

SRRT Newsletter

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of the American Library Association

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FROM THE COORDINATOR

Although most recent ALA Presidents have had ties to SRRT, it is the ALA Council that governs our professional association. The ALA Council has become dramatically more conservative over the past 5-10 years. The ALA Self-Study Plan in all its phases reflects this trend. Many provisions already enacted have decreased democratic participation and structure. While the association has been bogged down in these internal debates, libraries are struggling in a harsh budgetary environment. Our profession is being challenged to redefine itself in the face of great technological change. Trends point toward the corporatization of librarianship, often without even lip service to social responsibility.

SRRT has gathered a progressive, diverse slate for ALA Council. We urge you to vote for these petition candidates. Remember, bullet voting increases the chances that these people will win. The candidates are: **Ismail Abdullahi, Roland Barksdale-Hall, Kathleen Bethel, Ivan E. Calimano, Sylvia Curtis, Carolyn Garnes, Elaine Harger, Al Kagan, Mark Rosenzweig, Lorlene Roy, Stephen Stillwell, Wendy Thomas, and Tom Wilding.**

The ALA Diversity Summit, gathered by Betty Turock while still President-elect, has produced a list of minority candidates for ALA offices. One of the candidates for president and one for treasurer are minorities. After due consideration, the SRRT

Action Council chose to endorse another candidate for president. Action Council endorsed neither candidate for treasurer. The minority candidate for treasurer did not show up at the candidates' forum.

The following candidates for Council are minorities. Publication of this list does not imply SRRT endorsement. For the Action Council approved list of progressive, diverse Council candidates, see above. This list is for informational purposes only. The candidates are: H.H. Chung, J.J. Gallant, Y. Maki-no, E.J. Regner, B.L. Tsai, B.J. Wakashige, P.M. Wong, R.R. Ballard, S.F. Biddle, E.M. Black, M.M. Bowie, F.S. Brown, **Carolyn L. Garnes** (SRRT/CSK member), V.B. Moore, M.M. Mosley, G.L. Reese, F.E. Unaeze, J.L. Ayala, T.L. Clarke, R. Garza, L. Herrera, F. de Ortega y Gasca, R.S. Salazar, and J.A. Castiano. These candidates were nominated by the ALA Nominating Committee.

SRRT Action Council endorses **Barbara Ford** for ALA President. Barbara's stance on the Poor People's Policy and other issues of SRRT concern impressed the members of Action Council present at the Tuesday meeting in San Antonio. Barbara's first office in ALA was as a member of Action Council and she served as its coordinator. Barbara has worked in libraries in Illinois, Texas, and Virginia. She is currently director of libraries at Virginia Commonwealth University. While ACRL president,

she helped shepherd the anti-apartheid platform through that organization and through ALA as a whole.

We aim to make a difference. We may not be able to change the world, but we can at least try to influence our profession.

*** VOTE THE SRRT SLATE! ***

--Stephen Stillwell

TASK FORCE AND AFFILIATE NEWS

ALTERNATIVES IN PRINT



At Midwinter in San Antonio, the Alternatives in Print Task Force and the Alternative Press Center (publisher of the *Alternative Press Index*) shared a booth, displaying our own publications and many others. We are planning to share a double booth at the New York Conference and will be glad to display materials and pass out notices from other SRRT task forces.

For New York, we are planning two programs and an event. **Dan Tsang** of AIP and **Peggy D'Adamo** of APC will moderate a panel (members not yet announced), Monday, July 8, 9:30-11:00 am, to discuss "The Alternative Press on the Internet":

Are you looking for alternative viewpoints on the Internet? Attend this program, where speakers familiar with progressive, feminist, gay/lesbian, environmental, people of color, labor, and other alternative, online resources will offer their views on the potentials and pitfalls of cyberspace. The speakers will talk about where to find alternative materials, what resources and discussion groups are avail-

able, censorship issues, and possible future directions for the alternative press on the "information Superhighway."

