Abstract
Updating research done in 1980, the authors survey the current status of programming for women in public libraries, concentrating on the largest U.S. public libraries. The designation of National Women’s History Month was assumed to provide a legitimizing factor that libraries could use to develop women’s programming. Many libraries have indeed developed programming for women during National Women’s History Month, but many more have planned women’s programming as part of their regular offering of programs. Women’s programming has been strengthened by a greater visibility of the diverse needs and interests of women, funding for programs for women, and greatly expanded publishing activity that continually provides new titles on women’s issues for public library collections. Women themselves have been a catalyst for programming as they have been avid users of public libraries and often the primary audience for library programs. Although librarians seem reluctant to identify their target audience by gender, they continue to develop programming that attracts more women than men.

Introduction
In 1980 we wrote an article for *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, then called *RQ*, entitled “Public Library Response to Women and Their Changing Roles.” In that time of wide-ranging social and personal activism we spoke as feminists and as librarians to library practitioners. Our goal was to encourage a greater public library focus on women and so-called women’s issues. To that end we chronicled programs, services, and collection development and identified patterns of practice. Slightly over a quarter century later, when the women’s movement we remain part of is
no longer a visibly active force in our society, we revisit the public library’s response to women and their changing roles.

Today many women’s issues have become subsumed under larger issues. Now the focus is on single parent families and the working poor, rather than on working women. Similarly the high cost of health care is a larger issue than specialized and appropriate care for women. Concern for displaced workers has replaced concern for displaced homemakers.

In the 1980s feminist bookstores were still springing up. Now, along with most independent bookstores, they are closed or closing. Consciousness raising groups are passé. Women are more likely to be in a book discussion group, many of which take place in public libraries. Then, women’s alternative presses were actively publishing. Now only a small number of these independent presses survive with any viability: Feminist Press, Seal Press, Aunt Lute, Spinsters Ink and Calyx, for example. Today young women live lives their feminist mothers could only dream about, but many disavow the feminism that won them their choices.

The cooling of social activism on women’s issues is partially a result of the success of the women’s movement. We have seen some positive changes. School sports opportunities have increased for girls and women with Title IX (Blumenthal, 2006). A woman has recently been appointed the president of Harvard (Bhayani & Guehenno, 2007). Yet the issues that drove the women’s movement are far from resolved. For example, the wage gap between men and women persists (Lips, n.d.) and reproductive freedom is far from sure (NARAL, n.d.).

In this current environment of aging NOW members and a decreasing activism on women’s issues, what are public libraries, some of which are now administered by the feminist activists of past years, doing to serve women? How are public libraries dealing with women-related issues? What programs and services do they offer to address the needs of women? To answer these questions we surveyed fifteen major urban public libraries and a recommended few other libraries in smaller communities regarding their public programming for women and on women-related issues, with a particular focus on National Women’s History Month.

We knew that public library adult programming now typically plays a greater role in public library services than it did when we wrote our 1980 RQ article. Then the focus in public libraries was more on information services. In recent years, however, public libraries have moved from defining themselves in terms of an information role back to the educational and cultural roles popular in the first half of the twentieth century. This shift was marked by the 1990 formation of the Public Programming Office within the American Library Association. The American Library Association has had staff devoted to developing public programs in public libraries at various times in its history, but it was the availability of National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funding, initially for the “Let’s Talk About It” reading and discussion programs, that provided the impetus for
this latest emphasis within the association. These programs also provided an impetus and resources for programming for women.

Deborah Robertson, Director of the American Library Association’s Public Programs Office, reports that over 80 percent of U.S. public libraries are actively involved in public programming and that programming is a core service in libraries with an educational mission (D. Robertson, personal communication, November 2, 2006). These programs provide information as well as entertainment and enlightenment and have become an end in themselves as well as a “stimulus to use” as Margaret Monroe termed them (Heim, 1982).

Why do we focus on National Women’s History Month? National Women’s History Month, established in the eighties, offers public libraries a familiar framework for programming. It allows them to take an approach similar to Black History Month or other heritage theme celebrations relevant to their communities. For the purposes of this investigation, we assumed that if public libraries were doing any public programming on women’s issues and women, they would likely be doing something in March when National Women’s History Month is celebrated.

The roots of National Women’s History Month go back to “Women’s History Week,” first celebrated in Sonoma County, California in 1978. This public celebration was scheduled around March 8, International Women’s Day, long celebrated in Socialist countries. In 1981, the unlikely combination of Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and then Rep. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) co-sponsored a joint congressional resolution proclaiming a national Women’s History Week. In 1987, Congress expanded the celebration to a month, and March was declared Women’s History Month (National Women’s History Project, n.d.).

At one time public library programmers might have been called radical for programming on women’s issues or for a female audience. While that is not necessarily a bad thing, it is not a position most public librarians or their libraries are comfortable with. Now that Congress has legitimized the inclusion of women in our history, public libraries theoretically should be willing to build regular and recurring programs on women, or at least on women’s history, into their schedules. The question is: are they doing this?

**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this article, public programming is defined as educational and cultural programs sponsored by public libraries for adult audiences. As noted above, public programming is not a new function for public libraries, but the emphasis on public programs changes with the societal role sought by public libraries. We are currently in a period where public programming is being given greater credibility as a library service.

