FROM THE COORDINATOR

I saw a list of SRRT members the other day, was intrigued by our foreign membership, and thought it would be fun to include a short report on it in this column. So here is the breakdown for individual members: Bermuda 1, Canada 22, Hong Kong 2, Israel 1, Japan 1, and Saudi Arabia 1. We also have organizational members in Canada, South Africa, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.

There has been a lot of fallout from our actions in Miami Beach. There have been articles in American Libraries, LJ Hotline, and the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs on the David Williams affair and the former Task Force on Israeli Censorship and Palestinian Libraries. The first two were calm and factual; the last was a misinterpretation. Letters to the Editor from yours truly and Sandy Berman will hopefully set the matter straight. More vehement has been the response to the discussion of the Association for Library Service to Children and the Boy Scouts. The article in ALSC’s own journal misses the point completely, as does the notice in the VLA Newsletter (Virginia). The point is not really whether the Boy Scouts endorse or oppose homosexuality. The point is that ALA has established for itself certain guidelines and policies and that it and its constituent pieces must abide by these policies. ALA policy clearly prohibits the kind of relationship that currently exists between ALSC and the Boy Scouts. One of two actions must therefore be taken—either ALA rescinds its policy or the relationship between ALSC and the Boy Scouts is adjusted so as to conform with ALA policy. If that adjustment means a severance, then that is the way it must be. (ALA Council and the Executive Board have decided that the way to deal with the BSA question is to create a committee. The President’s Special Ad Hoc Committee on External Relationships has been established. Their final report is due at 1996 Annual. I have accepted an appointment to the Committee.)

I hope many of you took the time to respond to the Organizational Self Study using the form in the last newsletter. I had asked for you to send me a copy, so I could monitor the response. My mailbox has not been overflowing. I only hope that we can live with the results when we have not been active in shaping the process. I received one letter resigning from ALA because of the Self Study; the author sent copies to the appropriate ALA officers.
My annual plea for people to consider running for SRRT Action Council follows. It is time to change your words into actions and stand for election to the SRRT Action Council. There will be four vacancies on the Council this year. This means that we should have a slate of six or seven people. If you are interested, please let me know before the end of the Midwinter Meeting. One note to current and prospective Action Councillors—as I expect to spend 1996 writing my doctoral dissertation, I will not be standing for reelection as Coordinator in June. Besides, I think my happy home would be in jeopardy if I agreed to do this for a fourth year. So you all should think about this issue over the next several months.

See you all in Philadelphia!!!

--Stephen J. Stillwell, jr., Action Council Coordinator

Note: Action Council will be meeting at Midwinter on Saturday, Feb. 4, 9:30-11:00 am and Tuesday, Feb. 7, 9:30-11:00 am.

REID THIS ...

Hi, I’m nobody’s typo, but now that I’ve caught your eye, I’d like to introduce myself. I’m Carol Reid, your new newsletter editor, following excitedly in a very impressive (and quarter-century-old this year) tradition. As to my somewhat skittish transition, thanks are owed outgoing (in both ways) editor Tom Wilding for his help and encouragement, my assistant editor and friend Ian Duckor for technical and moral support, and my coworker Andy Mace for his WordPerfect and editing expertise. Plus the usual suspects, Sandy Berman and assorted SRRTers who supplied me with sundry submissions for this issue. (You may as well find out now—there’s no avoiding it—I’m avid for, or alive with, alliteration.) Speaking of words, I heard something on the radio the other morning that inadvertently spoke volumes about discourse and social values. “It’s alarming but true,” it began. “You are judged by the words that you use…” It was an ad for a program purporting to improve one’s verbal ability and chance for advancement. I found the locution ironic, however, and rather oddly disturbing, considering the use of the word ‘alarming’ in that context. For an outfit priding itself on precision of language, such syntax seemed more than slightly strange. It is not, after all, like the thing you’re being judged on here is your looks, or your money, or the color of your skin, not the content of your character. And, while it may be “darming” that some people lack linguistic skills, it’s hardly a bad or wrong thing to be evaluated on one’s ability to reason, to form opinions, and to express them clearly and consciously. So, with that said, I hope we all will continue to use this forum to sound (genuine) alarms, to question terminology, and to pass judgment and justice whenever called for. I await those calls (letters, news, reviews, essays, and email) with eagerness.

