

GLBTF NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF THE GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL TRANSGENDERED ROUND TABLE
OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

From the Editor:

Dear fellow round table members there is much to report! As you will read in this issue, the round table and its members continue to make our 30th year an extraordinary one. There is much good news:

The conference activities this past summer in Chicago were well attended and enthusiastically praised. Please see the letters from our co-chairs and the overview of the Gay Teen Preconference in this issue.

Barrie Jean Borrich, winner of the nonfiction GLBTRT Book Award for Nonfiction has written an essay "Learning to Live by the Book," which appears in this issue.

Our own John Littlewood, Associate Professor of Library Administration at the University of Illinois, has endowed a Professorship in Gay Literature at that same university in honor of his late partner, Don Laube.

Library Personnel noted that "the professorship will establish what may be the first full-time position at a university library devoted to this interdisciplinary area... It compliments the Library's Lambda Literature Library Endowment Fund, established in 1993, which supports the collecting of gay literature." Littlewood stated in the article that "I wanted to make certain that my work in gay literature continues long after I'm gone."

The strides made this year by our members, in their professional and personal lives, and by the round table as a whole are significant. I believe that our gains mirror the accomplishments of other gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people across the national, and indeed international, landscape.

We now have about 300 members. We would like to double that number in 2001. Please ask other GLBT-supportive members of ALA to join our Round Table when they renew their Association membership.

Don't forget about our challenge grant! This person will match dollar for dollar up to \$2000 any donations made by roundtable members to the GLBTRT. This grant will end when we meet the goal or by December 1, 2000. Donations from organizations or businesses do not count as

part of this challenge grant. Checks can be sent to ALA, made out to the GLBTRT; NOTE IN LARGE LETTERS THAT THIS IS A DONATION TO THE RT! The address is noted inside.

Please note that this issue contains an insert from Haworth Press announcing the publication of a new journal, of specific interest to our Round Table members. The insert is provided for informational purposes and is not an endorsement. A review of this journal will be included in a future issue of the newsletter. Since the Round Table is now responsible to generate enough income to support its work, the RT is revisiting its policies at the next conference, but will place the emphasis upon remaining nonbiased in light of the book awards.

-M. Callaghan "Cal" Zunt
Newsletter Editor

Professorship in Gay Literature Endowed at University of Illinois

John M. Littlewood of the University of Illinois Library "retired" in June 2000 after 38 years as Government Documents Librarian, as Gay Literature Bibliographer, and as Associate Professor of Library Administration. In the 1990s he acquired the second official title with the responsibility of acquiring gay studies materials using a small state supported budget. After his technical "retirement" he moved physically into a different library office but will continue to oversee obtaining gay studies information for his research library.

Earlier a legacy was insured through an endowment to create the John Littlewood/Don Laube Professorship in Gay Literature. This professorship which will reside in the University Library both honors the memory of John's life partner and makes certain that the Illinois gay studies collection will continue and will grow in importance.

John M. Littlewood
Associate Professor of Library Administration
Gay Literature Bibliographer
100 Library
University of Illinois Library
1408 West Gregory Drive
Urbana, IL 61801

From the Co-Chairs

Roland Hansen, Male Co-Chair

The ALA Annual Conference in Chicago proved to be quite successful for the RT. The Anniversary Gala came off without a hitch, more or less. I am happy to announce the creation of what we hope will become an endowment fund, which will fund the Book Awards. The initial gift of \$10,000 comes from Stephen Stillwell and Tom Wilding. Additional pledges have also been made, so the seed money is now up to \$13,000 PLEDGED. Anyone else interested in pledging or donating should contact Satia Orange at the ALA OLOS Office for further instructions. This is a great start on our funding the awards on a permanent basis.

The Program and meetings were well attended with some new RT members getting involved. This is great news. We welcome all RT/ALA Members to participate.

