

# FROM THE LIBRARIAN

May 2017. The Office of the Gender and Women's Studies Librarian turns 40 this year! Back in 1977, the first Women's Studies Librarian-at-Large was hired to serve the University of Wisconsin System for what was to be a two-year trial period...and the rest is history — or as a certain generation of feminists might have chosen to call it, *herstory*.

Herstory or history, the interesting story of those 40 years is the foundation for this office's mission and work today. We're fortunate that our forebears kept thorough records and even wrote chapters and articles about those years. Here are some of the highlights:

By 1973, women's studies courses had begun to be offered at many University of Wisconsin System campuses. This movement was growing at a pace that encouraged then-Vice President for Academic Affairs Donald Smith to create a task force to consider creating whole women's studies *programs* on all System campuses. The task force's final report in 1974 recommended not only the creation of programs, majors, courses, and a Systemwide administrative structure, but also the development of a librarian position to offer bibliographic and research assistance in the area of women's studies.

Unfortunately, in the 1975–1977 state budget, the legislature denied a request to fund a women's studies librarian position. But the need for such a position only grew as more new feminist research emerged. In response to a 1976 conference, "The Development of Resources for Women's Studies," Vice President Smith approved funding for a two-year pilot program

that would hire the first University of Wisconsin System Women's Studies Librarian-at-Large.

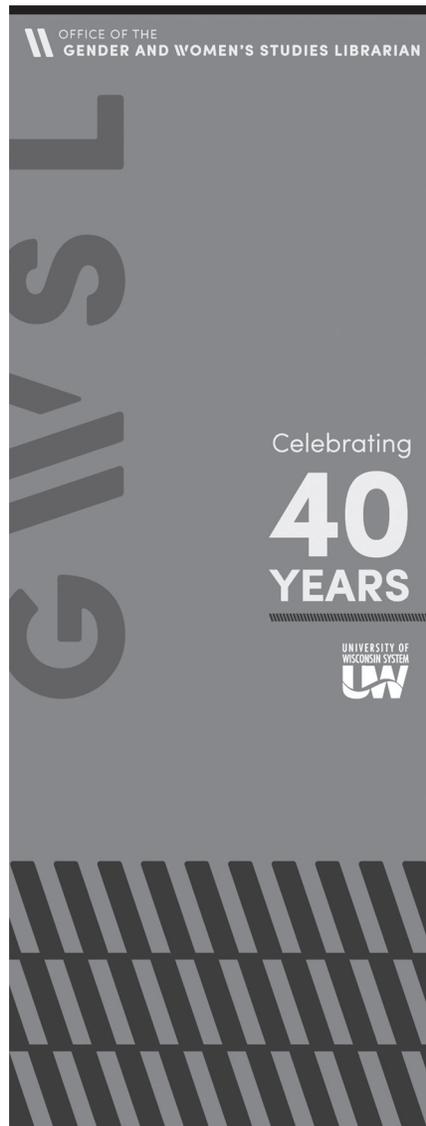
In 1977, Esther Stineman (later Lanigan) was hired as the first Women's Studies Librarian-at-Large. During her tenure of about 18 months, Stineman visited each of the UW campuses, received grant funding to create

a slide and audio presentation on the importance of women's studies in the humanities and social sciences, and developed the first women's studies general resource text, entitled *Women's Studies: A Recommended Core List* (in 1979).

Linda Parker, the second Women's Studies Librarian-at-Large, was hired in 1979 and served until 1981. Parker too visited all of the campuses, compiled bibliographies, and developed materials that would quickly grow in usage beyond Wisconsin, throughout the U.S., and into other countries. The three journals the office still publishes today were started under Parker's leadership: *Feminist Collections: A Quarterly of Women's Studies Resources*, *New Books on Women and Feminism*, and *Feminist Periodicals: A Current Listing of Contents*. Parker also oversaw the acquisition of the office's first micro-computer and began offering an online search service.

After Parker's departure, Sue Searing was hired in 1982 as the third Women's Studies Librarian, the position by then having been made permanent and the "at-Large" designation dropped. Searing built on the solid foundation of the previous librarians by strengthening existing relationships and improving ongoing services. In 1987, she, Esther Stineman, and editor Catherine Loeb published an updated resource list titled *Women's Studies: A Recommended Core Bibliography, 1980–1985*. Searing also began creating a guide to nonprint resources in women's studies that would later become *Women's Audiovisuals in English* (WAVE).

(continued on p. 16)



*From the Librarian (continued from p. ii)*

My predecessor, Phyllis Holman Weisbard, began as the fourth Women's Studies Librarian in 1991 and served nearly 22 years before her retirement in July 2013. In addition to continuing the successful projects of the office, Weisbard also oversaw the conversion of WAVE from print to electronic resource, was invited as a visiting speaker by the U.S. State Department Centers in India, and, among many other impressive accomplishments, took on the implications of the "digital revolution" for the office's publications and services.

In our 40th year, I reflect upon this herstory with awe and a sense of enthusiastic responsibility as the fifth holder of the position now titled *Gender and Women's Studies Librarian*. You may have read about my journey to this position in an earlier issue of *FC*, but let me reiterate that this is my dream librarian job! I am so grateful to build on the amazing successes of my predecessors, to feel the support and encouragement of the current staff and administration throughout the System, and to have the privileged opportunity to grow and evolve within this unique position.

While the cornerstone projects of the office will continue, we have begun new projects as well, such as Wisconsin Women Making History and Women's Knowledge Digital Library, which seek to reach out to online users in Wisconsin and all the way to women doing imperative activist work on the ground in developing countries around the

world. Our international partnerships are growing, and I get increasing numbers of requests for assistance from outside of the state and U.S. We will never lose sight, though, of our local ties and our focus on the gender, women's studies, and LGBTQ studies programs of the University of Wisconsin System.

With this anniversary, we have rebranded our office, and in the coming year we will redesign our publications. As we look forward to even more changes, I invite you to join us in celebrating the first 40 years of feminist librarianship and see what the next 40 will bring!

*Karla J. Strand, M.L.I.S., D.Phil.*

Learn More

Marian J. Swoboda, Audrey J. Roberts, & Jennifer Hirsch, *Women on Campus in the Eighties: Old Struggles, New Victories* (University Women: A Series of Essays, vol. 4), 1993. Full-text PDF available from ERIC Institute of Education Sciences ([eric.ed.gov/?id=ED375773](http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED375773)).

*Transforming Women's Education: The History of Women's Studies in the University of Wisconsin System* (Office of University of Publications, for the University of Wisconsin System Women's Studies Consortium), 1999. Available from the University of Wisconsin Press (ISBN 978-0965883467).



*Miriam Greenwald*