RSVP, SRRT ...

TASK FORCE AND AFFILIATE NEWS

ALTERNATIVES IN PRINT

Byron Anderson has finished compiling a revised and greatly enlarged (about 40 additional presses) second edition of Alternative Publishers of Books in North America, ISBN 0-9640119-1-3, which is again being funded by AIP. Publication is scheduled for January 1995 in time for ALA Midwinter. Free copies can be obtained in the exhibit hall there at the CRISES Alternate Press Exhibit, booth 647. Copies can also be ordered (enclose $2.00 for shipping) from CRISES Press, 1716 SW Williston Road, Gainesville, FL 32608.

SRRT Newsletter 2 December 1994
There will be a special AIP meeting at Midwinter on Saturday, 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. (just before the first SRRT Action Council meeting), to discuss plans for a new ALA/SRRT-sponsored review journal recommending alternative books, periodicals, and non-book materials for libraries. It may contain two other sections for resources and critical articles. To start and operate this complex undertaking will require many dedicated volunteers in all aspects of writing, editing, publishing, marketing, and business management. SRRT members who want to attend—all are welcome—can find the location in the program. If you can’t attend, but are interested in helping publish the journal, write Charles Willett at the CRISES Press address above or telephone him at (904) 335-2200 (home and office).

For a vendor study on acquiring alternative books, AIP needs a library able to contribute 40 hours of staff time. The test would involve sending identical orders on the same day for a list of monographs to ten or twenty U.S. suppliers and tabulating response time, discounts, and completeness. By prior agreement, publishers would reimburse the library after the books had been returned. Contact Charles Willett.

The Task Force on Alternatives in Print has proposed a program called Pushing the Boundaries: Zines in Libraries for ALA’s Chicago conference in 1995. Possible cosponsors include the Intellectual Freedom Round Table, ALCTS Serials Section.

What are zines and what is their significance for librarians? The New York Times, Chronicle of Higher Education, and Time Magazine have all run articles about zines—self-published magazines—in the past year or two, and increasingly they are available on newsstands, but librarians have been conspicuously silent on the topic. Not just another short-lived trend, zines have been around for years, and raise free speech issues (comic zine editor Mike Diana was prosecuted in Florida for publishing Boiled Angel), not to mention collection development concerns.

A panel of experts—including such individuals as Nancy Bonnell-Kangas (serials librarian at Columbus Metropolitan Library in Ohio/editor of Nancy’s Magazine), Jim Romenesko (journalist/editor of Obscure Publications), Stephen Perkins (scholar/curator of the Subspace International Zine Show), and Billie Aul (special collections librarian, Factsheet Five archives, New York State Library)—will describe zines’ history (and potential future), analyze their cultural significance, map their links to other genres and movements (e.g., comics, self-publishing in general, and so-called “networker culture”), and consider zines’ place in librarianship.

(Editors note: for more on fanzines, see articles by Chris Dodge and Billie Aul in this issue.)

ENVIRONMENT

The Task Force will meet twice during the ALA Midwinter Conference on Saturday and Sunday (the time and table number will be announced.) One of the main issues discussed during these meetings will be the resolution on the use of non-chlorine bleached paper by ALA.

The resolution needs strong support from notable preservation organizations or other groups within ALA. The General Membership Meeting at Midwinter requires the signature of two Counselors before presenting the resolution to ALA Council. During the annual meeting in Sun Valley, October 5-9, 1994, the resolution was fully supported by the Idaho Library Association.

The text of the resolution listed below is open to comments. If you have any recommendations, please contact Maria Anna Jankowska (General Editor, Electronic Green Journal), at the University of Idaho Library, Moscow, ID 83844-2373 mjanko@raven.csrv.uidaho.edu.
Feminist Task Force Midwinter meetings are scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 4, 2-4 pm, and Monday, Feb. 6, 9:30-11 am.

GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISEXUAL

This is a tentative schedule for GLBTF meetings at Midwinter. Consult the final Midwinter program for changes and room locations.

Friday, 2/3/95:
• GLBTF Program Planning Committee, 2-4 pm
• GLBTF Steering Committee, 8-10 pm

Saturday, 2/4/95:
• Book Awards Committee (closed meeting), 2-5:30
• Tour of Lesbian and Gay Library, 201 S. Camac St., 4-6 pm
• Social Hour at Woody’s Bar, 202 S. 13th St. (between Walnut & Locust), 6-8 pm

Sunday, 2/5/95:
• Book Award Committee (closed meeting), 9:30 am-12:30 pm
• Tour of AIDS Info Library, 32 N. 3rd St., 12-2 pm
• Read-Aloud, 4:30-5:30 pm
• Visit to Giovanni’s Room Bookstore, 345 S. 12th St., 6-7:30 pm

Monday, 2/6/95:
• GLBTF All Committees meeting, 9:30-11:00 am
• GLBTF Program Planning Committee, 2-4 pm

Tuesday, 2/7/95:
• GLBTF Steering Committee, 8-9:30 am
(program will say 8-11 am)
Everyone is welcome to our meetings, especially newcomers! We'll be celebrating our 25th anniversary during ALA’s Annual Conference in Chicago in 1995—and we need lots of volunteers and input to help plan for our preconference and gala dinner. For more information, please contact GLTTF Co-chair Wendy Thomas, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA 02138 phone (617) 495-8647; fax (617) 496-8340 email: wendy@harvarda.harvard.edu.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A subcommittee of the International Responsibility Task Force is organizing a book drive to send medical texts to a Palestinian medical center in Gaza. We need volunteers to help in the project. Please contact either Elaine Harger or Margo Brault for more information: Elaine Harger (eharger@sescva.esc.edu and notmmb@lsuvm.sncc.lsu.edu), Empire State College, School of Labor Studies Library, 225 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014, phone (212) 647-7833; Margo Brault (notmmb@lsuvm.sncc.lsu.edu), Middleton Reference Services, Middleton Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, phone (504) 388-8538.

The Progressive Librarians Guild has a new location, c/o Empire State College, School of Labor Studies Library, 225 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014.

PEACE INFORMATION EXCHANGE

The Task Force will meet twice at the ALA Midwinter Conference, Saturday, Feb. 4, 11:30-12:30 and Tuesday, Feb. 7, 8:00-9:00 am. At the Annual Conference in June, the topic for the program will be alternatives to militarism and violence in the schools. Ray Parrish, director of the Midwest Committee for Military Counseling, and Charlotte Anderson of Education for Global Involvement are tentatively scheduled to speak.

PIE is still seeking nominations and a new sponsor for the SIRS Peace Award. With the financial support of the Social Issues Resources Series, this award is given annually to a library (or librarian) that has significantly contributed to "the advancement of knowledge related to the issues of international peace and security." The award is given for a single project (bibliography, display, program, etc.) which is judged on quality, impact, timeliness, and amount of time since completion. Nominations should include an assessment of the nominee’s value along with at least one of the following: copy of a printed research piece; photographs, newspaper clippings, or other visual representation; additional relevant supporting documentation. Nominations are due by February 3, 1995, to: Beth Sibley, Government Information Service, 223 Main Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720 esibley@library.berkeley.edu.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ZINES

