, to be produced by the San Francisco Bay Area Gay & Lesbian Historical Society.

To be listed in the directory, contact

Alan Miller, Canadian Gay Archives, Box 639, Station A, Toronto, Ont. M5W 1G2, Canada. Submissions of articles should be sent to SFBAGLHS, Box 2107, San Francisco, CA 94126.

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