A second panel, moderated by **Jim Danky** and **John Cherney**, will discuss "Watching the Right: What Librarians Need to Know." Panelists are **Chip Berlet**, Political Research Associates, Cambridge, MA; **Diana Duby**, People for the American Way, Washington, DC; **Mary Ann Mauney**, Center for Democratic Renewal, Atlanta, GA; and **Jeffrey A. Ross**, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, New York City:

Even before Family Friendly Libraries was created, the Right was interested in libraries. Four national experts from organizations that monitor the Right will describe their work and how librarians can use it to gain a better understanding of the politics of today.

There will also be an AIP business meeting. Times and locations of these happenings will appear in the next newsletter.

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Editor: Carol Reid
Assistant Editor: Ian Duckor
Book Review Editor: Steven Harris
Editorial Board: Carolynne Myall, Mark Rosenzweig, Theresa Tobin.

DEADLINE FOR JUNE 1996 ISSUE: 2 MAY 1996

Finally, with support from APC (**Chuck D'Adamo**, co-chair) and alternative publishers and booksellers in the New York area, AIP is again putting on an evening event, on Monday, July 8, 6-9 pm, at the Mechanics Library, called "Food for Thought: Free Speech Buffet".

Meet alternative publishers, writers, and booksellers. Sample alternative periodicals, books, and zines. Meet the staff and board of the Alternative Press Center and celebrate the new CD-ROM version of its *Alternative Press Index*, just published by the National Information Services Corporation. Meet the editors and reviewers of *Counterpoise*, SRRT's new review journal, due to debut in January 1997. Free food. Cash bar. Try some alternatives.

--Charles Willett

GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISEXUAL

Virtually all GLBTFFers who attended the Midwinter Meeting in San Antonio agreed that this was one of our most productive conferences ever! Many new faces appeared at our steering committee, all-committee, and program planning meetings. We welcome all new attendees and hope to continue to see you in the future.

As promised, we are determined to work on strategic planning this year. For more information, see the separate section in this newsletter.

REPORT FROM PROGRAM PLANNING COMMITTEE

Midwinter '96 in San Antonio brought a rush of fresh air into the program planning committee meetings! Welcome and thank you for all who attended and participated.

Developments for 1996 Annual Program

While the President's theme harkens to "Equity on the Information Highway," the members of the GLBTF and program cosponsoring groups (REFO-RMA and the ALA Black Caucus) want to reach underprivileged patrons too! The 1996 Annual Conference program, "What About the Side Streets?: Reaching underserved populations," will feature a compare/contrast panel that will speak to marketing outreach programs to various underserved library patron populations. Speakers will represent programs aimed at Spanish-speaking communities, black youth, and lesbian patrons. Audience concerns will be addressed in an open and anonymous manner. A poster session highlighting the program components will appear in the ALA exhibits area prior to the program, which is scheduled to follow the first annual GLBTF Book Award Breakfast (see below for more information).

Find the program near the Breakfast's meeting room, at 11:00 am-12:30 pm on Monday, July 8, 1996. Please come and participate in building bridges to underserved library patrons, and between ALA minority units.

General Announcement

Planning for the 1997 Annual Conference GLBTF program has begun! If you are interested in helping flesh out the debate regarding ALA's move away from supporting social issues, please contact Program Planning Committee chair:

Michael Miller
E-mail: miller@columbia.edu

The PPC wants to make this program a major conference event at Annual '97 in San Francisco.

GLBTF BOOK WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Jim Grimsley and **Urvashi Vaid** are the 1996 recipients of the American Library Association Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Book Awards. This year the award winners were announced for the first time at ALA Midwinter, following the committee members' vote on Sunday.

The awards, established in 1971 and sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Task Force of SRRT, are awarded annually to authors of books of exceptional merit examining the lesbian, gay, and/or bisexual experience and published during the prior calendar year.

Grimsley received the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Book Award for Literature for *Dream Boy*, published by Algonquin Books, a novel of adolescent gay love set in the rural South.

Vaid received the Nonfiction Award for *Virtual Equality*, published by Anchor Books, a study of the politics of the gay and lesbian liberation movement.

Finalists for the Literature Award were: Dorothy Allison for *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure*, published by Dutton; Francesca Lia Block for *Baby Be-Bop*, published by HarperCollins; Howard Cruse for *Stuck Rubber Baby*, published by Paradox Press; and Reynolds Price for *The Promise of Rest*, published by Scribner.