by Chris Dodge

Long slighted as “vanity press” in most quarters, self-publishing has proven its historic significance. But, while Thomas Paine (Common Sense), William Blake, Robert Burns, Lord Byron, Walt Whitman, Edward Fitzgerald (The Rubaiyat), James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, and Anais Nin all did it, administrators of the Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication program remain unconvinced. Likewise, comic books have been treated poorly by librarians, regarded as ephemeral fluff at best, seditious pornography at worst. It’s no wonder that one can find few self-published mini-comics in libraries—a double prejudice is at work. Long before the (relatively) mainstream press took notice, however, Lynda Barry, Matt Groening, the Hernandez Brothers (Love...
and Rockets), and Harvey Pekar were all self-publishing their work. What about zines, then: self-published magazines which may only last for an issue or two? Articles about zines have been appearing in daily papers around the country for the past few years. Typically, though, they refer to the genre as an outlet for ranters and ravers, wackos one wouldn’t want to meet in person. Librarians ought to take zines more seriously, both for immediate popular "consumption" and the benefit of future cultural historians. Just because freedom of the press belongs to those who have access to a photocopier doesn’t mean that all zines are equal. Their looks range from shoddy to stylish, and their content from unintelligible to trenchant. Don’t like one? Look at another, but don’t assume someone else will share your opinion. The OCLC database actually contains well over a thousand zines (under the subject heading FANZINES), most available at a single location. Often these cases represent someone’s special effort to collect materials produced locally—in their city, state, or region—without waiting for a review. The Minnesota Historical Society, University of Minnesota, and Minneapolis Public Library should follow this lead and procure, by any means possible, Womyn Who Masturbate, Profane Existence, The Blast, Baby Split Bowling News, Bundle of Sticks, Cake, Autonsexual Revolt, Another Pair of Shoes, and Robert Kirby’s comics, for starters. (Reprinted from MSRRT Newsletter, September 1994.)

ZINES HIT LIBRARY, STUN STAFF
by Billie Aul

In April 1992, the New York State Library acquired the archives of Factsheet Five, accumulated by its then editor, Mike Gunderloy. For those who don’t recognize the title, Factsheet Five is the review zine of zines. Besides Mike’s business records and correspondence, the collection includes 300 cubic feet of fanzines (approximately 10,000 titles), most of them reviewed by Mike and company in Factsheet Five. Most librarians know that alternative media, like zines, provide varied viewpoints, but acquiring a large collection of alternative material makes you aware of just how diverse those viewpoints can be. From PEZ collectors to white supremacists, anarchists to punk rockers, Queer Nation members to science fiction fans, the collection covers every conceivable point of view. We have already had researchers use the collection to investigate such diverse topics as the relationship of zines to underground culture formation, the influence of the Beats on current zine writers, and the use of historical images in the tax protest movement. We look forward to long-term uses for the collection. In particular, we think it will become an important resource for the study of popular reaction to the Gulf War. The collection represents not only points of view from innumerable political groups, left to right, it also contains a vast assortment of ideas from people writing personal zines (zines by single individuals, often reading like diary entries or letters) and by those editorializing in otherwise non-political zines. Not everyone can travel to Albany to use the Factsheet Five collection, but everyone can get a taste of the diversity of the zine world by either subscribing to the current Factsheet Five (Factsheet Five Subscriptions, PO Box 170099, San Francisco, CA 94117-0099) or reading Mike Gunderloy and Cari Janice’s The World of Zines: A Guide to the Independent Magazine Revolution (NY: Penguin Books, 1992). Mike and Cari’s book highlights the best of the zines they saw while working on Factsheet Five. It is not meant to be a directory of zines, though it does provide addresses for the zines covered. Instead, it tries to provide an overview of the types of zines available in the many categories Mike and Cari identified in their work with this phenomenon. I recommend that every library look into zines. Whether you want to collect zines produced locally or zines on a particular topic, there is something out there for you.
STATEMENT OF LIBRARIANS FROM THE UNITED STATES AND PUERTO RICO ON U.S.-CUBA RELATIONS

We librarians from the United States and Puerto Rico have just completed our productive participation in the 60th conference of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) in Havana, Cuba. We were hosted by hundreds of dedicated Cuban librarians from all types of libraries throughout the island. As a group, we feel compelled to give our colleagues and government representatives our observations. We urge a reevaluation of U.S. policy toward Cuba, leading toward normalization of relations.

