BOOK REVIEW

A HERSTORY OF WOMEN’S BOOK COLLECTIONS

By Rosemary Rasmussen

As we drove up the deserted New York side street to Tower Press, Maryann Turner, affectionately known to her friends as Buckwheat, was sitting atop a pile of boxes just off the freight elevator. The boxes were filled with her new book which she was absorbed in reading. We took a few snapshots for the record, and then eagerly began our part in distribution, the next step in the birth of this entirely woman-produced book. And how appropriate for a book entitled Biblioteca Femina, A Herstory of Book Collections concerning Women.

Along with most of women's herstory, the record of collections by, for, or about women has been buried or obscured, if the collections themselves survive at all. Biblioteca Femina is named after one such early collection, begun by Grace Thompson Seton for the 1933 International Conclave of Women Writers in Chicago, and now dispersed in the general collection of Northwestern University. The book discusses the growth and contents of this first biblioteca femina as well as many other collections, so that they will never be lost or forgotten. For example, even in circles of feminist librarians, it is not common shared herstory that in 1935 Rosika Schwimmer had a plan for "a world center for women's archives" to be started with the books filling her New York apartment. Although her dream was never realized, much good came from the effort and her personal collection is now at the New York Public Library. It is not unusual for women to turn their homes over to developing a library. In 1969 in Berkeley, the "Women's History Research Center Library," one of the more famous women's collections, was started by Laura X in her home, where it grew, filling an even faster growing need, until its original housing and finances were no longer

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problem patrons
by Gay Frances Boughourian

Too long have we fitted our expectations.
Too long have we been the passive librarian.
Too long have we allowed the vandal, the disturber, the fiend, the person, the guerrilla subverter, the brute, the brutal, the raucous, the delinquent, the gang, the disruptor, the disturbed, the wrecked-in-libraries and all those who use the library not for its libraries but as a weapon.

Too long have we chosen not to do anything, not to violate their rights as they have ours and our patrons and our staff.

Too long have we allowed their rights to surpass the majority of those good faith of those sane, or at least unsane, libraries.

Too long have we allowed their rights to surpass the minority of those libraries for their libraryness, not for their sock-washing sink-filled restrooms, but for their public buildings, for their such-much-stark-fitted restrooms, for their very antichristness.

Too long have we been non-committable for those who are our patrons, those who for some reason desire to make a donation, to take action, to make change, to care for those in need of change.

Too long have we mistaken a patron's right to free expression against the rights of those who use and then those who run the library. Now may we have our people because of this mistake.

But long have we done nothing.

And now we have problems.

Small wonder, but...

We were unprepared.

And we were never armed along the way.

And the idea of danger seems the use of the library for whatever reason has gone against the grain, not a part of our librarianship.

It was not a part of our lives, our creed of fair access, or the Library Bill of Rights.

By not doing anything about their behavior we are reinforcing them and they will continue to do our way.

We lose credibility with our other patrons, who can not call us unbiased.

Again we prove that to be in nothing in our world anymore, and nothing-thing-orientation has been restored because no one has done anything or we got on to change it. These who would do the impossible have been punished, too.

It's never-right, never-on-come back.

Does one find these souls in other public buildings such as museums? Why, because they are not allowed in. Are painting, are artistic, are actable and still more important than staff and patrons.

As we provide a haven, they will come under us.

As we do not make it uninvulnerable for them we are made for the staff and the patrons they will come, this is not our fault.

We are not a mission.

Our responsibility is to those who are really patrons.

We have collected them, gave them programs, forced them into our libraries. They are our responsibilities to contact them and compel to present the problem.

And the problem of a richer, better, more enjoyable life to fulfill our mission, the mission of our library, "to know, instructing and watching the lives of the City's people.

These are our charge, our people, our mission.

We have dissipated our energies, our time, the others.

We have allowed them to disrupt our energies, our enthusiasm, with their delirious assaults on us, with the horrendous of their acts.

We have shirked ourselves to live with the situation.

A policy of not tolerating library abusers should be precluded.

Specific guidelines should be set down so that the staff will know how to act upon the policy of the library which we do from time to time do.

