

RESOURCES FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH:

A VALUABLE TEACHING TOOL

Somer Brodribb

Dans cette session nous allons examiner ce que RFR/DRF offre actuellement aux chercheuses féministes, et discuter nos plans pour des futures questions thématiques et des sections de travail sur la recherche dans l'action féministe. En outre, nous allons demander aux participants à la conférence des informations sur leur utilisation de la revue afin d'identifier des nouvelles directions et exigences dans la recherche féministe, le partage d'informations et les réseaux d'échange d'information.

Originally the Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women, *Resources for Feminist Research/Documentation sur la recherche féministe (RFR/DRF)* was created in 1972 when Margrit Eichler and Marylee Stephenson participated in the first Women's Studies session at the Learned's in Montreal, 1972. The Newsletter began as a networking tool for Canadian women's studies scholars, and moved with Margrit Eichler from the University of Waterloo to the Dept. of Sociology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, in 1975. The journal started publishing quarterly in 1977, and changed its name in 1978 to indicate its commitment to a feminist perspective.

RFR/DRF is now associated with the Centre for Women's Studies in Education, O.I.S.E. Major funding is currently provided by three sources: the Women's Program of Secretary of State, sales and subscriptions, and O.I.S.E. The journal now has official status as an OISE publication which ensures a certain amount of institutional recognition and financial commitment – however, the editorial board of RFR/DRF remains autonomous. It is composed of feminist scholars – both academic and non-academic, who come from various disciplines and are involved in diverse aspects of women's movements in Canada and internationally. Some are linked with other feminist media such as



Somer Brodribb (right) with Myra Novogrodsky and Frieda Forman.

Rites, HERizons, and Boudicca Books. Other important contributors to our bibliographic sources and sanity are Frieda Forman, a long-time liaison person and consultant with WERC; Margaret Beattie of Sherbrooke who provides francophone materials and contacts; and more recently, Marta Mendez in Bogota, Columbia.

RFR/DRF is distinguished by a strong commitment to interdisciplinarity and internationalism in feminist research. Its focus is on Canadian and international, but not U.S., material. This is not because of a negative judgement of American work – that area is already well covered by U.S. publications which are readily accessible to Canadian scholars. Besides recognizing from the beginning that sisterhood is global, RFR/DRF has happily transgressed traditional disciplinary boundaries. In feminist scholarship, awareness of and borrowing from feminist perspectives in other disciplines has helped us reconceptualize female experience and disrupt rigid male-defined categorizations. Historically, RFR/DRF has been receptive to, has sought out, and has furthered the explosion of feminist studies, reporting back and anticipating directions, trends and innovations in feminist work.

In terms of format, this is organized as the presentation of discussion forums;

articles; abstracts of conference proceedings; theses; book reviews; special annotated bibliographies; letters to the editor; announcements; work in progress; and critical essays on the state of affairs in various disciplines. Generally, abstracts have been organized under five regular disciplinary categories: Education; Social Science and History; Social Policy and Social Action; Health and the Sciences; Humanities, Literature and the Arts. Recently we've been a little more fluid and experimental with that organization. In 1980, we began to devote an entire issue to book reviews, and this has evolved into the July issue, which we think meets many readers' priorities for summer reading. Indexes appear annually.

Our special thematic issues are an important contribution to feminist studies: they identify and open up new fields of research, and have evolved into books once the RFR/DRF issues have gone out of print. 1979 saw the publication of "Political Theory: A Feminist Perspective," guest edited by Mary O'Brien and Angela Miles; "Canadian Women's History: Teaching and Research," guest edited by Sylvia Van Kirk; and "Women and the Politics of Culture," by Barbara Roberts and Ceta Ramkhalawansingh. These remain important sources. For example, "Women and the Politics of

Culture" presented a discussion forum which contained articles by Rosalind Vanderburgh, Helga Jacobsen, Susan Cole, Judy Ramirez, Gail Kelly and others on a variety of topics, such as "Growing up Ethnic," "Class and Gender Conflicts in the Toronto Native Community," "Immigrant women," "South Asian Women in Montreal," "La population franc-ontarienne," "Jamaican Women," "Women in School Politics." That issue also included reviews of books still important in the area: *Indian Women and the Law*; *All of Baba's children*; *Women in Apartheid South Africa*; *A Window on Soweto*; *Inside the Nicaraguan Revolution*; *Frogs in a Well*; and *Asian Women in Britain*. It also included resource guides; project reports; conference reports; announcements and networks; an audio-visual guide on resources for teaching women and ethnicity; and a survey of five Canadian newspapers that focussed on women and the politics of culture in the mass media. Digging out your back issues of *RFR/DRF* is really quite worthwhile, I think you'll be surprised at what you'll find there.