We have seen firsthand the determination of our Cuban colleagues to advance their library services despite the hardships, shortages, and material limitations they are now experiencing. We have witnessed their determination to safeguard basic gains in education, including library services, in the context of developing aspects of a market economy. We have been deeply impressed by their commitment to common professional objectives and deeply moved by their generosity in hosting librarians from all over the world despite their problems.

It is clear that many of these problems could be alleviated by the end of the U.S. economic blockade against Cuba and the normalization of relations between our two countries. Diplomatic and economic ties between the U.S. and other nations (such as China and Vietnam), with which the U.S. has ideological differences, have been achieved. Why not do the same with Cuba? Normalization would allow the flow of food and medicine into Cuba through trade, reduce the hunger of Cuban people, and stem the tide of those Cubans who are trying to escape these economic hardships by taking to the sea in rafts.

But Cuba will not be the only beneficiary of such a course. U.S. businesses and the American people will benefit from trade, and the prestige of the U.S. in world affairs will be enhanced by its ability to abandon an outdated policy that is universally opposed in the international community.

We have been privileged among U.S. citizens to have had the opportunity to visit, research, and study library service in Cuba and to confer with colleagues from every continent gathered here. And, although we have done this within the guidelines of the U.S. Treasury Department, we have been deeply embarrassed by the senseless restrictions placed on travel here for U.S. citizens. We librarians struggle daily for intellectual freedom and the right to know. These are fundamental principles of our profession and our democratic system. The continuation of a policy which limits the right of U.S. citizens to travel is unworthy of a great nation and contradicts our country's ideals of personal and intellectual freedom and human rights.

In conclusion, we urge our government to seek negotiations with the government of Cuba, aimed at normalizing relations, ending the blockade, and reinstating unfettered travel and exchanges between the people of our two countries.

Signatories: Nancy D. Anderson (University of Illinois, Urbana), Mary Ashe (San Francisco, CA), Herbert Bibbo (Long Island Resource Council, Stony Brook, NY), Mary Bibbo (University of Chicago Library School), Stephen C. Bloom (Philadelphia, PA), Alex Binsa (University of Illinois, Chicago), Marjorie E. Binsa (Center for Research Libraries, Chicago), Ruth C. Carter (University of Georgia, Athens), Robert Colón (University of Puerto Rico, Arecibo), Miriam Castillo (Mortenson Center for International Library Programs, Urbana, IL), Astrid Céspedes (University of Puerto Rico, Arecibo), Jasia E. Cordero Quiñones (Library System, University of Puerto Rico), Donald Davis (GSLSU, University of Texas at Austin), Donna Dey (Salt Lake City, UT), Gloria Duenas (President, Library Co-op, Inc., Edison, NJ), Robert Doyle (Chicago, IL), Carlos Echavarria (Social Science Research Center, University of Puerto Rico), Charles Ely (California State University, Dominguez Hills), Carol Elliott (University of Arizona, Tucson), Monica Hirt (Ponce Valley, CA), Adriana. A. Pander (Queens Public Library, NY), Adele M. Patock (Toronto, Ontario), Shirley Fitzgibbon (Bloomingston, IN), Barbara J. Ford (Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond), Judith H. Hunt (University of Virginia, Richmond), Suzanne Haidaszewicz (SUNY at Buffalo, NY), Lisa Hoytke (University of Puerto Rico, Ponce), Al Kagan (University of Illinois, Urbana), Dorothy Karrney (Bradley University, Pilsen, IL), Ann Kelsey (SUNY College at Morris, NY), Martin Kesselman (Rutgers University), Estella Estes (New Brunswick, NJ), Clayton C. Kirkling (Phoenix, AZ), Leonard Knittel (Chicago, IL), Mike Koons (GSLSU Romey College, River Forest, IL), Victor A. Lehmman (Madison, WI), Olivia Madison (Iowa State University), Anna M. Leatherby (University of Alabama, SCITS, Tuscaloosa), Martha McPhail (San Diego State University, San Diego, CA), Suzanne Har Nicotra (Morgantown Library Co-op, SUNY, NY), Maria E. Ordorica (Library System, University of Puerto Rico), Lizette Ormsbee (Richmond, VA), Betty J. Owsley (Indianapolis, IN), Grace Patterson (Edgewood, NJ), Jose Manuel Perez (Mishler Edwards, Puerto Rico), Tom Perry (University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis), Simeon J. Pfister (Madison, WI), Magda Rivera (Library System, University of Puerto Rico, Howard Roettig (Gibson Island, MD), Sarah R. Rowland (Gibson Island, MD), Marjorie V. Rowland (Gibson Island, MD), Lilian Solis (University of Puerto Rico), Ann C. Sosnak (Englewood Public Library, Englewood, NJ), Delilah Snow (Syracuse, NY), Rosemary Stevenson (Urbana, IL), Christy Ann Strogo (Storrs County School District, Virginia City, NV), Edward Sullivan (Phoenix, AZ), Peggy Sullivan (Chicago, IL), Susan Swartwout (New Brunswick, NJ), Thomas Toller (University of Nevada at Occaso), Myra Torres (Allano Library System, University of Puerto Rico), Natalie Torres (Library System, University of Puerto Rico), Elisa Vazquez (Library System, University of Puerto Rico), Diane Webster (Potomac, MD), Rehmann Wedgeworth (University of Illinois, Urbana), Chung-Kyeu Wedgeworth (University of Illinois, Urbana), Gloria Westfall (Indiana University Library, Bloomington), Mohamed Zehory (Ohio State University, Lima Campus)