In our 1980 RQ article we defined library service to women as “services designed to meet the needs of female clientele regardless of their position on the women’s movement” and library service on women-related issues
"as services on issues arising from the women’s movement, but not necessarily directed at a female clientele and not limited to a feminist perspective" (Cassell & Weibel, 1980, p. 70). Twenty-six years later we are limiting ourselves to public programs and no longer reference the women’s movement, not because it is not important or still necessary, but rather because for most American women it is not the immediate force it once was.

For the purposes of this article, we define library public programs for women as programs directed toward a female clientele. An example of today’s women-targeted activity would be the AIDS and sexually transmitted disease (STD) awareness program, with private consultations afterward, developed by a Cleveland Public Library branch in cooperation with a local women’s center (E. Leavitt & R. Antonucci, personal communication, December 12, 2006). AIDS and STD are not “women’s issues” but the program clearly targeted women as the audience. In another example of a library program for women, the Chappaqua (NY) Public Library targets women as the audience for a workshop for divorced, newly separated, and widowed women. The workshop provides information from a divorce lawyer, a financial advisor and a psychologist and has been so well received that it has become an annual event (J. Kuhn, personal communication, November 8, 2006).

We define library programs on women-related issues in the same apolitical way as previously: those programs responding to issues faced predominantly by women in their societal roles, but not necessarily directed at a female client group. The San Antonio Public Library’s “Little Red Wagon,” an early literacy outreach program targeting people who work with children—caregivers, parents, and teachers—is one example. Three staff members educate the caregivers on the importance of reading using ten modules, such as prenatal reading and nutrition, developed for the program (S. Mathews, personal communication, December 20, 2006). The target audience is not specified as women, although most of the audience is female. Early childhood literacy is still a women-related issue because of women’s continuing role as the primary caregivers of young children despite gains in male involvement in parenting and preschool education. In response to another issue more often associated with women than men, the Brooklyn Public Library’s Caribbean Literacy and Culture Center partners with the Urban Justice Center on a program entitled “You Are Not Alone: Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence” (L. Cohen, personal communication, November 1, 2006).

**Literature Review**

Women are the majority of the more than 135 million adult public library in-person users; 56 percent in 2006 according to the American Library Association (2006, p. 13). This is not new. Historically, use studies where data are broken down by gender (and a surprising number of studies, even today, do not do this) report women as the majority users of public
libraries. While one might assume that this fact alone would compel public libraries to actively develop services for women and on women-related issues, this has generally not been the case. Two seemingly contradictory responses to women being the majority of library users may contribute to this. On the one hand, the predominance of women among public library users can be seen as a failure on the part of American libraries. This argument ties the societal significance of the public library to status of clientele, and men have more status. On the other hand, librarians typically just don’t talk about the high percentage of women users, so it may be that they don’t even pay attention to gender as a factor in library use. In fact, since our RQ article in 1980, there has been very little literature on public library service to women or on women-related programming or services.

This absence is puzzling because there is a reasonable body of library literature on gender. Tools produced to aid in women’s studies collection development exist. There is a massive literature on gender and children’s literature and media. The academic women’s studies librarians who represent an institutionalized response to the women’s movement, one that does not exist in public libraries, have produced a sizable literature but, for the most part, the public librarians are silent on women library users.

A notable early exception to the dearth of information on public library services for women is Peggy Glover’s book entitled *Library Service for the Women in the Middle* (1985), a how-to guide written by a practicing public librarian on developing and promoting service to middle-aged women. Glover focuses on who these women are and their unique needs as women, as well as possible library responses to their needs. There have also been scattered articles on specific programs in practice-based journals, such as “Sweat and Self-Esteem: A Public Library Supports Young Women” (Quatrella & Blosveren, 1994), about an exercise program, or reports of programs such as the ERIC document on a reading and discussion program, “Women of the Plains and Mountains: Programs for Public Libraries” (Nesmith, 1982).

In 1982 the American Library Association Committee on the Status of Women published a brochure on library service to women entitled *The Library–A Room of One’s Own* (Weibel, 1982). Aimed at women unfamiliar with library services, the brochure covered all types of libraries and emphasized the collections and information services in public libraries. The Committee on the Status of Women intended this brochure to be distributed at gatherings of women but very little was ever done with it.

Katie O’Dell’s *Library Materials and Services for Teen Girls* (2002) is as much an annotated bibliography as it is a guide to collaboration and outreach. Annotated bibliographies on topics of concern to women or about women have been sporadically published by *Library Journal* as collection development aids. “Stopping the Violence at Home” an annotated list of recommended titles on domestic violence, including older titles
that should be retained when weeding, along with some background information on the issue of domestic violence, is typical of these articles (Brinkman, 2004). There is also a small body of literature that looks at library use by women but mainly in the context of their overall information needs. Elfreda Chatman’s 1991 article, “Channels to a Larger Social World: Older Women Staying in Contact with the Great Society,” is representative of this literature.