A part of our training/education should be daily training/education the patron problem and when/if he might be coming and what help is available for them as well as us. (Type available)

What in the next otherwise?

What is the cost to last patrons? What is the cost to damaged property? What is the cost in spent energy and wasted time? What is the cost of leaving/retarding our rights as an unrelated place to work?

What is the cost?

Sourcebook

A special report on Appropriate Technology is available from the Ozark Institute, P. O. Box 560, Eureka Springs, Arkansas, 72632. "Enabling people to respond more fully to the growing need for small-scale technology" is the goal of proponents of the concept.

This special issue of Ozarks includes discussions of all aspects of the Issue, and useful bibliographies.

The second edition of the DIRECTORY of the BLACK CIRCLE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, more than two years in preparation, is an updated listing of black librarians throughout the United States and other parts of the world, divided into four sections - Alphabetical - Home Addresses, Alphabetical - Library Addresses, Classified - Type of Library, and Classified - Geographical Location - the DIRECTORY is an excellent tool for use in locating the black librarian.

To order your copy, mail $10.00 and your name and address to:

Richard Griffin
P. O. Box 11
Greenvale, NY 11548

Please make check (or money order) payable to the BLACK CAUCUS-ALA. Sorry, no orders can be accepted without payment.

"Sexual Harassment: A Hidden Issue" is a 7-page publication discussing the rights of persons facing seduction on the job or on campus, including a list of organizations to contact and a bibliography. Available from the Project on the Status and Education of Women, 1818 R Street, N.W., Washington D.C. 20009.

(Reprinted with permission from the COMMUNICATOR, the monthly newsletter of the Librarians' Guild of the Los Angeles Public Library. Available to all non-guild members at $1.00 per year, Box 715, Los Angeles, California, 90071.)
Among the plans are poetry readings, freebies for cooperating libraries, and personal visits from among the 1200 or more members of COSMIP, additionally, an important element will be coordination and cataloging of materials added to the OCLC system with some active processing through Temple University.

During the AAL/ARA annual meeting in Chicago, the final meeting of the project GAASP (Getting and Abetting Small Presses) met, under the auspices of the U.S.O.E. Library Research and Demonstration Program. The U.S.O.E. Project Officer for the project grant, 00078078, is Librarian Drennan. Principal Investigator for the grant is Mr. Elliott Shore (Temple University Library). The grant is being administered through Temple University, and Elliott Shore is also serving as Project Director. (Telephone: 215-767-8667).

The project is an outgrowth of work of the AAL/ARA Task Force on Alternatives in Print, est. 1969) and of COSMIP (Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers, est. 1968).

Promising support for the work has been offered by Professor Mimi Penchansky (Queens College Library, for the Task Force on Alternatives in Print), Assistant Professor Jackie Eubanks (Brooklyn College Library), and by Richard Norris, COSMIP Coordinator since its inception.

These plans will be implemented through project staff, through the Principal Investigator, or from among the highly qualified panel consulting to the project. The first meeting in Chicago in June 1978 included Sanford Baron (Hennepin County Library, MN), James F. W. Chisholm (University of Wisconsin), Judy Hogan, (Poet, and Editor of Shamal Books, Inc., NYC, and Coordinator of COSMIP), and Patricia Glass Schuman (President, Neal-Schuman Publishers, est. 1968), and of COSMIP (Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers, est. 1968).

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adequate. Today in New York, the Lesbian Her­
story Archives are housed in a room of Jean
Nestle’s apartment, where they also are grow­
ing with donations of time and materials, and
funding is being sought.

To this day, rare is the collection which
is well-housed or well-funded. As a rule, a few
personally interested women dedicate their own
life and money, materials, and even their homes.

Included in Biblioteca Femina, however, is a
detailed grant proposal for a regional women’s
library, hopefully pointing a way to financially
better times. For those wishing to do further
research, to visit existing collections, or to
build on the work already done, there is a list
of women’s collections by state. In fact, the
whole volume serves as inspiration and example.

In the introduction, the editors state
that “Afro-American contributions to libraries
are demeaned or ignored by many white pro­
fessionals.” (p. 67)

Considering that a film like the Speaker
could be produced by supposedly enlightened
professionals, it appears fairly clear that we
have not traveled far along the road to
racism/sexism awareness. Because white inan­
escity to subtle, institutional racism is
as potentially damaging as outright hostility
to people of color, a certain amount of self­
education would seem to be in order.