The Pre-Conference on Gay Teens was a resounding success with great speakers, panelists, and authors. Attendance was around 125. The highlight for me was hearing Kevin Jennings, Executive Director of GLSEN give a very rousing opening address which got the day off on the right foot, and inspired everyone.

Faye Chadwell comes on board as Female Co-Chair. Robert Ridinger has agreed to chair the Elections Committee for the next year, filling out Steve Russo's term. Bob Jaquay is Breakfast Planning Committee Chair, and Michelle Hackwelder has taken on Program Planning as the committee Chair. I'm sure I'm forgetting someone, so apologies in advance. Thanks to all of you for your involvement and support. Thanks to Steve Russo for getting the Elections Committee going during the RT transition time, as well as all of his other involvements with the RT.

On a personal note, lots of love and thanks to Shari Clifton, Immediate Past Co-Chair for all your involvement with the RT, especially during the transition time. It's been great working with you (and Lettie), and I hope we can do it again sometime. And thanks and love to Lettie's other Mom, Carolyn, and of course, my other half, Bill, for all of your involvement as well.

But, there's still more to do. We're on a roll with presenting quality programs – we're getting a reputation – and we need to keep that energy going. We need you to get involved, as I've said so many times; we need your donations – if you can – to stay financially afloat.

Please don't hesitate to contact me, Faye, or any RT Steering Committee member, or the OLOS Office, if there is something you can contribute to the success of the GLBTRT. Hope to see you in Washington DC for ALA Midwinter.

Roland C. Hansen, Co-Chair
SAIC Flaxman Library
37 S. Wabash
Chicago IL 60603
312.899.5097 312.899.1851 fax
rhanse@artic.edu

Faye Chadwell, Female Co-Chair

I am delighted to serve as co-chair for the newest round table in ALA, and I look forward to working with Roland Hansen, my very talented co-chair. Perhaps like many of you, being involved with the members of this roundtable and witnessing their passion about our purpose as an organization are what drew me initially to ALA. Perhaps to no one's surprise, these same reasons are what will keep me coming to ALA.

As a young round table, we have much to accomplish: recruiting and retaining members, raising funds, effectively navigating the byways of ALA's infrastructure, promoting ourselves and our services, planning programs, and communicating the interests and issues of GLBT librarians and library users. It strikes me that the more things change, the more they stay the same. All that I said about what we as a young round table need to do applied to us as a long-standing task force. Despite this perceived lack of change in the nature of the challenges before us, I remain excited at our prospects—largely because of our past successes.

About GLBTF Newsletter

GLBTF Newsletter (ISSN 1045-2893) is an official publication of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Transgendered Round Table of the American Library Association. It appears quarterly in March, June, September, and December. Subscriptions are included in your membership fee to the round table via your annual membership fees to ALA.

American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

Letters to the editor, correspondence to the above address care of:

Newsletter Editor -

M. Callaghan "Cal" Zunt
or via email at: cal.zunt@cpl.org

Most recently, our annual gala in Chicago was a huge success. Our engaging program on youngadult titles for glbt youth was well-attended. Since annual, folks havebeen plying the listserve regularly with dozens of good ideas.I encourage all round table members to become involved and share their-thoughts and energy. We need you. Bring along a friend or a col-league.And don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns aboutthe round table.

Faye A. Chadwell
Head of Collection Development
1299 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-1299
541-346-1819 fax: 541-346-3485
email: chadwelf@oregon.uoregon.edu
<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/colldev/colldev.html>

Volunteer with Us

Volunteer with the GLBTRT!!!

Join us! We are always looking for energetic committee members. Interested candidates must be members of ALA. Please mail/email your nominations to the GLBT RT at the ALA address on the back of this newsletter, or attend our meetings during conference and see if you would like to volunteer. We look forward to working with you!