**Methodology**

In order to discover the status of public library service to women and on women-related issues, we examined library Web sites and conducted telephone interviews with administrators, adult programming, and public relations staff in twenty-three public libraries. (See appendix A for a list of libraries contacted.) The libraries selected for examination were the following:

- The fifteen public library systems in the United States serving the largest populations as defined by the Urban Libraries Council
- An additional seven libraries recommended for excellence in public programming by Deborah Robertson, Director of the American Library Association’s Public Programs Office
- The only public library listed as a partner on the National Women’s History Month Web site: Ocean County (NJ) Public Library

We also posted requests for information on public programs for women and specifically those focused on National Women’s History Month on two email lists: Public Programs hosted by the American Library Association and PubLIB, the general public library discussion list. Thirteen responses were received to these postings: Multnomah County (OR) Library; Rochester Hills (MI) Public Library; West Deptford (NJ) Public Library; Omaha (NE) Public Library; Contra Costa County (CA) Library; Chappaqua (NY) Public Library; Pekin (IL) Public Library; Kenton County (KY) Public Library; Blackwater Regional Library (VA); Kansas City (MO) Public Library; Jacob Edwards Library in Southbridge (MA); Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library (MN); and Sachem (NY) Public Library. In addition, we interviewed national library leaders, scholars active in National Endowment for the Humanities funded public library programs, and the executive director of the National Women’s History Month Project.

Our 1980 analysis of library programs and services to women resulted in the identification of factors that worked against the development of these services and factors that contributed to successful services. We used these same factors to examine current public library programming and to analyze three case studies we have deemed as best practice: Broward County Public Library, Ocean County Public Library, and Middle Country Public Library.
UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FEMALE LIBRARY AUDIENCE

In 1980 when we first looked at public library service to women, women were not typically viewed as a clientele with particular information or service needs outside their traditional roles of wife, mother, or homemaker. We also noted that “the development of special services to encourage greater use by women has not been a priority for most libraries, as it was for the disadvantaged in the sixties, a period of analogous social change” (Cassell & Weibel, 1980, p. 72).

In general we find that this statement remains true today, but we also uncovered a number of questions that merit further exploration. Although most programming in public libraries has been designed as gender-neutral, appealing to all users, the predominant audience of most public library programming is women. In all but one of the twenty-three libraries surveyed, even though none routinely broke attendance data down by gender, staff reported that women made up the majority of their typical public programming audiences. San Diego was the exception to this (L. Whitehouse, personal communication, November 9, 2006). ALA Public Programs Office Director Deborah Robertson agrees that the majority of the public programming audience is typically female (personal communication, November 2, 2006). Why do women outnumber men in programming audiences if the programs are not expressly designed to appeal to them?

As an example, 75 percent of the participants were female in the “Be Well Informed @ Your Library” workshops sponsored in 2005 and 2006 by Walgreens and the American Library Association at ten major urban libraries. The typical attendee was a 70 plus-year-old African American woman (Reference and User Services Association, 2006). Is this because women are the caregivers in their families and having information is part of care giving? Or, given the age of the typical participant, is this because women outlive men? Or are women coming to public library programs because they are already users of other library services? The Queens Library reports that women are 98 percent of the participants in the book discussions they sponsor at over half their branches (S. Thompson, personal communication, November 2, 2006). Is this because discussing books is seen as a women’s activity? Or do women want to discuss their reading more than men? Do they place greater value on social interaction? Or is it the books selected? Or the time and place of meeting?

Two scholars active in National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funded scholar discussion programs offer some insights on these questions. Dr. Suzanne Ozment, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of South Carolina at Aiken, a scholar involved in two “Let’s Talk About It” series sponsored by the American Library Association Public Programs Office and funded by NEH, observed that the women who came to the public programs seemed to be women who
had not had much time for themselves since they were busy with families or careers and now wanted to give themselves a treat. They wanted a mind-expanding program, yet they were often resistant to hearing about women such as Frida Kahlo who were more radical in their approach to life. Rather they liked to hear about women whose lives were more “normal” and to whom they could relate. “The series that worked well had programs about women authors that the women attendees could admire or the characters in the books were ones the women could admire” (S. Ozm, personal communication, November 1, 2006). Elizabeth Baer, now a professor in the English Department at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, pioneered the Vermont public programs that led to the development of the original “Let’s Talk About It” series. In Vermont and later in Virginia, Baer found that about 85 percent of the audience for these library programs was women. She feels women are more comfortable than men talking with others about the books they read and sharing their own experiences. Baer supports the contention that the reading and discussion series that have done well have been those that women could easily relate to by bringing their own experiences to their reading and finding through the readings either a character that expresses their own thoughts or a theme that helps them to better understand events in their own lives (personal communication, December 31, 2006).

The majority of the public librarians we interviewed don’t talk about women as an audience with unique needs or responses. They don’t consciously view women as a public library audience much less the primary audience. These librarians seemed more comfortable talking about racial and ethnic communities than gender. They see their programs as serving all, and some were almost defensive when asked about programs that might target women. Given this, how are they developing programming that appeals overwhelmingly to women? Deborah Robertson says that the audience for programming depends on subject and format: “People come (to programs) for people with whom they identify and to learn something new” (personal communication, November 2, 2006). Are public libraries unconsciously developing programs to respond to the interests of women?