(Submitted by Al Kagan)

SRRT Newsletter 7 December 1994
OPEN HEARING ON ACCESS TO ELECTRONIC INFORMATION

On Monday, February 6, 1995, from 2:00 to 4:00, during the 1995 Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia, the Intellectual Freedom Committee will conduct an open hearing on access to electronic information. The IFC has been discussing issues and concerns brought to its attention by librarians, relating to minors’ access, privacy, and how libraries can integrate new services, such as access to the Internet, into traditional selection criteria, reconsideration procedures, and intellectual freedom policies. The Committee is interested in hearing from a broad cross-section of librarians from different library settings. It needs to garner a better understanding of current concerns on this subject and also to gather information to use as the basis for a new interpretation of the “Library Bill of Rights” on access to electronic information. Anyone interested in testifying in person may do so by securing a time slot from Judith Krug at the Office for Intellectual Freedom (800-545-2433 ext. 4223). Written testimony is also accepted.

(Editor’s note: one may also monitor and engage in such discussions by joining ALA’s OIF listserv. Email to: listserv@uicvm.uic.edu; message: sub alaoif <your name>)

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN ILLINOIS

The June 1994 issue of this newsletter reported on an anti-progressive (predominantly homophobic) proposal introduced at the Illinois Library Association’s annual meeting. It reflected the current backlash against the premise of social responsibilities in the library profession and argued that “ALA appears to have lost touch with member concerns regarding its primary role of addressing those issues which directly impact librarian-

ship and the provision of library services in our nation.” The reaction of ILA’s Social Responsibilities Forum is outlined in the article that follows from the ILA Reporter.

Social responsibility was at issue at the ILA Annual Membership Meeting. The ILA Officers sponsored a regressive resolution, but the membership tabled their proposal. It is heartening that our membership refused to put us on record against socially responsible action at the state and national levels.

Members of the Social Responsibilities Forum are aware that libraries are part of the social fabric of our communities, and therefore cannot divorce themselves from the issues of the day. Libraries do not exist in a vacuum. However, our critics charge us with draining scarce resources for non-library issues and being out of touch with members’ primary concerns. We reply that we must be engaged with the issues in our communities in order to provide relevant and appropriate service.