Nonfiction Award finalists were: Linnea Due for *Joining the Tribe*, published by Anchor Books; *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage*, edited by Claude J. Summers and published by H. Holt; Jonathan Ned Katz for *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, published by Dutton; and Minnie Bruce Pratt for *S/HE*, published by Firebrand Books.

The awards were selected from a list of 76 nominated titles drawn from a list of more than 800 fiction and nonfiction titles identified as having gay, lesbian, or bisexual content.

Save the date!

The awards will be presented on Monday, July 8, 1996 (8:00 am-10:00 am) at a gala breakfast commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Book Award, during the ALA Annual Conference in New York. If you are interested in helping us plan for this exciting event, please contact the Book Awards chair, **John DeSantis**, at (603) 646-3605, or janusz@dartmouth.edu.

FUNDRAISING KICKOFF FOR BOOK AWARDS

Expectations are running high in anticipation of announcement of corporate sponsorship of the GLBTF Book Awards. Such news would be presented at the GLBTF Book Awards 25th Anniversary Breakfast in New York City this July.

Securing a sponsor for the Book Awards is but one component of a larger fundraising effort by the GLBTF to support its activities and programs. Those interested in working on fundraising or who know of possible donors or sponsors should contact **Wayne Mullin** soon.

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NEWSLETTER

Please accept our apologies for the fact that we have not had a newsletter since June 1995; we will resume production of the *GLBTF Newsletter* this spring. Look for lots of news heading your way if you're a subscriber. If you would like to subscribe, the current subscription cost is \$5.00. Make your check payable to ALA/SRRT/GLBTF and mail it to: ALA, 50 East Huron, Chicago, IL 60611.

For more information, please contact the GLBTF co-chairs:

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HUNGER, HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

SRRT's Task Force on Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty held its inaugural business meeting in San Antonio during the ALA Midwinter gathering in late January. Founder-Coordinator **Sandy Berman** (Hennepin County Library, Minnesota) announced the Task Force's first program, tentatively scheduled for Saturday afternoon, July 6, at ALA's New York City Conference. Four panelists assembled by TF member **Karen Venturella** (St. John's University Library, Jamaica, NY) will explore library service to poor people, emphasizing both the theoretical issues of information poverty and practical ways to meet the needs of low-income populations. Among the handouts will be resource lists, sample anti-poverty publications, and ALA's "Policy on Library Services to Poor People." Titled "Poor People and Libraries: What's the Connection?," the program is cospon-

sored by the Progressive Librarians Guild and the Intellectual Freedom Round Table. Panelists will be **John Buschman** (Rider University), **Yolanda Bonitch** (New York Public Library), **Brian Kenney** (Brooklyn Public Library, Flatbush Branch), and an anti-poverty activist, perhaps someone "formerly or currently homeless."

At the suggestion of **Kim Edson** (Hennepin County Library), the TF's 1997 San Francisco program will address the issue of fees and fines as barriers to library use, and consider alternatives. Potential speakers include **Gordon Conable**, Michigan library director and intellectual freedom advocate; **James Chaffee**, editor of the San Francisco watchdog newsletter, *The Original*; and **Melissa Riley**, San Francisco Public Library librarian-activist.

In the course of the ALA San Antonio conclave, Berman asked each of the three ALA Presidential hopefuls if they would assign high priority to implementing the long-dormant ALA poor people's policy. All said they would. Among other things, "implementation" could involve finally publishing the whole policy in *American Libraries*, producing a policy-based leaflet replete with resource citations, encouraging ALA units to undertake poverty-related projects, urging the Library of Congress to finally establish subject headings for such topics as CLASSISM, HOMELESS FAMILIES, and WORKING POOR PEOPLE, and resuscitating OLOS' newsletter, *Empowerment*, as a vehicle for anti-poverty, pro-literacy activities.

Task Force members also discussed publication—either by ALA or a socially responsible press like McFarland—of a poverty-connected "cookbook," containing essays, bibliographies, and directories, perhaps modeled on McFarland's *Gay and Lesbian Library Service*. Such a volume might additionally contain "Libraries Change Lives" statements written by poor and homeless people. In fact, the Task Force invites such recollections and anecdotes now.