We do not know the answer to this question, but we do see evidence that public libraries are trying to respond to women’s roles and unique challenges. All of the twenty-three libraries we surveyed sponsored some programming for women or on women-related issues within the last few years. Yet the initial perception of at least half the library representatives we spoke with was that their library did not program to women as a target audience or on women-related issues, other than any Women’s History Month activities the library might sponsor. When prompted with examples, however, they could readily identify programs aimed at women and on women-related issues. The range of this programming is wide, with writing programs, health awareness, history, author appearances, and book
discussions being the dominant themes. There is a clear focus on mothers among the libraries that offer emergent literacy programs, and a growing number of public libraries are targeting girls with special programs such as the Miami-Dade Public Library System’s Girl Power programs that provide information on careers, how to dress, etc. (L. Louisdhon, personal communication, December 12, 2006). Just the fact that many public libraries now offer toddler story times at night, when working parents can come, demonstrates an awareness of the changing roles of women.

The question remains: how systematic and sustained is this women-related programming? As described by our interviewees, the programs seemed isolated examples or part of series focused on larger themes such as health. The Los Angeles Public Library, for example, does over twenty thousand programs a year but has no identifiable focus on women (P. Persic, personal communication, December 21, 2006). We do, however, see suggestions that the preponderance of women in traditional public library programming audiences, such as book discussion groups, have caused these activities to become subtly women-focused. At the New York Public Library, for example, Miriam Tuliao, Coordinator of Adult and Information Services for the branch libraries, says “the majority of books chosen for book discussion groups feature themes of interest to women such as coming of age stories, immigrant stories, stories of women growing old” (personal communication, November 6, 2006).

At the same time public library programmers are continually trying to broaden their audience to other groups. It is considered a triumph when the audience for a program has a higher number of men. The Harris (TX) County Library, for example, is now trying to develop book discussion groups for men (S. Booth, personal communication, November 3, 2006).

Changes in Factors Affecting Library Service to Women and on Women-Related Issues

Funding for Women-Related Programming

In 1980 we found there were only limited public and private funds available to specifically address needs and interests resulting from the women’s movement. Funds targeted for libraries did not include service to women or on women-related issues as a priority. Of course, without funds to stimulate new services, libraries tended not to initiate them, particularly in austerity periods (Cassell & Weibel, 1980, p. 72).

This is no longer the case. As philanthropy specifically directed at women and women’s issues has developed over the past twenty-six years, public libraries have benefited. Partnerships with the for-profit sector interested in the women’s market have also benefited libraries. Finally, federal funding for public programs at all types of cultural and educational institutions has been a major factor in nurturing the growth of public library public programming and providing support for women-related programs.
In the philanthropy sector, for example, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation has provided grants to public libraries to develop their breast cancer collections and do public programming on breast cancer awareness. In 2003 the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County used over $80,000 in Komen funds to expand the Library’s up-to-date holdings related to breast health by approximately twenty-fold (from sixty-eight books to more than two thousand) and to produce public programming aimed at both men and women. These included programs in Spanish and programs targeted at the African American community (Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 2003). Three other libraries surveyed also reported benefits from Komen Foundation funds: San Antonio Public Library, Broward County Library, and Los Angeles Public Library. Local foundations concerned with women and women’s issues, such as the Long Island Fund for Women and Girls, which helps support the Middle Country Public Library Women’s Expo, also provide a source of funding for library services directed at women.

The Woman’s Day magazine/American Library Association partnership represents another approach to funding for library programs. This co-branding partnership begun in 2002 focuses on the role of libraries in developing writers and has resulted in a number of activities linking the magazine’s readers to libraries. Among these are “Put It in Writing @ Your Library” workshops, held for the past five years in locations Woman’s Day authors can easily reach. The workshops are geared for women but attendance is not limited to women. Initially offered only in public libraries, the workshops have also been offered in community college libraries since 2004, and focus on the nuts and bolts of getting published. Authors share their personal experiences for about one and a half hours, and then librarians discuss local resources and the role of the library in support of local writers. Workshops are publicized in the March issue of Woman’s Day, which reaches over four million readers, and are held on the Tuesday of National Library Week in April. Woman’s Day pays for the authors and the American Library Association provides promotional material for local use. Overall attendance at these workshops has been “fantastic,” reports Megan Humphrey, Manager of the Campaign for America’s Libraries, which administers the partnership for ALA. There have been only a few disappointing turnouts, mostly because of unforeseen circumstances like bad weather (M. Humphrey, personal communication, December 5, 2006). The County of Los Angeles Public Library, one of the sites for the program, also reports that it is “very popular with women” (N. Mahr, personal communication, November 1, 2006).

Partnerships and co-branding with cultural, educational, and community organizations at the local level are also an important source of support for public library programming. Frank Navarro, Los Angeles Public Library Adult Services Coordinator, sees community organizations appro-
appropriately promoting their own mission in a library setting as providing sustaining resources to public libraries with limited programming budgets (F. Navarro, personal communication, December 21, 2006). The Multnomah County (OR) National Women’s History Month partnership with the University of Oregon’s four-year-old Center for the Study of Women in Society Road Scholars programs is an example. Speakers are free but the library must cover travel and lodging if the speaker has to travel any distance. In 2006 the partnership resulted in programs such as “Warrior Women in Anglo History and Song,” “Kinship by Design: A History of Child Adoption” and “The Gendered Garden: Women in the History of Gardens.” “This program series is a perfect fit for the library’s celebration of National Women’s History Month. The speakers are dynamic, articulate, and scholarly without being too academic and out of reach of our public library customers” according to Terrilyn Chun of the library’s public relations, public programs and exhibits department (personal communication, November 16, 2006).