Treasure's Update

The Gala was a success with 176 places filled. Hopefully we will havemade some kind of a profit from this event. The preconference was alsowell attended and there is a possiblity we made see some money from thisevent as well. Things are staring to look good regarding our funds. Atthe Gala it was announced by Saita Orange that we have recieved a pledgeof \$10,000.00 to start an endowment for the book awards. Following thisannouncement Anne Symons and Roland Hansen both made additional pledg-esof \$1,000.00 each. So we now have a total of \$12,000.00 pledged towardthe book award endowment. We need a total of \$40,000.00 to start theendowment. It is know time for every roundtable memeber to startthinking about contacts, organizations , vendors, foundations etc who wecan approach for grants or donations. Any information should be sent toeither me or Gary Klein. Also if you wish to pledge money to the bookaward endowment please do so.The \$2,000.00 challenge grant is still in effect. We have untilDecember 1, 2000 to pick the pocket of a member of the roundtable whowill match dollar for dollar every-thing up to \$2,000.00. At last countwe only had \$425.00 in the account. I have made my donation what aboutyou. All donations should be sent by check to the following address:OLOS American Library Assocaition50 East Huron StreetChicago Il 60611Checks should be made out the GLB-TRT ALA. Make sure you specify it is a donation in your let-ter.It is important that every roundtable member become involved in theorganization. If you are interested in serving on the fund raisingcommittee let me know.Yours in black ink

NormanEriksen
Treasurer
n.eriksen@brooklynpubliclibrary.org

Book Award Committee

Read a great glbt book lately? If it was published in late 1999 or 2000 please consider nominating it for the GLBT Round Table's book award for 2001. The book award committee is accepting nominations for the year 2001 Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Book Award. The 2000 winners were Po Man's Child by Marci Blackman (Manic D Press) for literature and My Lesbian Husband: Landscapes of a Marriage by Barrie Jean-Borich (Graywolf Press) for non-fiction. A list of all winners and honorbooks can be found at http://calvin.usc.edu/~trimmer/ala_hp.html

The award, which consists of a commemorative plaque and a cash stipend, will be announced not later than February 2001 and presented to the winning authors at the summer 2001 American Library Association Annual Conference in San Francisco. Any individual not affiliated with the publisher or the author of the book being nominated may make nominations for the Book Award.

Authors may not nominate their own works. A short statement (30 to 50 words) describing why the book is being nominated should accompany the nomination, which must be submitted to Committee chairs by November 30, 2000. Nominations will be accepted by U.S. mail (postmarked by the deadline), electronic mail, or facsimile transmission (FAX). Nominations may be sent to the address/email below.

Committee Chair Anne Moore

Resource Access Librarian
W.E.B. Du Bois Library
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003
Email: amoores@library.umass.edu
Tel: 413-545-6888 Fax: 413-577-3114

Gay Teen Preconference a Success

On Friday July 7, at the start of the Annual ALA Conference in Chicago, GLBTRT co-hosted a pre-conference designed for librarians with interests in intellectual freedom issues that impact library services to gay teens and other young adults.

Being present at this "event", in a packed room at the Chicago City Centre Holiday Inn, proved significant for all of us attending, as we were not only given a wealth of insights into the issues that face us as librarians when confronted with the challenge of reaching GLBT youth, but were given the opportunity to reflect on our own personal roles in this arena.

Organized by a wonderful collaboration of individuals from GLBTRT, YALSA, AASL, and ALA/OLOS, and offered under the auspices of the Margaret A. Edwards Trust, the day offered up a variety of perspectives on the issues at hand. Each segment in the day was led by a distinguished leader/expert who presented his/her experience, thoughts, and suggestions. Needless to say, much of the credit for this event goes to ALA Past President and GLBTRT supporter Ann Symons. Her energy and commitment to the topic definitely set the tone and pace for the day.

The day began with Kevin Jennings, who is the Executive Director of GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network). We were given an overview of the dynamics at play in shaping individual and societal perceptions and realities regarding GLBT persons, starting at an early age. The message: Homophobia, both internal and external can best be dealt with by breaking the silence, and we were called upon to do so in a safe and inviting way.