Send them, together with any other ideas or questions, to:

Sandy Berman
4400 Morningside Road
Edina, MN 55416
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sberman@hennepin.lib.mn.us

REPORT FROM THE LITERACY ASSEMBLY

The Literacy Assembly met during the Midwinter Meeting in San Antonio. Peggy Barber, who has taken on responsibility for fundraising in ALA, met with the Assembly to describe the efforts related to the Fund for America's Libraries. ALA has begun a process to identify major priorities for fundraising through the Fund, but it is unclear how literacy will be treated as a priority.

The members of the Assembly agreed to draft a resolution recommending that the Executive Committee treat literacy as one of the highest priorities for fundraising, in keeping with existing ALA policy. The representatives could then take that resolution back to their units and seek endorsement. The resolution was passed by the Assembly, and SRRT endorsed that resolution at the second session of Action Council Midwinter Meeting.

The Assembly was also briefed by Mattye Nelson on various literacy projects that are being carried out through the Office for Literacy and Outreach Services, including a multi-year project funded by the Viburnum Foundation, which focuses on family literacy, a National Science Foundation project focused on science and reading, and a partnership with "Sesame Street."

--Tom Wilding, SRRT Liaison to the Literacy Assembly

GEORGIA ON MY MIND

On February 19, 1996, the Georgia Senate passed a bill that restricts the access of minors to materials in public and school libraries that violate the state's "harmful to minors" statute... It has come to our attention that Senate Bill 630 *does not* carry criminal penalties [as originally reported] for librarians who provide materials deemed "harmful" to minors under this legislation.

However, the bill does restrict the access of minors to materials in public and school libraries that are deemed "harmful" under Georgia law. Accordingly, please contact members of the House Judiciary Committee and voice your strong opposition to this legislation.

--from a post to the ALAOIF list, by Donna Reidy Pistoris, Associate Director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom

(My birthday is 2/19 and I lived in Georgia for a little stint once, and recall Savannah's lovely public library... Coincidental musings aside, though, this story both troubles and puzzles me. How do you enforce a law when you have made the would-be perps (that's us) exempt? Threaten their jobs, impugn their reputations, take to constantly slapping their wrists, or what? And whose improbable job would it be to decide which materials to "restrict"? Equally appalling legislation is rearing its ugly head all over--teachers in New Hampshire are forbidden to speak of the love that once dared not speak its own name, and Tennessee proposes to fire those who persist in teaching evolution! I hope we are all standing up for free speech, what with the Communications Decency Act, and mounting censorship attempts and all, which concludes my editorial comment.)

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE GLBTF

Why it's a good idea

- We're twenty-five years old this year, and it's time that we took a good look at what we've done and what we want to do in the future.
- Our bylaws are now seven years old, and in dire need of revisions.
- We need a working mission statement, and then a firmer sense of our goals and our objectives to meet these goals. And we need all of the above to be considered in terms of having enough members to meet these goals and objectives. For example, many people urge us to take a more activist role within and outside of ALA. However, activism does not now have a formal place in the GLBTF. There is no committee that has the charge of writing letters to ALA when conferences are scheduled in cities like Cincinnati or states like Colorado. Without a formal place for activism in the GLBTF, this kind of work simply doesn't get done.
- Another reason why this is a good idea is that for far too long a small handful of people have been doing the lion's share of work in the GLBTF. In some cases, "committees" consist of one or two people. This leads to burnout, as you can imagine.
- The GLBTF needs a regular system of fundraising. Our parent organization, the Social Responsibilities Round Table, has given us until the year 2000 to make our book awards self-sustaining. This mandate is also an incentive for the Task Force to explore fundraising in general, and we must now determine how to do this. One of the first steps in this process will be determining our goals and objectives.
- Lastly, the exercise of clarifying who we are and what we do will undoubtedly help in terms of increasing communication among the GLBTF members. As some of you know, there have been more than a few instances in the last several months where we've been unclear as to who does what.

What we should do

- First, we need a mission statement (by Annual 1996).
- Second, we need to clarify our priorities, in light of the mission statement, and come up with goals and objectives to meet these goals (by Annual 1996).
- Third, we need to rewrite our bylaws and firm up our committee structure. This should also include explicit job descriptions for committee chairs, detailed charges for each committee, and specific membership goals for each committee (by Midwinter 1997).