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) public programming funding awarded to individual libraries or through the American Library Association’s Public Programs Office has been a significant force in the development of the reading and discussion programs so popular with women. Thomas Phelps, NEH Director of Public Programming, estimates that between sixty and seventy percent of the public library reading and discussion programs funded by NEH were on what he terms women’s themes, which “tend to draw larger audiences.” Popular themes have been women in the workplace, women in the wars and women immigrants. Programs on women and war covered the Civil War, women war correspondents, Rosie the Riveter, and an examination of how women’s active duty changed people’s perception of women’s abilities. The women immigrants themes ranged from programs on individual immigrants such as Typhoid Mary and Emma Goldman to a discussion of books written by women immigrants. Other programs have evolved around the contributions of specific women such as Annie Oakley, artists Georgia O’Keefe and Frida Kahlo, or groups of women such as the suffragists (T. Phelps, personal communication, November 7 and December 29, 2006).

Even funding programs not targeted at women now more readily include a female focus. For example the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) “Big Read” grants support community-wide reading programs of the works of four American women authors. Women writers constitute half the possible reading program selections. Many of the award sites were public libraries (NEA, 2006). The Cuyahoga County Public Library, for example, received a grant for $20,000 in 2006 to do programming around Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God (S. Feldman, personal communication, November 17, 2006).
Collections and Resources

Examination of collections and resources is not within the scope of this investigation, but we did observe some general trends. In 1980 we reported that “much of the material produced in the information explosion on women-related issues is still outside the standard acquisition channels for public libraries” and that women-related issues were “emerging so rapidly,” with so much information being produced, that keeping collections current was difficult. We also noted the controversial nature of much of the material on women-related topics (Cassell & Weibel, 1980, p. 72).

Today public library acquisition of “women’s studies” materials and materials of interest to women of all political perspectives is a given. In great part this change occurred because these topics are now published by the mainstream presses. It is easy to find them reviewed and easy for libraries to acquire them through their standard procedures and channels. Issues we once thought controversial or taboo are now discussed on television and portrayed in advertising. Ms. magazine is indexed in Readers’ Guide and often found in even the smallest public libraries. Mainstream magazines now frequently highlight significant women’s issues from history to health to domestic violence. Information and ideas once only found in women’s centers or feminist bookstores are more readily available in book or online formats commonly owned by public libraries, and fast-breaking information is now most easily found on the Internet.

This is not to suggest that all is right with the world. It can still be difficult to obtain materials through public libraries on current issues such as the “day after” abortion pill. Abortion, and materials on it, remains highly controversial, and homophobia still limits access to lesbian materials. However, mainstream publishers do produce books on these topics, and controversial issues are included in databases such as American Women’s History (available from Facts on File), and many public libraries are acquiring them.

In 1980 we observed that “many women active in the community-based women’s movement have not viewed the public library as a potential source of information and literature” and have set up their own resource centers (Cassell & Weibel, 1980, p. 72). While this is likely still true for many community-based activists, the days of the feminist bookstore or women’s center as an alternative source of information are over in most communities. The choices now are the local public library or the Internet. Because the selection of materials at the public library provides more diverse views through the books and journals acquired, more women are likely to find the information and literature they seek at the library. Internet Web sites require evaluation in order to understand their point of view. This is an area that calls for significant research. We simply don’t know whether or how women activists are using public libraries.
National Women’s History Month Programming

National Women’s History Month Project Executive Director Molly McGregor says that “libraries may buy a poster now and then” but the project has no way of tracking library participation in National Women’s History Month celebrations (personal communication, October 23, 2006). How might libraries take part in National Women’s History Month celebrations? At the most basic level, through book displays and bibliographies—something all twenty-three public libraries we surveyed say they do at least sporadically. Sixteen of these libraries (70 percent) also plan some sort of systematic public programming for National Women’s History Month (NWHM). (See Appendix A for a list of these libraries.) For the majority of these sixteen libraries this is an ongoing commitment. Nine (69 percent) of the thirteen libraries responding to our email list postings seeking information on public library programming for women also sponsor NWHM programs: West Deptford (NJ) Public Library; Multnomah County (OR) Library; Jacob Edwards Library in Southbridge (MA); Sachem (NY) Public Library; Contra Costa County (CA) Library; Omaha (NE) Public Library; Kenton County (KY) Public Library; Blackwater Regional (VA) Library; Rochester Hills (MI) Public Library. “Libraries latch on to hooks” when planning programs, according to ALA Public Program Office Director Deborah Robertson (personal communication, November 2, 2006). National Women’s History Month provides a recurring hook on which to build public programming. It is also a legitimizing factor like Black History Month, a time when programming on women is sanctioned and, in fact, expected.

NWHM programming patterns reflect current directions in public library adult services development: programming through partnerships, a mix of centralized and local planning, a mix of funding sources, and promotion of programs through the library Web site as well as more traditional approaches of flyers and calendars.