The definition of library service is at issue. If we do not uphold human rights, how can we have credibility in our communities? The only specific issue mentioned in the proposed resolution was gay rights. If we do not take a stand against discrimination towards gays and lesbians, will this community trust us to make balanced collection development decisions, and will gays and lesbians feel comfortable in our libraries? We must point out that our successful annual programs show support for library-related social issues. Over the past decade, the Forum has sponsored programs on homelessness, latchkey children, racism in the workplace, employment resources and services for blue-collar workers and underemployed people, labeling of controversial A/V materials, and cyberpunk subculture materials. All of these programs were well-attended; some were standing room only.

The debate over social and political issues and their relationship to our work is not new and will not go away. Let us not forget that other professional organi-
zations confront these issues just as we do. By definition, a democratic organization provides a forum for debate. Members must be free to bring up any issues that seem relevant. It is up to the membership to decide which issues are important and which ones are not. We are strongly opposed to resolutions that seek to close off debate. We should always remember our core value of promoting access to information, for ourselves as well as for the public.

(The Forum's next annual program will be on the theme of the role of socially responsible activity within a state library association, and the related issue of promoting democratic participation within ILA.)

Dear Friends of Sandy Berman,

For those of you who may not have heard, Sandy's wife Lorraine died suddenly and unexpectedly in mid-July from a brain aneurism.

Memorial donations may be sent to:

University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum
2675 Arboretum Drive
Box 39
Chanhassen, MN 55317
(Make check out to: Arboretum Foundation)

Raptor Center
University of Minnesota
1900 Fitch Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55108

Please note on checks: "Donation in memory of Lorraine Berman"

Heartfelt thanks for all your sympathy and support from Jill, Paul, and Sandy Berman.

4400 Morningside Rd.
Edina, MN 55416

Racism and discrimination within mainstream society are, unfortunately for many, still a vivid part of everyday life. Violence directed toward minorities, based on fear, hatred, and ignorance, is on the increase. But racism and discrimination are also evident within the gay/lesbian subculture. Much of the popular gay and lesbian writing being published today is primarily directed toward the white gay male population. Lesbian publishing has been a little more open to women of color as can be seen through the writings of Audre Lorde, Naomi Littlebear, haffie gossett, Rosario Morales, and Jewelle Gomez, to name just a few, although even the lesbian works being published today appear, to this reader, to be written primarily by white authors. With the exception of a few collections edited by people of color and a small offering of fiction, poetry, and drama, there appears to be a lack of support for those who do not fit within the status quo.
With that in mind, this reviewer was quite excited to come across such a powerfully written book, the first of its kind to offer a scholarly view of ethnic gay and lesbian writing in the United States, and one which defies ethnic and mainstream homophobia as well as heterosexual and gay/lesbian racism. Dr. Nelson has made some excellent choices in his selection of diverse voices and quality writings from Asian-American, Latino/Latina, Native American, and African-American gay and lesbian authors. These works challenge both the tokenization and marginalizing of gay men and lesbians of color in dominant academic thought. Some of the topics discussed in this work include post-colonialism and gay/lesbian identities, emerging Asian-American gay and lesbian writers, redefining the Harlem Renaissance from a gay perspective, and contemporary African-American gay male performance art. The writing here is brutally honest and the reader is made painfully aware of the bigotry and marginalization found within an already much maligned minority. Perhaps through the power of the written word, we will become more sensitive to the needs of our brothers and sisters within the community, whose voices have been ignored for far too long.

*Critical Essays* is the perfect book for an academic, public, or even that personal library, where all voices should be heard and acknowledged for their intrinsic value.

—Rob McCabe, Detroit, MI.


This novel is inhabited by many ghosts. The spirits of great Latin American literature run wild beneath Gioconda Belli’s style and technique—Allende, Garcia Marquez, even Borges have taught the author well—but, despite some rather magical events, the meat of the book is a fairly straightforward narrative of one woman’s involvement with the revolutionary underground in a fictional Latin American country (better known as Nicaragua). The heroine, Lavinia, is appalled by the values of her upper-class background in the face of the widespread economic hardship and political oppression she sees, but first she must deal with her own doubts and those of her revolutionary friends before she can throw off the sexist attitudes of society (revolutionary and conservative alike).