We will actively involve all GLBTF members, and potential members, by soliciting your comments and ideas via the *GLBTF Newsletter*, the *SRRT Newsletter*, and GAY-LIBN. Discussions on strategic planning will occur at Midwinter and Annual Conferences in 1996/97. See below for more information.

How you can help with strategic planning

First, send us your comments and ideas about a mission statement! We do not really have one now, but this is the Purpose statement at the beginning of our bylaws:

The Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Task Force of the American Library Association's Social Responsibilities Round Table shall: promote the improved quality, quantity, and accessibility of library materials of particular interest or usefulness to lesbians and gay people; promote and defend unrestricted access of all library users to information by or about gay, lesbian & bisexual people; provide bibliographic services to librarians, archivists, other information professionals, and library users; work toward eliminating job discrimination against gay, lesbian & bisexual employees of libraries, archives, and information centers; advocate revising classification schemes, subject heading lists, indexes, etc. in order to remove terms derogatory to the lives, activities, and contributions to culture and society of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals; remind the membership and leadership of the Association as often as necessary that many librarians, archivists, other information specialists, and library users are lesbians, gay men, or bisexuals; support the minority groups working for adequate representation and equal opportunity within the Association; work with groups outside the Association interested in improving the legal rights of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals; provide opportunities for gay, lesbian & bisexual librarians, archivists, and other information specialists attending Association conferences to meet and socialize with one another; and promote the Association's *Library Bill of Rights* and its *Code of Ethics*.

Suggestions for a mission statement:

Second, we need to prioritize our activities. Also, are there things we are doing that we shouldn't be? Are there things we *aren't* doing, but *should*?

Below is a list of our current activities. Please rank these items and feel free to add new ones (rank the new items as well.)

- Each year, we give two book awards (one for literature, one for nonfiction) to the best books with gay, lesbian & bisexual themes.
- We present a program at ALA's annual conference. Recent topics have included the future of gay books for children, collection development, and mainstreaming gay publishing.
- We publish a quarterly newsletter.
- We maintain a Clearinghouse of gay, lesbian & bisexual-related bibliographies, directories, and reading lists.
- We hold Read-Alouds and social hours at ALA midwinter and annual conferences.
- We do publicity for our events, awards, and meetings.
- We attempt to fundraise on an as-needed basis.
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Please send your comments to:

Wendy Thomas

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LIAISON TO INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM ROUND TABLE

Sanford Berman has volunteered to take over the position of SRRT-IFRT liaison. Presuming he is still interested, this will be confirmed at the annual conference in New York. Our constitution calls for three-year terms with one possible renewal. Thanks, Sandy--and congratulations to both SRRT and IFRT for forging what I believe is a natural and powerful alliance. As coordinator of NYLA's IFRT (NYLA does not have a SRRT), I am continually struck by the relationship between the oppression of people and the suppression of speech. Since most, but by no means all, censorship attempts are generated by "family values" types, such a pooling of resources should result in fairly smooth sailing. On the other hand, there are enough instances where the quashing is on the part of liberals, objecting to conservative viewpoints, that this liaison will likely lead to some lively debates. I'm all for it. [Ed.]

MSRRT'S WEB SITE

The *MSRRT* (Minnesota Social Responsibilities Round Table) *Newsletter*, for over eight years a source of alternative reviews, commentary, and networking info for library workers, is now on the Web. Issued in print under the auspices of the Minnesota Library Association, the newsletter's scope includes alternative periodicals and zines, covering such topics as economic justice, ethnic concerns, queer culture, feminism, sexuality and body image, environmentalism, human rights, peace, arts, and labor. (That brief description doesn't do justice to this really excellent newsletter, which your editor highly recommends!)

MSRRT's URL is:
<http://www.cs.unca.edu/~davidson/msrrt/>

LABOR BEAT WEB PAGE

Labor Beat now has an Internet web page. If you also have a web page of social responsibilities, you may want to add a link to it. Labor Beat's URL is <http://www.cs.uchicago.edu/discussions/cpsr/lb>

Labor Beat is a Chicago-based organization that develops and distributes progressive television, radio, and Internet communications on labor and social issues. More than three hundred Labor Beat television programs and Labor Express radio programs have now been produced. New programs are produced at least twice a month.