The majority of the libraries programming for National Women’s History Month do so through partnerships or in cooperation with other community organizations. Tanya Simons-Oparah, Outreach Services Director, Broward County Library, credits partnerships with local women’s groups as the key to the library’s successful programming for women (personal communication, November 3, 2006). In the case of Broward County (FL) Public Library and Ocean County (NJ) Public Library (both profiled below) these partnerships involve significant leadership on the part of the library in countywide efforts. These partnerships are also ongoing, continuing from year to year. For other libraries partnerships vary from year to year. In 2006, for example, the Chicago Public Library partnered with the Chicago Improv Festival because performing arts was the theme for all Chicago Public library heritage month celebrations (S. Stravis, personal communication, November 2, 2006).
Funding for National Women’s History Month typically comes from the library programming budget; only the Free Library of Philadelphia reported using only private funds for programming (H. Packman, personal communication, February 7, 2007). In some cases library funds are supplemented by grant funds, foundation or library friends funding, or contributions from partner agencies. Only the Chicago Public Library reported a designated budget for NWHM programming (S. Stravis, personal communication, November 2, 2006).

Preparations for Women’s History Month typically involve a combination of centrally coordinated planning and local planning. Chicago Public Library and Cleveland Public Library use planning committees made up of central and main library representatives to plan the library’s initiatives, with an option for locally generated programs (S. Stravis, personal communication, November 2, 2006; E. Leavitt & R. Antonucci, personal communication, December 12, 2006). Miami-Dade, Houston, and New York Public Library have program planners on staff that identify women’s history programs for branches but also encourage local branch developed programs (L. Louisdhon, personal communication, December 12, 2006; H. Stokes & S. Fernandez, personal communication, November 3, 2006; S. Thompson, personal communication, November 2, 2006). The third planning model used is program development only at the local or branch level. This is the approach taken at the Los Angeles Public Library (F. Navarro, personal communication, December 21, 2006).

Of the sixteen public libraries sponsoring NWHM programming, Chicago Public Library program planning is the most deeply integrated into the library’s system-wide programming framework. NWHM programs parallel the planning of the other heritage months celebrated by the library: African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Polish. All five heritage months are planned by committees made up of branch and central library staff. All have a designated programming budget although they may also draw on other programming resources in the library. All five heritage months include locally generated branch programs, programs planned by the committees that are offered at the central and regional libraries, and programs selected by the committees that are offered to branches whose staff select those of greatest interest to their community. More significantly, the five months are promoted with similar graphic designs using the same tag line: “Chicago celebrates diversity.” “We’re part of the Celebrate Diversity Banner” says Sandy Stravis, current chair of the library’s Women’s History Month Committee (personal communication, November 2, 2006).

All the libraries sponsoring National Women’s History Month programs typically promote them through the library’s calendar both in print and online. Flyers are also produced at the local level for most branch programs. The Broward County Public Library, Chicago Public Library, and Ocean County Public Library produce separate Women’s History Month brochures. This schedule information is replicated on the library Web sites.
In 2006 NWHM program content and format varied with the communities served, but all typically drew on local resources unless a major author was featured. The programs were not limited to history. They featured, for example, a Chicago Public Library panel discussion with black women journalists (S. Stravis, personal communication, November 2, 2006); a San Diego film and book discussion series on female mystery writers (L. Whitehouse, personal communication, November 9, 2006); a one-act play on Isadora Duncan at the Los Angeles County Public Library (N. Mahr, personal communication, November 1, 2006); a program on the women in James Baldwin’s life at Enoch Pratt Library (J. Cooper, personal communication, November 6, 2006); a talk by the city’s first African American female pathologist at the Houston Public Library (H. Stokes & S. Fernandez, personal communication, November 3, 2006); and a portrayal of Jackie Kennedy Onassis at Cleveland Public Library (E. Leavitt & R. Antonucci, personal communication, December 12, 2006). NWHM programs were typically no different in content and format than programs for women and on women-related issues offered during the rest of the year, both by the libraries that programmed during National Women’s History Month and those that did not—that is, they treated non-controversial topics and focused on achievement.

Lucrece Louisdhon, Assistant Director for Outreach and Programming and Special Projects at the Miami-Dade Public Library System, makes the point that the community needs to be connected to the program concept and therefore the focus for community programming needs to be on women’s achievements, not Women’s History Month per se (personal communication, December 12, 2006). Community connections, community programming, community-focused, and similar terms were used repeatedly when programming philosophy was addressed in our interviews.

Does National Women’s History Month foster more programs on women and women-related issues in public libraries? Or are programs the libraries would offer anyway merely clustered in March? Do these programs draw any audience different from the ongoing programs? We don’t know the answers to these questions but they merit further exploration.

Best Practice Case Studies
Three libraries exemplify the factors that support public library programming to women and on women related issues: Broward County Public Library headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Ocean County Public Library in a fast growing area of southeastern New Jersey; and Middle Country Public Library in Suffolk County, Long Island. All three have a well-developed library adult service philosophy, place a strong emphasis on services to adults through public programming and emphasize a partnership approach to programming. These partnerships include local businesses, governmental agencies, and local women’s groups ranging on the political activism spectrum from NOW to women’s service organizations.
Furthermore, these exemplary partnerships are ongoing, not just linked to one program or one time of the year. The partnerships indicate not only a willingness on the part of the library to work with such organizations but also an ongoing interest on the part of these organizations and agencies to work with the library. The partners bring additional resources to the libraries, but the libraries also provide significant programming resources. Finally, the partnerships supply an additional legitimizing factor for the programming by broadly representing the community.