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Biblioteca Femina is a valuable research
tool, a welcome addition to women’s history in
general, and inspiring feminist reading, even
for non-librarians.

Herstory...

BIBLIOTECA FEMINA: A Herstory of Book Collections
Covering Women, by Maryann Turner, Illustrated
$5.00 from Celebrating Women Productions, Box 251,
Warrensburg, New York 12885.

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A Grant Proposal...

Abstract

This is a need for a Multicultural Women’s Library. The purpose for this
documentation has been outlined. The library can be funded on a
variety of levels through the contribution of time and materials of the
members. Women have been given the right to equally in education.
Through the program, education and life skills programming will be
offered. The purpose of this program is to educate the women in the
community in the various areas of the services that they are in need of
for their success. This will include educational, employment, and
vocational training. The program will also offer a variety of services
such as counseling, counseling, and employment training.

HANDBOOK OF BLACK LIBRARIANSHIP. Compiled and
edited by E.J. Josey and Ann Allen Shockley.
392 pp. Nominated for the 1978 Ralph R. Shaw
Award for outstanding contributions to library
literature, $17.50 from Libraries Unlimited,
Box 263, Littleton, Colorado 80160.

By Jim Dwyer

The Handbook of Black Librarianship is a
multifaceted work which is valuable either
as a text, as a source of professional reading,
or as a reference book. It contains biographical
essays, bibliographical essays, and direc­
tory information on many aspects of librar­
ianship and highlights the largely ignored
contributions made by Afro-Americans. A list
of the main sections reveals the broad scope:
pioneers and landmark episodes, early library
organizations, contemporary black librarians­
ship, vital issues, significant books and
periodicals for black collections, African
resources, and Afro-American resources. The
essay are supplemented by Lists of libraries
serving predominately black communities,
and black book publishers, among
others.

E.J. Josey and Ann Allen Shockley are
certainly not newcomers to the editorialial
field, and their experience and expertise
are evident throughout. Most of the ground
covered here is new, and the Handbook can be
seen as a companion volume to Josey’s The
Black Librarian in America and What Black
Librarians are Saying, and Shockley’s Living
Black American Authors. Like these earlier
works, the Handbook is a source of both ex­
ternal information and interesting, thought­
provoking reading. I had originally planned
to skim the book, but ended up reading it
cover to cover!

Why should this work be of interest to the
majority of librarians who are white or
who work in predominately white communities?
Considering that a film like the Speaker
was made by supposedly enlightened
professionals, it appears fairly clear that we
have not traveled far along the road to
racism/sexism awareness. Because white inan­
escity to subtle, institutional racism is
as potentially damaging as outright hostility
to people of color, a certain amount of self­
education would seem to be in order.

In the introduction, the editors state
that “Afro-American contributions to libraries
education, and learning in general are
feats of no small means when one considers the
discrimination with which their works and indeed
their accomplishments were often met.” (p. 28)

Considering that Josey wrote these words
shortly before the release of the Speaker, they
seem unnervingly prophetic. Are we doomed
to follow our liberal road to hell which is
lined with good intentions but pitted with igno­
rance, misunderstanding, and insensitivity?
My only regret regarding the Handbook is that
since it was not released a few years ago; a broader
understanding of the history, frustrations, and
aspirations of Afro-Americans might have helped
to prevent the debacle in Detroit. It is hoped
that subsequent editions will provide coverage
of the Speaker controversy—ideally after ALA
has admitted its mistake and removed its name
from the film.

This book does indeed “fill a void for a
variety of people” (p. 11) and has many uses: as
an acquisitions tool for the bibliographer, a
reference tool for the scholar, an educational
tool for the librarian and for students, and,
finally, as a counterbalance to the concept of
libraries as predominantly white, middle-class
institutions, and to the Office of Intellectual
Freedom as a consciousness-raising experience!
SHARE...  

SHARE - A Directory of Feminist Library Workers  
3rd edition, 1978. Compiled and edited by Carole Leita. $3.00 prepaid or $3.50 invoiced from Women Library Workers, Box 9032, Berkeley, California 94709.