Whether or not you have the resources to visit Labor Beat's web page, you can receive a list of videos by email. Send your request to: webmail@curia.ucc.ie, with the message: GO <http://www.cs.uchicago.edu/discussions/cpsr/lb/vids.txt>. Or email: Bob.Gallie@Syslink.MCS.Com. (Note: the webmail computer is often out of service.) A printed, illustrated version of the list is available from:

Labor Beat
37 S. Ashland Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60607
phone: (312) 226-3330
fax: (312) 561-0908
email: LDuncan@IGC.APC.Org

CALL FOR PAPERS

Joseph Slaughter, Bret Benjamin, and Bill Paredes-Holt, from the University of Texas at Austin, are in the process of launching a new, free electronic journal dealing broadly with the issues of human rights and technology.

*MONITORS: A Journal of Human
Rights and Technology*
<http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/~monitors/>

We are now accepting papers/projects/proposals for the inaugural edition of *Monitors: A Journal of Human Rights and Technology*. As far as we are aware, this journal is the first to encourage both activist and academic approaches to the broad concerns of human rights by focusing specifically on the impact of technological advances. *Monitors* is intended to fill a gap in contemporary human rights scholarship (understood as a mix of theory and practice) by using new information technologies to analyze the various forms of oppression/repression and human rights violations that have always accompanied the advancement of technology. *Monitors* will be a forum where the medium of the World Wide Web itself connects and enables the changing nature of information, documentation, activism, and human rights.

With this call for projects for the inaugural issue of *Monitors*, we encourage submissions that focus on technology as it pertains to the evolving discourses surrounding human rights. Because initially *Monitors* will be available only as a web publication, we look forward to receiving submissions that both utilize web technology and question the utility of that technology for scholars and activists. As such, we envision the scope of this journal to include, but not be limited to, these possible topics:

- prisons and political prisoners
- torture and disappearance
- cultural narratives of technology and human rights
- travel, tourism, and technology
- transnational/multinational corporate expansion
- developing markets
- labor rights and exploitation
- development projects
- transfer of technology
- enviro/eco-politics
- pollution and industrial/resource management
- medicine and health services
- genetic engineering and social engineering

- States and NGOs
- population control
- exploitation, representation, and appropriation of indigenous peoples
- privatization of human rights and resources
- military research and development
- communications technologies and control
- Internet as activist resource
- urgent action
- theoretical/philosophical treatments of technology and human rights

Please send submissions and inquiries before March 31, 1996, to:
Monitors@lists.cwrl.utexas.edu

or snailmail to:

Monitors
c/o Joseph Slaughter
PAR 108
Department of English
University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas 78712

Please email us before sending web projects so that we can arrange for the easiest method of submission.

MAN OH MAN!

(or, We are human, hear us roar...)

The "manforms" are reportedly leaving the library--the Library of Congress *Subject Headings*, that is. Sanford Berman, for twenty-odd years, had done everything humanly possible to get LC to be PC, to little avail. Recently, he was inspired to prevail upon his friend, Minnesota author Rosalie Maggio (*The Non-Sexist Word Finder*, *The Bias-Free Word Finder*) to write them a letter. To which they rather surprisingly responded that they intend to change 'man' to 'humans' sometime in 1996! Each credits the other one, but together they accomplished an awesome and overdue feat--about which Sandy says,

"When I see the new listings in the Library of Congress weekly subheading updates, then I'll believe it."

For more information on the short shrift and long haul of subject heading reform, see *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People*, along with Berman's other books and articles.



Steven R. Harris
Book Review Editor

THE WOMAN-CENTERED ECONOMY: IDEALS, REALITY, AND THE SPACE IN BETWEEN, edited by Loraine Edwalds and Midge Stocker. Chicago: Third Side Press, 1995. (ISBN 1879427060) \$15.95 pbk.