Staff members we spoke with in all three libraries were enthusiastic about the programming offered to women and on women-related issues. They did not hesitate when asked to describe programs aimed at women. They knew what they were doing. The planning process in all three libraries, which includes their partner agencies, organizations and businesses, provides a sanctioned discussion of women’s needs and of library service to women.

Two of these libraries, Ocean County Public Library and Broward County Public Library, sponsor extensive month-long countywide NWHM programs as well as having a sustained record of public programming on women-related issues and for women. Middle Country Public Library does not program specifically during National Women’s History Month, but mounts significant and innovative programming throughout the year and a signature event in the fall.

The profiles provided below are based on telephone interviews, examination of documents provided by the three libraries and review of library Web sites. Tanya Simons-Oparah, Outreach Services Director, Broward County Library provided information on their services. Mary Ellen Pellington, Assistant Director, and Glynis Wray, Principal Librarian-Public Relations, provided information on Ocean County Public Library. Information on Middle Country Public Library was provided by Sandra Feinberg, Director; Barbara Jordan, Assistant Director for Community Relations; and Sophia Serlis-McPhillips, Coordinator of Adult Services.

Broward County Library
Partnerships increase the Broward County (FL) Library’s outreach to its community and enable the library to plan and present extensive programming during Women’s History Month. In 2006 the Women’s History Month celebration included a salute to International Women’s Day sponsored by many community groups, including the Broward County Historical Commission, the American Association of University Women, National Organization for Women, Broward County Trial Lawyers Association, Broward Community College, and Florida Atlantic University. The library programming included an exhibition of the work of local women artists, an International Women’s Day reception celebrating women’s leadership in Broward County, a workshop on “Foremothers: Early Women’s Rights Leaders,” a program on Zora Neale Hurston, women’s health programming, programs on women who start businesses, films on women, book discussions, and book displays.
The library publishes the county’s Women’s History Month brochure that lists community events of interest as well as library events. The library often takes a leadership role in planning the large public events such as this but is quick to invite other groups in the community to join them.

The Broward County Library emphasizes cultural programming as a way to bring its diverse community to the library. Women’s History Month, along with Black History Month, is one of the library’s annual core programming themes. Other core themes may vary from year to year, but its designation as an annual core theme assures that there will be National Women’s History Month programs in all branch libraries. Programming on the core themes is a requirement for all branches although other programs may also be developed. Program planning at the Broward County Library is done both centrally (through Outreach Services or the Florida Center for the Book housed in the main library) and locally in the branch libraries. In almost all of the library’s thirty-eight branches there are staff that are responsible for planning programs as part of their duties. These programmers meet four times a year with Tanya Simons-Oparah, Outreach Services Director, to discuss the core themes and program options.

Program funding comes from the county library budget, the library foundation and Friends group. Partnerships also enable the library to leverage funding and resources from other sources especially for special events. Ms. Simons-Oparah reports that when they partner with other groups, they try to get them to help with the funding since the library is providing the venue. Branches can request additional funding for programming from the library foundation or the Friends group.

Programming for women is not confined to Women’s History Month. Broward County Public Library was involved in establishing a Women’s Hall of Fame in the county and offered space for Hall of Fame events. The Pan-African book festival, now in its fifth year, is a library sponsored event. Each year the library seeks additional groups as partners for this event. Readings by authors who are invited to the library are always one of the highlights of the festival. Recognizing the importance of women writers, a couple of years ago the library sponsored a year long program, “Urban Stories,” that featured the work of women self-published authors. Another year the festival focused on women writers from historically black colleges. In 2005 the library was one of the sponsors of the Afrikan Women’s Week program that featured speakers, African drumming and dance, a fashion show, a presentation on spirituality, a program on holistic living, and a self-awareness workshop for girls. Programs were held at venues all over the county and were promoted by the library. A grant in 2005 from the Susan G. Komen Foundation enabled the library to present programs on breast cancer targeting African American and Hispanic women during Women’s History Month. The Broward County Public Library also has a coordinator who works with newcomer groups in the county. Programs
for newcomer populations, aimed at helping immigrants adjust to life in the United States, often attract mostly women. A program that explained the legal ramifications of corporal punishment of children is an example of successful outreach to immigrant women. Currently the library is working with a local Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Task Force to develop programming for Gay Pride Month.

Ocean County Public Library

2007 will be the third year of a countywide celebration of women’s history spearheaded by the Ocean County Public Library (OCPL), the only library partner listed on the National Women’s History Project (NWHP) Web site. The celebration that builds around the annual NWHP selected theme is organized by a committee made up of representatives of organizations like the Girl Scouts, League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women, the county Historical Society, Soroptimists, Zonta, the New Jersey Coalition on Women and Disabilities, local higher educational institutions, the Ocean County Advisory Committee on Women, Ocean County Health Department WIC program, and the library. Each agency develops its own programming, while the library serves as the steering and coordinating agency for the planning committee and publishes a brochure listing all the programs put on by participating agencies. The Ocean County Advisory Committee on Women and the library co-sponsor the Women’s History Month kickoff celebration, which includes activities such as proclamations read by county politicians and the acknowledgement of the achievement of local women by their own organizations.