Following this, we were treated to panel discussions on collection development and effective library practices regarding GLBT literature. Participants in all the discussions gave their first-hand accounts of how they "challenged" and/or worked with the "system" and increased awareness and acceptance in their respective disciplines. Bill Vratsidis, from Toronto Public Library, gave a wonderful testament to a library and librarian committed to being out there in its service to this population. Many thanks to Shari Clifton, Victor Shill and Anne Moore for their involvement with these panels.

Filled with lots of good ideas, we moved to lunch and to a great talk by author Chris Crutcher. Well known author of Ironman, Athletic Shorts, etc., Chris talked about the challenges of writing about "real" people and "real-life" circumstances, especially for the teen audience. Not one to be daunted by the threat of censorship, he showed how sticking to your principles can pay off.

The afternoon began with Don Romesburg, who is probably best known for his editing of Young, Gay & Proud, and other Gay/Lesbian resources. Don shared his growing-up gay in Alaska experience with us, and how his librarian (Ann Symons) helped to ease his troublesome journey.

Jordan Friedman, director of Columbia University's health education program which produces Go Ask Alice!, a health question and answer Internet site, offered first hand accounts into the controversy surrounding this web site, and the ways in which they have dealt with the challenges that have occurred. The bottom-line here was that open access to good information always has a place!

Judy Krug, Director of the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, and Ann Symons discussed the assistance offered by the Office, citing several instances where help was just a phone call away. They estimated that between 400-500 book challenges to GLBT literature happen yearly, from inside organizations as well as from the community at large. However, they are only alerted to one out of four. The message here was that we don't have to go it alone.

Lucy Jane Bledsoe, author of *Working Parts*, and winner of the 1998 ALA/GLBT Award for Literature, shared her personal story with us. Her commitment to her craft, as well as her championing of the need to reach GLBT teens, illustrated the need on our part to make these works available to teens. She also made a strong case for the need for more books. Perhaps there was a budding author out in the audience needing this push.

Linda Wallace gave us tips on dealing with the media, and once again stressed the importance of being prepared.

As the day came to a close, we were treated to a surprise guest. "Dr. Laura's" name had been offered up several times during the day, but who would have guessed that she would have deigned to pay us a visit? Well...almost....Bob Goedert, a recent high school graduate, and skilled debater and public speaker, gave such a good presentation that you'd have thought that the "queen of mean" was actually before us. Many kudos to this young man for not only lightening-up our day, but for underscoring the reason we were there for. As one of the panelists said, "Perhaps we should look at gay youth as a user group that is under served, instead of as victims!"

Of course I can't speak for everyone attending, but I believe that this pre-conference was indeed a hit, and hopefully the beginning of many more to come.

Bob Jaquay, Director, William K. Sanford Town Library, Colonie, New York

Book Reviews

Rayside, David. *On The Fringe: Gays and Lesbians in Politics*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-8014-8374-3

Part of a recent burst of publishing on gay politics in the social sciences, this highly detailed analytic work by a veteran Canadian activist and political scientist compares the political systems of Great Britain, Canada and the United States as case studies of the degree of effective involvement by homosexuals in public life since the 1960s. Rayside's objectives were equally to evaluate the gains made in party and legislative politics by gay persons and "the effect of direct engagement with institutionalized politics on the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered movement" (p.1).

The introductory essay on "Activist Influence and Political Context" sets a useful framework within which the individual country studies may be considered and is worth reading for its discussion of the factors involved in dissecting the intersection of social movements with mainstream institutions of power, including strategy, organizational approaches and the scope of colliding agendas. The writing style is a little dry and, while the attention to detail is necessary to make specific points, it makes for heavy going. Three prominent openly gay politicians whose candidacies and service broke new ground in their nation's respective political arenas agreed to be interviewed as part of this study, British Labour MP Chris Smith, Canada's New Democratic MP Svend Robinson, and Representative Barney Frank. Readers should review the articles on the United States, Canada and Britain in the 1999 volume *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics* and examine the biographical anthology on U.S. homosexual politicians, *Trailblazers*, prior to reading Rayside's volume. Useful for collections in large public, college and university libraries.

