

LITWOMEN.ORG

Presents

Women in Print - Central Source Networking

A comprehensive website for women-owned, women-centered publishers & booksellers
Women / lesbian / feminist -- books, magazines, journals, alternative media

Audience Promotion

Feminist Bookstores, Independent Booksellers,
Women's Studies Departments, Librarians, etc.

Website: www.litwomen.org/WIP

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History of Women in Print

The Women in Print Movement emerged to pursue justice and equality for women by putting women's writings into print. This contemporary Women in Print movement developed in the late 1960s and was focused by lesbian and feminist print activism. As Carol Seajay (1992) has noted about print and the women's liberation movement:

In the late 1960s, little of what we needed to know was available in any written form. When we did get coverage in mainstream publications, our ideas were distorted and trivialized, and it became increasingly clear that if we wanted feminist ideas in print we would have to do it ourselves. Freedom of the press, we learned in the early 1970s, belonged to those who owned printing presses....we established our own typesetting shops, binderies, wholesale distributors, and bookstores to put literature into women's hands....The development of the women-in-print movement was a part of that drive for women's independence. – *Carol Seajay, 1992, 20 years of feminist bookstores. In MS., July/August 1992, pp. 60-61.*

The Women in Print movement has been one of radical social change for women—and men—concerned about women's writings, women's rights and politics. Most importantly, it promotes alternative options against the gatekeepers for public discourse.

The contemporary women's movement acknowledges one of the ways in which women's lives can be enriched, changed and improved is through access to the words and ideas of women in print. During the women's movement of the 1960s and 70s, it had been the topics raised in consciousness-raising conversations that became the focus for many early publications produced by feminist and lesbian presses such as experiences of domestic violence, sexual harassment, pay

inequity, racial discrimination, lesbian relationships, and so on. One of the emancipatory goals of the contemporary Women-in-Print movement has been to break new ground on issues and topics important to women's lives. By doing this, opportunities in print and conversation could be opened for discussion, action, and social change for a larger number of women. Magazines, journals and women's newspapers provided outlets for creative writing and poetry, information sharing, news, opinion and analysis. They generally functioned as tools for organization. Women in Print was a strategy to build solidarity and to create actions for change. Many reading women with access to feminist and women's literature and print resources have found sustenance and strength in them. (see Theresa Corrigan, T. (1996). Feminist bookstores: Part of an ecosystem. In Berman, S. & Danky, J.P., (eds.). *Alternative Library Literature, 1994/1995: A biennial anthology* (pp. 59-61). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.)

Additional resources:

Adams, K. (1998). Built out of books: Lesbian energy and feminist ideology. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 34 (3-4), 113-141.

Grant, J. (1996). Building community-based coalitions from academe: The Union Institute and the Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press transition coalition. *Signs, Summer*, 1024-1033.

Murray, S. (2001). 'Live authors. live issues': Dilemmas of race and authenticity in feminist publishing. In Berman, S. & Danky, J.P., (eds.). *Alternative Library Literature, 1998/1999: A biennial anthology* (pp. 1-24). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.

Norman, R. (2001, Fall). Support your feminist bookseller: She supports you. *NWSAction: National Women's Studies Association*, 13 (1), 30-32.

Spender, D. (1989). *The writing or the sex?: OR why you don't have to read women's writing to know it's no good*. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, Inc..

Woolfe, V. (1929). *A room of one's own*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.



History of Women's Presses Library Project

The Women's Presses Library Project (WPLP), a coalition of women-owned independent presses, began its official work September 1994. Those presses produced books addressing a range of subjects and concerns for women and girls not regularly dealt with by the mainstream houses.

Many of them joined together in an effort to increase the visibility of their titles in libraries throughout the United States and Canada. In 1998, the WPLP represented 30 presses and close to 400 titles in 80+ subject areas. Mev Miller coordinated the work of the project and its visibility.

Through a variety of activities, the WPLP was able to reach many of its goals. Most notably, WPLP had a strong working relationship with the Feminist Task Force of the American Library Association (ALA) especially in the planning of their annual Authors Breakfast. Additionally, it established working relationships with several ALA groups, and received recognition and respect from individual librarians.

However, around the year 2000, changes in both the book industry and librarianship led the publishers to reevaluate both the goals and the continuing survival of the Women's Presses Library Project. The numbers of feminist presses began to dwindle and many of the remaining women's presses were unable to financially support the project. Membership decreased

substantially. Additionally, technological development in librarianship and budgetary considerations shifted the ways in which librarians made decisions about acquisitions and collections. This affected the purchasing of independent press books, and ultimately, the women's presses.