"The feminist movement may have been declared dead by the mainstream many years ago. But the women's community is still alive. And the woman-centered economy keeps breathing it new life." This quote from the book's introduction encapsulates its focus. Defining the woman-centered economy as the financial aspect of the feminist community, the editors have compiled over 30 essays that cover all

aspects of money and how it relates to feminism, lesbianism, and women's lives. As the subtitle suggests, the essays in this book cover a range of topics from the ideals and dreams that birthed the women's movement, festivals, bookstores, and presses, to the often harsh reality of keeping and maintaining businesses that cater to women's needs, and the encouraging inside glimpse into strong woman-centered institutions.

Ranging from the philosophical to the tongue-in-cheek, these essays cover the history of feminist publishing and bookstores, interviews with women's business owners, frank discussions of the history and reality of producing women's festivals, feminist fundraising phobia, and issues concerning the "sliding scale" at women's events. Classism and racism in women's communities and attitudes are discussed in powerful essays by Gloria I. Joseph and bell hooks. Minnie Bruce Pratt's essay on privilege and women's lives is equally thought-provoking.

These essays present a comprehensive picture of the economics of women's culture, including an essay on the unfortunately defunct feminist music journal, *Hotwire*; an explanation of the philosophy and daily existence of Aunt Lute Books; an interview with Joani Blank, founder of Good Vibrations, a retail and mail-order concern that sells products to enhance people's sex lives. Further essays describe unique feminist businesses; an account of a co-owned midwifery practice; an essay on the history of the "original womyn's woodstock," The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival; and personal essays by women who have committed themselves to feminism in their final choice of employment and the methods they use to survive and get fulfillment from their work.

Over two-thirds of the essays are written specifically for this title, while the rest are reprints from various sources including feminist journals and essay compilations. In addition to these prose essays, the work

includes a directory of grant givers and resources for feminist endeavors, an economic survey identifying survival needs of lesbian separatists, a detailed book review of Marilyn Waring's *If Women Counted* (Harper San Francisco, 1988), and a list of related resources for further reading. It concludes with brief biographies on the contributors and an index to the work.

The Woman-Centered Economy is a significant collection of essays from a wide variety of perspectives within the women's community. It offers a contrasting view to mainstream economics and highlights the struggles of feminists and lesbians living within it. I would recommend this book for all academic and larger public libraries, and any library collecting women's studies materials.

--Rachel Cassel Murphree, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

***DREAMS LIKE THUNDER*, by Diane Simmons. Brownsville, OR: Story Line Press, 1995. 189 p. (ISBN 1885266030) \$14.95 pbk.**

Winner of the 1993 Oregon Book Award for fiction, *Dreams of Thunder* is a story of the vitality of imagination that springs from the seemingly dull and isolated environment of rural eastern Oregon in the late 1950s. Simmons, who is undoubtedly drawing on her own childhood spent in this region, gives us the story of Alberta, a 10-year-old girl growing up on the family farm that she will inherit someday. On the farm she is able to observe the unhappy lives of her mother and paternal grandmother. Her mother, who was raised in genteel Southern society, has difficulty coping with the isolation of rural life and a domineering mother-in-law. Her grandmother's caustic personality is fed by an unwillingness to accept the truth about her pioneer father, Thomas

Pratt, whose legendary position as the valley's benefactor is called into question.

Caught between her mother's and grandmother's battles, Alberta is able to keep her sanity through her ability to retreat into her imagination. She conjures up the images of her infamous great-grandfather in both of his incarnations, as benefactor and land grabber, accepting both as interesting and exciting. Alberta also escapes into the lives of other families in the valley. For example, she enjoys a visit with the residents of the looked-down-upon trailer park, and keeps the secret of her neighbor as he fakes alcoholism. Alberta also has the ability to look outside of her environment, as she daydreams about the world of her cousin, Martha Lee, who lives in Japan.

Despite escapes into her imagination, Alberta also attempts to exercise control over her environment. She has gained recognition as the person who established the correct population of the valley, and she is consumed with a wish to build a scale model of the valley, where she can precisely place each person, home, and geographic feature. It is in these actions that it becomes clear that Alberta has successfully integrated her imaginary life with her fate of being eternally linked to the farm by inheritance. Her acceptance of this fate, and her coping mechanism of daydreams and social interaction, demonstrate a level of self-fulfillment that can only be envied by the rest of her family.