By Susan Firestein

SHARE (Sisters Have Resources Everywhere) - A Directory of Feminist Library Workers: 3rd edition, compiled and indexed by Carole Leita, is a geographical listing of feminist library workers who are willing to share their personal and professional expertise helping people in the library world as well as feminists at large. The directory is a handy reference tool but not specifically a roster of feminine achievers or their achievements. Actually, all the entries have one basic characteristic in common - an indication of a state of mind and awareness, a receptivity and willingness to interact, to share talent, ideas, feelings, and frustrations concerning feminism and/or librarianship.

Each entry contains an individual's name and address, area of work, special skills, interests, memberships in professional associations, and other - which ranges from swimming pool invitations to Bavarian folklore. The entries are listed geographically by country or state and are comprehensively indexed by name, subject, organization, and publications.

The concept of the SHARE directory is an extremely useful one for any group organized around specific issues. The SHARE directory format has been used by the New Jersey chapter of Women Library Workers to produce their own SHARE directory on a state-wide level. Many other organizations inside and outside the library field could benefit from a personal skill/resource directory specific to their interests to establish an effective communication and idea-sharing network.

The directory is especially helpful for those people locating in a new area or seeking employment in a specific region, since important personal contacts and information sources not easily documented are readily available through the content and indexes of SHARE. Also, for any people physically or emotionally isolated from those with a similar interest in feminism or librarianship, the directory provides an enormous reservoir of otherwise underground information. The SHARE network for specialized skill and interest sharing fills a gap left open by most other library-oriented publications.

SHARE has been published biennially since 1975 by Women Library Workers, a national feminist organization, and will now be published annually. The directory is a natural offshoot of the organization, a group which seeks to explore the existing distribution of power in the library world and to provide a communication network and woman-affirming forum for all library-information workers. Anyone interested in being listed in the forthcoming issue will find an entry form in the current edition. The deadline for all entries for the 1979 issue will be May 1, 1979. The editors suggest sending information to them immediately and providing updated information if need be.

SHARE newsletter:

SRRT NEWSLETTER

May 1, 1979. The editors suggest sending information to them immediately and providing updated information if need be.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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There is a great need for information, not only of the existence of the program and its requirements, but also for the resources to help have a meaningful impact on the planning once citizens have found ways to open the door.

The new regulations require the following as minimums for citizen participation:

1. That the applicant shall provide citizens with an adequate opportunity to participate in an advisory role in planning, implementing, and assessing the program.

2. The applicant shall prepare a written citizen participation plan to make sure all the requirements set forth in the regulations are implemented. The plan shall go into effect no later than August 1, 1978.

3. There must be citizen participation at the community-wide level. In communities over 50,000 there must be a process of citizen participation at the neighborhood level where a significant amount of activity is planned.

4. Participation shall involve low and moderate income persons, members of minority groups, residents of areas where a significant amount of activity is proposed or ongoing, the elderly, the handicapped, the business community, and civic groups concerned about the program.

5. Citizens are required to be involved in development of the application.

6. The plan shall provide for a sufficient number of public hearings.

7. Citizens have the right to review all documents and make an assessment of the program.

These are the important regulatory tools that are available to the citizens. The local government has a responsibility to make sure that citizens understand these regulations, but a little outside help never hurts and is often needed. Once citizens have realized the goal of having a written citizen participation plan, then the important part of the process begins, making sure citizen views are actually involved.

Once involved in the political process, there is a much better chance that citizens will make sure the plan is carried out. This not only provides for necessary development but also accessibility of the local government. Without such an approach, the dollars will continue to flow from Washington to the cities rather than to the benefit of the people. The verdict is now being created.

For more information about specific programs and a list of organizations involved in the community development block grant program contact:

Andy Mott
Center for Community Change
1000 Wisconsin Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20007
202-223-4313
The federal response to "community development" is contained in many programs, enough to keep a research librarian busy for weeks, but the main effort to deal with urban decay is Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended (24 CFR Part 570 Community Development Block Grants). Replacing the Urban Renewal Program and Model Cities, The 1974 Act is firmly grounded in a philosophical and congressional recognition that people who suffer the problems are best able to understand them and must be incorporated into any process that will find solutions. Solutions cannot be imposed on high but citizens must see the possibility of change, have input into the needed change and then work for that change. The program may contain the most democratic ideal that has come out of Washington in a long time.