After considerable thought and discussion, then current member publishers of the Women's Presses Library Project decided to discontinue many of the on-going projects and to focus energies in the areas which seem most productive -- a comprehensive website and an annual presence at the ALA conference. In this way, they hoped to broaden their scope to be more attractive and economically feasible to a larger number of publishers, including those who produce journals and magazines, and alternative book related materials. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, this vision never became a reality.

In 2001, the WPLP quietly discontinued its official work. However, the coordinator, Mev Miller, kept its website alive until October 2002.



Why now?

The WPLP had gained a fair amount of visibility and an enormous amount of respect during its short tenure. Even after it no longer functioned, people continued to use the website as a point of reference. Mev Miller continued to receive emails and phone inquiries about women's presses. These requests came from librarians, academics, and authors seeking publishers for their books, among others.

Inland Book Company, a primary supplier for independent press books, closed in 1995. Feminist Bookstore News, the quintessential information-sharing publication for feminist bookstores and presses, closed in 2000. Both these events contributed to an ever-widening gap for bookstore buyers, librarians, and individuals seeking contact information about women's presses and their title information. Also, the numbers of feminist bookstores and women's presses have decreased in recent years making it harder for those remaining to maintain visibility and networking.

The Internet has helped to alleviate this problem only minimally. Though several websites do list feminist bookstores and women's publishers, many of those lists are outdated and incomplete. These are not especially reliable sources of information. There is no one group of organizations (Feminist Bookstore Network, women's presses, International Feminist Book Fair or others) who continues to keep a current and meaningful list of women-owned presses and bookstores.



What will it be?

Mev Miller, under the umbrella of LITWOMEN.ORG, is now prepared to develop and maintain **WOMEN IN PRINT - CENTRAL SOURCE NETWORKING**. It is envisioned as THE comprehensive website for women-owned, women-centered (women / lesbian / feminist) publishers & booksellers of books, magazines, journals, and alternative media. Building on Mev's connections developed during her work with WPLP and her on-going experience with the Feminist Bookstore Network, this Women in Print website will not only promote women's presses and

feminist bookstores to each other, but will also attract an audience of independent booksellers, librarians, academics (both in women's studies and other interdisciplinary departments), authors, and readers.

Though this project will start primarily from the base of North America, a few international presses are represented. In time, we hope this website will become a primary international resource as well. At this point, the proposal is quite modest -- to simply offer one resource in which to find up-to-date information about women's presses and bookstores. It is hoped this website will gain recognition and become one reliable place to find and grow a revitalized and lively Women in Print movement. Depending on interest, time and energy, this project could conceivably grow to include many other activities.

Because **WOMEN IN PRINT - CENTRAL SOURCE NETWORKING** will be sponsored by LITWOMEN.ORG, it will also share an expanding audience of people interested generally in women's literature and literacy.



Women in Print - Central Source Networking

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Who will facilitate it?

As the owner of LITWOMEN.ORG and long-time coordinator of the WPLP, Mev Miller will facilitate this site and process. Mev has 20 years experience in various aspects of the book industry, especially in feminist and independent bookselling, publishing and distribution.

1982-1985, various positions including Manager, Waldenbooks (Connecticut)

1985-1992, Sales Manager, Inland Book Company (East Haven CT)

1993, Marketing Manager, Spinsters Ink (Minneapolis, MN)

1993-present, Amazon Bookstore Cooperative (Minneapolis, MN)
Bookseller, Magazine / video Buyer, Community Outreach Coordinator, Out-of-store sales coordinator, Bookkeeper (1996-1997), Independent Press Book Buyer (1997-2001), Website design & maintenance (1995-present)

1993-1998, Independent Marketing Consultant (St. Paul, MN)
Clients included: New Victoria Publishers, Madwoman Press, Consortium Book Sales & Distribution, Feminist Bookstore Network Holiday catalog ad rep, KIT, Sanguinaria Publishers, among others

1994-2000, Coordinator, Women's Presses Library Project
Awarded the Jackie Eubanks Memorial Award in 1997 (Presented by the Social Responsibilities Round Table, Alternatives in Print Task Force of the American Library Association for outstanding advocacy in promoting the acquisition and use of alternative materials in libraries)

1994-2000, Feminist Bookstore News, University Press Column Editor

1996-present, Developer of litwomen.org

1999-present, Founder and Coordinator of WE LEARN
(Women Expanding: Literacy, Education, Action, Resource Network)

2001-present, Feminist Academic Press Column, Editor

2002-present, Independent Consultant (Providence, RI).
Clients include: Acorn Alliance/MoyerBell, Amazon Bookstore Cooperative, National Institute for Literacy

Also, Mev has had many articles and reviews published in several books and professional journals, on Internet media, and recorded as radio documentary. She has been developing and maintaining websites since 1995.