Robert Ridinger, Electronic Information Resources Management, Founders Library, Northern Illinois University

Reviews are a regular feature of the GLBTF Newsletter.

If you would like to be a reviewer or receive reviewing guidelines, please contact:

Barbara R. Stevens
GLBTRT Book Review Editor

Email: stevenbr@uwec.edu
715-836-2522 or Fax 715-836-2902

LEARNING TO LIVE BY THE BOOK
by Barrie Jean Borich

There was a girl who lived on my block when I was growing up who was as destined to become a cheerleader as I was destined edit the school literary magazine. One morning, on a chilly south side of Chicago bus stop, I told this girl I had just read a good book. "You think all books are good," she sputtered. It was a typical exchange between a popular girl and a smart girl. She meant to wound me, and did, and her future-cheerleader social superiority was upheld, for the moment. But even then I knew there was more in store for me than the ethos of that windy street corner. I knew because while she was perfecting her cartwheels I went to the library. I read books.

Like most writers I spent my childhood deluged in books. But unlike my nieces and nephews today (whose Barbie-doll and toy-truck-strewn bedrooms contain a good many children's stories and novels inscribed by their lesbian aunts) I didn't own many books when I was a kid. If we had been required to own books in order to read them I wouldn't have read very many. I was the first-born child of my generation on both sides of my extended working and lower middle class family, and had scads of aunts and uncles who loved me dearly. But they weren't readers, and would never have thought to give a book to a child. I depended on the library.

The particular box of brown brick and mortar I frequented was the Harvey Public Library in the near southeast suburbs of Chicago, across the street from the YMCA where I learned to swim. My parents were public school teachers and my family spent summers traveling in a truck camper. During the school year I checked out the maximum number of books allowed on my library card, but in the summer we had a special deal. I was able to check a stack of books as high as my head and was allowed to keep them for all of June, July, and August. By the time we returned to the city at the end of the summer my entire pile was fully digested.

It's not the plots that I remember from all those books. I read fast and too hungrily, and jumped from one book to the next without taking a breath.

Just a few details still glimmer on the periphery of my memory: the flounce of a hoop skirt at a summer lawn party; the view of a burning house from the vantage point of a garden; a girl in a pin stripe shirt who takes a trolley car to her downtown job. I recall more vividly the act of reading itself, the deep meditative dance with words that opened worlds far beyond my usual reach. I adored the way words lined up to form images, stories, and meaning. It's no surprise that I later became the sort of student who scored high verbal scores on standardized tests. Library books were my education, and set me on the path of becoming both a writer and a citizen of the world.

I see libraries as the containers of culture. Not long after my first book was published I looked for it in the Harold Washington Library in downtown Chicago. When I found it on the shelf, crisp and hardbound, I experienced a thrill that shook me to my shin bones. I had finally really accomplished something. I was a contender. There are those in our wide society who keep saying that lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders don't belong in culture. We hear these ignorant know-it-alls speak every time we tune in to a radio talk show on the subject of gay and lesbian marriage or GLBT civil rights or homophobia in the public schools. They say we are deviant, a burden, and have no part to play in civilized American life. My response is that heterosexuals don't own culture. We are as much a part of civilization as anyone. Our continued marginalization is not about our worthiness, but rather about who is authoring the definition of culture. We don't have to change or even assimilate to be a part of history. We have been here a long time and will always be here. The existence of our books in the library is part of what validates our presence.