1980 saw the publication of an "Irascibility" issue, a call to feminist scholars to rage collectively against sexism. Still timely. And an important issue on the "Psychology of Women," which, according to reviewers, remains the outstanding bibliographic guide. 1981 produced a discussion forum on "Women in Resistance and Revolutionary Movements" with special interviews with women activists; The Resistance, Chile; The Revolution, El Salvador; and the Reconstruction, Nicaragua. Also that year we produced an "International guide to Women's Periodicals and Resources," which many of you have found extremely useful and have urged us to update. Other special thematic issues include "Women and Trade Unions," guest edited by Lynda Yanz and Linda Briskin, which quickly went out of print and then evolved into the recent book published by Women's Press, *Union Sisters*. "Women as Elders" by Emily Nett has also gone out of print and been a highly recommended bibliographic source. "Women in Agricultural Production," edited by Nora Cebotarev and Fran Shaver, appeared in 1982; and in 1983 *RFR/DRF* again took the lead with the publication of "The Lesbian Issue," guest edited by Kathy Arnup, Gloria Geller, Amy Gottlieb and Jeri Wine. It featured articles on lesbian teachers, and pieces by Nicole Brossard, Mary Meigs and Jane Rule. Similar to the design of other issues,

book reviews complemented the discussion forum, and a resource guide included information on groups and organizations in Canada; an international periodicals listing; Canadian Gay Archives Holdings of lesbian periodicals; films; videotapes and slide shows; and an annotated bibliography on child custody and the lesbian mother.

"Women and Education I," guest edited by Somer Brodribb and Mary O'Brien, was primarily oriented to the concerns of teachers and activists in the educational field. It contained references to material on the history of women and the teaching profession; sex-role stereotyping in the schools; the status of women in educational institutions; girls' sports and science education; and the school/labour force connection. It included a critical review essay by Mary O'Brien, and a guide to Women's Studies programs in Canada at the post-secondary level. Part II includes Ruth Roach Pierson's historical review essay on moments in the development of a feminist perspective, as well as pieces on non-traditional education in rural communities, and connections between education, the labour force and the family.

The 1984 special issue on "Women and Language," edited by Frances Rooney and Marguerite Andersen, includes pieces by Dale Spender, Marina Yaguello, and articles touching on Literacy for Poor Women in Central America, Harlequin Romances, and the language of feminist researchers and the terminology of library indexes. The 1985 "Art" issue featured a collection by Canadian women artists; reports on work in progress relating to media; current projects and upcoming shows; and artistic motivation. Currently hot off the press is our "Women and Disability" issue, guest edited by Frances Rooney and Pat Israel. Also available in cerlox binding and on cassette, women in the disability movement and able bodied women discuss issues, questions, strategies. Other special issues are planned in the area of Women and the Criminal Justice System, Women and the Decade, and Women in Science. Additionally, we are negotiating to find funding and respond to a call by Canadian Women's research organizations that came forward at the last CRIAW conference to publish a special issue on work in progress and a guide to women's studies periodicals, newsletters, and organizations.

One of our key continuing concerns is the representation of francophone mater-

ial. This is proceeding well in the book review section, and we have published particularly useful articles, accounts and bibliographies, such as "La recherche universitaire sur les femmes au Québec" by Yolande Cohen; the research projects of the Groupe de recherches en histoire de l'éducation des filles au Québec; and the bibliography of Contemporary Feminism in France. However, work in progress and francophone contacts could be increased, and linkages with *La Vie en rose*, *Communiqu'elles* and other Quebec feminist publications strengthened.

Another aspect of *RFR/DRF* that requires affirmation and your support is the work in progress section. We urge you to submit abstracts of your work in progress, and we do include addresses when provided to facilitate communication between researchers. Please keep this a vibrant tool for expanding feminist research. For the last issue, 600 work in progress forms were distributed, but only about a dozen came back. This may reflect the fact that work in the area of Women and Disability is just emerging. The real questions are how can you *not* use *RFR/DRF* and what do we need to do so that you can use it better?

Somer Brodribb has edited two special issues on education for RFR/DRF, published by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Toronto. Her research interests include the relations of nationalism and feminism.

Call for Submissions!

Prairie Fire, a Manitoba literary review, is planning a special issue for Summer of '86 to celebrate Canadian women's writing. We welcome submissions, in English or French, by and/or about Canadian women writers. Payment will be upon publication. Send us poems, songs, stories, drama and visual art. Query first for essays, articles, reports, reviews and interviews.

Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with all submissions and correspondence.

Submit before October 31, 1985 to:

Prairie Fire
3rd Floor, 374 Donald Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3B 2J2