The 1974 Act also contains one other important corollary, which is that Washington cannot plan for the nation. It recognizes that there is not one program to deal with urban problems in every city. Rather, individual communities must spend funds in an integrated fashion to meet local needs and priorities. The program also calls upon funded municipalities to program affirmatively for fair housing. Dual systems which fix up white neighborhoods and code people in those neighborhoods are no longer permissible.

The law recognizes that local government units know better than Washington what is needed in a municipality. Implicit in this is the need for citizen participation in the development of a plan of action since it is the citizens not the politicians who live the problems and have become the experts on urban blight. Unfortunately what has occurred in many instances is that local government has shown that it is as out of touch with the community it services as congress. While citizens are good enough to vote candidates into office, somehow they are not responsible enough to be trusted with digging what their community are. Citizens are supposed to be involved in the preparation of the application for the community development block grants, however, before the new amendments, effective March 1, 1978 (Federal Register, Vol. 43, No. 43, Wednesday, March 7, 1978, p. 8490), few citizens were actively involved. Cities have used the money very often to bail out programs rather than to plan strategies to effectively alleviate urban blight and plan for community development.

When city planning departments or community development administrations sit down with citizens, they will in all likelihood bring forth plans and as the professionals they may indicate options they have rejected. The picture painted will not be blurred, but may not be presented in its true dimensions. Citizens will often not get from government the full panoply of options.

Program possibilities will not be discussed. The mentality that the "hired professional paid by tax dollars" knows best is a block that must be overcome. Citizens need support and need somewhere else to go for options. I believe that libraries can fulfill this function by holding seminars, providing materials, providing information on the requirements of the program, being a depository for all community development documents, providing a forum for discussion and debate as to the possibilities and potentials of the program.

The neighborhood is the basic building block of the city. When the fabric of a community is cut by extensive demolition, that special essence of a neighborhood is not easily recreated. The Community Development Block Program gives us the ability to look at a neighborhood with serious problems but that still identifies itself as an entity, and then have the citizens invest themselves in planning for the betterment of their environment.

Urban planners once considered the way to save the cities was to destroy them. The idea of creating a band aid approach is not old and building anew out of the rubble has given us the Urban Renewal Program and many empty weed covered spaces.

Community Development has over time been dictated by industry and government and often imposed upon communities. The northeast and midwest urban centers are living with the results of these planning efforts and many other communities are now involved in a process that will eventually take the same toll. One lesson well documented by urbanologists like Jane Jacobs and Richard Sennet is that without the possibilities and potentials of the program. Solutions cannot be imposed from on top. People who suffer the problems are best able to understand them and must be involved. Community Development has over time been dictated by industry and government and often imposed upon communities. The northeast and midwest urban centers are living with the results of these planning efforts and many other communities are now involved in a process that will eventually take the same toll. One lesson well documented by urbanologists like Jane Jacobs and Richard Sennet is that without the possibilities and potentials of the program. Solutions cannot be imposed from on top. People who suffer the problems are best able to understand them and must be involved.

The failure of the Urban Renewal approach led to a re-evaluation and a concern for preservation through rehabilitation programs. However, much of the early rehabilitation strategy was based on getting money into the economic mainstream which meant helping the construction and mortgage industry. The results have been similar to those of prior approaches. Decisions as to what could or would be preserved, where and for what reasons were still made outside of neighborhoods and without concern for neighborhoods. Such planning was further compounded by the government's insistence on categorical grants. Cities could not obtain from the federal government what was needed, but rather what the government was offering. Highway funds were made available which meant that even if water purification facilities were needed the community would apply for highway funds since that was all that was available.

We are now facing what could be called the third generation of federally provided community development programs. These programs are in response to the reality that our nation's urban centers are in serious trouble. With loss of population and jobs, the financial base of many cities has eroded and those with the least resources have been left to contend with some of the most serious problems by those who could get out. School financing, municipal services, and unemployment become major issues for most American cities.

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