Her habitation takes place at the hands of an Indian spirit, a woman who has lived within an orange tree since the time of the Conquest when she was killed by the Spanish during an armed uprising. She too faced the obstacle of sexism when she tried to join the tribal warriors against the Spanish. When Lavinia drinks juice from the tree, she becomes infused with the power and determination of her predecessor. Anita Bryant never knew orange juice could be this good!

There are other ghosts here too, the brutal Somoza family not the least among them. Belli actually took part during the 1970s in the political struggle to overthrow the dictatorial patriarchy Nicaragua has lived under since 1935. *The Inhabited Woman* is a passionate depiction of opposition sentiment during that time. Two other specters that come to mind time and again while reading this book are Ollie North and Ronald Reagan. The personal narrative is, in political discourse, not always a reliable source of information, but in this case it provides the perfect antidote to the impersonal harshness of the Reagan-era propaganda about Nicaragua. It’s doubtful whether North or Reagan will ever read this book, but one can hope.

—Steven R. Harris, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.
I received two interesting video brochures that seem to complement each other, if perhaps a bit ironically, and go to prove that oppression and liberation reside less in social phenomena per se and more in terms of relativity, dichotomy, unequal power relations, and double standards. In one case, Candida Royalle is proud to present: "Erotic films for the woman who knows what she wants and the men who love her." Of higher quality that the average porn flick, her films have been deemed to have therapeutic value by the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists; the World Congress on Sexuality; and the American Psychiatric Association. Ms. Royalle is a member of Feminists for Free Expression and lectures widely on the sex and censorship circuit. As women continue to explore and create the art/commerce of sexual "objectification" from their own point of view, pornography will, I think, come to be seen as less and less objectionable and necessarily sexist. We may even be able to graciously grant the guys their own fantasies again as they shrink back to occupy half, rather than the entire, erotic landscape. And perhaps, as a result of this shifting ground, some of the images that have traditionally appealed to and come to define men will metamorphose as well.

In an effort to make that happen, the second brochure advertises "two important videos about men" presented by O.A.S.I.S. (Organized Against Sexism and Institutionalized Stereotypes). Stale Roles & Tight Buns serves up a fresh look at: cowboys and heroes; work, success, money, and power; men and emotions; military images; violence; isolation and competition; muscles and sexuality; romance and women; and fathering and other new images. It is "an excellent companion to Still Killing Us Softly, Jean Kilbourne's film about the exploitation of women in the media."

Men & Masculinity: Changing Roles, Changing Lives addresses topics like anti-pornography activism; challenging homophobia; counseling batterers to stop domestic violence; men's studies; women in the men's movement; and the National Organization for Men Against Sexism. (Not to be confused with the National Center for Men, period, which goes around blaming women for men's theoretically low social status and unequal rights!) Like the Royalle videos, these are being used for educational purposes, in schools, libraries, and therapy groups. "Oppressed," repressed, or merely depressed, if men want to come out of their stuffy old closets, I say let them. It kind of puts me in mind of a couple of zines I heard about. It seems that a while back the "womyn only magazine" Not Your Bitch, from St. Paul, Minnesota, gave rise to the Minneapolis-based Not Your Bastard: a tribute to Not Your Bitch—a zine for myn. "The reason we spell myn the way we do is to separate us from men."

Speaking of myn and MN, Hennepin County has done it again with a beautifully designed brochure heralding "Resourceful, Resplendent Females: Books for girls & boys to enjoy." This annotated bibliography was created by Tunie Munson-Benson, with the help of librarian Pamela Holt, and is illustrated by Debra Frasier, author of On the Day You Were Born. It spans the range from picture book to young adult literature, and includes a wide variety of ethnic and other forms of diversity. It also contains several "excellent resources" pertaining to girls' self-esteem, self-image, etc. and the fairly ubiquitous (everywhere but LC, that is) Hennepin-created subject headings, including "Assertiveness," "Cleverness," "Courage," and "Leadership in Girls"—not to mention "Softball for" and many more!

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