While the characters and setting are skillfully drawn, the plot of the novel is rather thin. It retains the tone of a series of short stories, from which the novel was obviously developed. Any weaknesses it may have as a novel do not diminish its strength as a hopeful appraisal of the creativity that exists in rural life.

--Arlene Weible, Willamette University, Salem, OR

THE DARK SIDE OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY, by Helen Ellerbe. San Rafael, CA: Morningstar Books, 1995. 221 p. 38 full-page historical illustrations. Bibliographical references and index (p. 189-219). (ISBN 0964487-349) \$12.95 pbk.

Before reading further, you should know that *The Dark Side of Christian History* was written by my daughter-in-law and was self-published by her husband, my son Andrew Willett. So family pride might obscure objectivity. But without this connection, you and I might never have encountered this fascinating, little known book.

Just as *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James W. Loewen (reviewed in *SRRT Newsletter*, June 1995) dispels the myths of American history invented for high school textbooks, so *The Dark Side of Christian History* lays bare in painstaking detail the hidden record of tragedies, sorrows, and injustices inflicted upon humanity by the Church. Alice Walker (*The Color Purple*), Barbara G. Walker (*The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*), and Sam Keen (*Fire in the Belly*) have recommended it highly.

Ellerbe decided to write the book after an acquaintance spoke of how Christianity had embodied the best in Western civilization and how it had brought peace and understanding to those it touched. Searching a bookstore for counterarguments, she was surprised to find almost no information about Christianity's dark past. At a time when many people feel alienated from the sacred, they may not realize that organized religion has a long history of curtailing and controlling spirituality. Ellerbe writes not to diminish the good that countless Christians have done nor to promote any other religion, but to expose the side of Christianity that has done so much damage.

The dark side of Christian history can help us understand the severing of our connection with the sacred. It can teach us of the most damaging slavery of all: the

control of people through dictating and containing their spirituality. This ignored side of history can illuminate the ideas and beliefs which foster the denigration of human rights, the intolerance of difference, and the desecration of the natural environment. Once recognized, we can prevent such beliefs from ever wreaking such destruction again. When we understand how we have come to be separated from the divine, we can begin to heal not only the scars, but the very alienation itself.

Writing in a lucid, accessible style, Ellerbe devotes a chapter to each stage of Christian history: establishing the early church; political accommodation with Rome; setting authoritarian doctrines; ruling the Dark Ages; repressing change in the Middle Ages; controlling the human spirit in the Inquisition and slavery; teaching entire populations during the Reformation that God is in heaven and that the physical world—once a divine, magical place—belongs to the Devil; vilifying women through 300 years of witch hunts; alienating people from natural life cycles and focusing instead on death; and providing the ideological foundation for mechanistic modern science and a society grounded in the belief in the necessity of struggle and domination. She concludes with a ringing affirmation of freedom:

Yet, with understanding and attention, we can stop such harmful patterns. We can recognize that efforts to convince us that God demands our fear and unquestioning submission are in fact efforts to control us and contain our spirituality. We can recognize that the belief in a singular supremacy lies at the root of chauvinism, racism, and totalitarianism. We can move towards a world that values diversity, freedom, and human dignity. And we can embrace the hope and pursue the dream that humanity can be free to act humanely.

—Charles Willett

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From a recent post to PLGnet-L; compiled by Martyn Lowe, London (with some corrections and additions by list subscribers); for further information, send an e-mail to: dehmLOW@bib.mh-hannover.de

NO-CONFLICTING VIEWS?

It has come to the attention of some of our members that programs and committee meetings apparently are being scheduled for the same time as membership meetings. This makes it harder for people to get to membership meetings, where, ironically, the quorum for passage of a vote has also been raised. Staff report that there is no policy stating that membership meetings have to be held during a "no-conflict" time; or, at least, they can not find such a policy. Patricia Glass Schuman has spoken to a number of people on the Executive Board and ALA staff. The matter supposedly will be taken up with the Administrative Committee of the Board, and likely hashed out at the Annual Conference. Calls to Council or Executive Board members or staff would be helpful. Any actions taken to ensure the preservation of a democratic structure within ALA are critical at this juncture. Thanks to Pat and Al Kagan for alerting us to this issue.

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