I write for the usual writerly reasons, deeply connected to my early days of drowning in the printed page. I write because I love turning words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, paragraphs into books that sit on bookstore and library shelves. It is way to keep indulging in my earliest passion, which is that deep internal dance with language. But I also write to make a simple and unabashedly queer point, which is that WE ARE HERE TOO. When I told a friend of mine, another writer, that my book had won the American Library Association GLBT nonfiction award she said "That sounds like a durable prize."

Yes. What could be more durable than an award that leads to more librarians being exposed to my words, and therefore my books earning a spot on a few more library shelves.

I received a letter this past winter from a young woman living in Alsip Illinois, another of the gritty and art-deprived regions on the south side of Chicago near where I grew up. She had come across *My Lesbian Husband* in her community college library. My book is about how it feels to be the lesbian at the family wedding. I've written about the experience of a butch-femme couple such as my beloved and I as we stand on the sidelines of the family extravaganza, but also about who we are alone, among friends, and living in community. As a writer, I am perpetually fascinated by the question: who are my people? My letter writer described herself as a "soft-butch," who was preparing to move to Madison Wisconsin to live with a woman she referred to as her fiancé. She wrote: "I read your book because of the title but I got more than I expected. I have often wanted to leave this place of small lawns and small minds. Your words remind me to remember the music of my grandmother's voice.

"A letter like this worth as much as any award, but I would never have received it if some librarian hadn't ordered it for that community collegelibrary. This is why I feel so indebted to librarians and they work they do. Librarians were the custodians of my first and deepest education. They handed me the tools that taught me how to read, write, and comprehend. And librarians are the cultural arbitrators on the front lines of the struggle to decide when and how the work of GLBT writers will be accessible to the waves of readers, writers, and thinkers that follow.

I will continue to give my nieces and nephews books for Christmas and their birthdays (along with the occasional retro-red wagon and leopard-print Barbie dress). I know no better gift than a book for a mind and body still in the early stages of getting to know itself.

And there is a particular pleasure in owning a beautiful volume, a delight I want to share with the children in my life. But I can't buy them all the books. These kids do, and will, go to the library too. What they find there will have something to do with who they turn out to be.

Barrie Jean Borich is the author of *My Lesbian Husband: Landscapes of a Marriage*, published by Graywolf Press.

She was the 1999 recipient of the GLBTRT Book Award for Nonfiction. The author's website is:

www.barriejeanborich.net.

Graphic Designer Needed for GLBTRT Poster

The Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgendered Round Table of ALA needs your help! Here is your chance to use your talents to help your fellow GLBT librarians, and it doesn't require leaving the comfort of your home, traveling to ALA, and attending multiple meetings!! The Book Awards Committee of the GLBTRT is looking for graphic artists to submit ideas for a poster celebrating the 30th anniversary of the ALA-GLBT book award.

The idea is to have something similar to a Caldecott/Newbery awards poster, but emphasizing GLBT-RT book award winners, finalists, etc. The poster should be colorful, clear, and concise. The design should be original, rather than a poster showing book covers of all award winners. Preferably, the design and content should not become quickly outdated. ALA would be responsible for poster production, and the poster would be marketed through ALA Graphics and the ALA store.

Deadline for submissions: November 30, 2000 If you are interested in donating your time and talents to this worthy cause, please contact Ellen Bosman at: ebosman@iunhaw1.iun.indiana.edu.

Ellen Bosman, M.L.S.
Technical Services Librarian
Indiana University
Northwest Library
3400 Broadway
Gary, IN 46408
Ph: 219-980-6947 : Fax: 219-980-6558
<http://www.lib.iun.indiana.edu/ebosman.htm>

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION:

This newsletter is now included in your membership fee to the GLBTRT via your regular ALA membership registration. Just be sure to join the GLBTRT when you renew your membership or initially join.

Subscription questions should be forwarded to the newsletter editor at cal.zunt@cpl.org. Thank you for your support.

GLBTRT Newsletter

M.C. Zunt, Editor

c/o GLBTRT

ALA / OLOS

50 East Huron St.

Chicago IL 60611

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