The librarians of Ocean County Public Library’s twenty branches organize local programs with the assistance of the library’s special events coordinator. Programs for all ages are planned. Adult program examples from 2006 included a women’s history high tea; Global Voice of Women Festival, a celebration of self in dance, food and music; “Our Daughters, the Soldiers,” a talk on women in the military; presentations on Alice Paul, the New Jersey native who authored the Equal Rights Amendment, done in cooperation with the Alice Paul Institute; as well as author and film programs and book discussions. Children’s programs included theater productions featuring famous women, a women’s history poster contest and other craft programs, and a program on women in flight.

During the 2006 celebration of National Women’s History Month, the library undertook a focus on girls that OCPL intends to continue and expand into an ongoing program. “Girls’ Career Day: Power Up Your Future,” a full day for young women in grades nine through twelve featuring cartoonist Lela Lee, was a resounding success, as was Rachel Sims, author of Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls.

Public programming and outreach are strong components of the Ocean County Public Library’s service to residents, and the library typi-
cally uses its own funding for programs. Funding for National Women’s History Month programs comes from a systemwide programming budget, local branch programming budgets, and for special or shared events, the special events programming budget. New Jersey Council for the Humanities funds have also been tapped.

Programming during National Women’s History Month and the partnership with the National Women’s History Project have a number of advantages for the library according to Mary Ellen Pellington, Assistant Director of the Ocean County Public Library and also a member of the Ocean County Advisory Committee on the Status of Women. NWHM programming enables the Ocean County communities to participate in programs they might not otherwise have, provides an opportunity for countywide networking of women’s organizations, and creates an awareness of women in a national and global context. Pellington says that it is “basically natural” for the library to tie into the National Women’s History Project and to adopt the project’s annual theme for its own public programs.

The Ocean County Public Library is also involved in other programming for women. In October 2006, for example, the library cooperated with the Ocean County Health Commission on programs on women’s health concerns such as breast cancer, bone density, obesity, and blood pressure.

**Middle Country Public Library**

The Middle Country Public Library (MCPL) in Suffolk County, Long Island (NY) focuses less on theme month programming than on targeted programming throughout the year. Theme-related programming occurs during National Library Week and the Week of the Young Child in April because of the publicity benefits of the tie-in, but given MCPL’s heavy year-round programming schedule, celebrations of National Women’s History Month and other heritage months are typically limited to book displays.

In addition to the women-related craft, health and book discussion fare typical of public libraries, MCPL has two ongoing programs for women: The Herstory Writers Workshop for self-development; and the Women’s Expo, an economic development program. MCPL also has a component for new mothers in their Family Place program.

For the past four years the Middle Country Public Library has funded Herstory Writers Workshop, a writing class for women eighteen years or older. “More than just a writing workshop,” according to a promotional flyer produced by the library, “Herstory is dedicated to celebrating the real lives of women, whatever their journeys.” Taught by Erica Duncan, a former *New York Times* writer, this intense class for up to twenty women meets twice a month and has been a turning point in the lives of many of the participants. The women write personal stories, often based on memories. Other programs have developed out of the writing workshop including an afternoon reception where women from the Herstory class read their works.
Now going into its seventh year, the Women’s Expo is a trade show and educational and networking opportunity for women entrepreneurs, sponsored by MCPL in partnership with the Long Island Fund for Women and Girls, and with co-sponsorship, which includes significant grants from area banks and businesses like Verizon. In October 2006 upwards of seventy women displayed and sold their products and services, double the number at the first Expo in 2001. The one-day Expo takes up over 60 percent of the library’s space and requires about seventy volunteers, many from the area business and bank co-sponsors. With over 1,500 attendees “the Expo breaks all records for the library in terms of the concentration of people coming in such a short span of hours.” The Expo has the feel of women supporting women to advance in business, “a very female thing.” (S. Feinberg, B. Jordan, & S. Serlis-McPhillips, personal communication, November 21, 2006). MCPL also offers educational workshops through its Miller Business Resource Center so the women can develop their business skills.

The Women’s Expo is run by a committee made up of librarians, representatives of groups focused on women and general purpose organizations with an arm devoted to women. The Expo originated with a conversation about jewelry between the female director of MCPL and the head of the Long Island Community Foundation.

For three years MCPL also worked with the Community Development Corporation on their Core Four program, a twelve-hour, four-week class that met at the library. Ten to fifteen women attended at a time. Librarians taught marketing segments and encouraged women with ideas for businesses to use the libraries for research.

Family Place, MCPL’s nationally recognized program enabling families and caregivers to play and learn with children, in partnership with the National Association of Mothers’ Centers developed a support program for new mothers. It is a peer facilitated empowerment program in which the mothers run their own events and select their own speakers. MCPL facilitated the development of the program in ten Long Island public libraries, eight of which continue to host it. Ten to twelve mothers meet weekly in eight-week segments, working collaboratively with a librarian who supports but does not interfere with their activities. This program is patron-driven rather than librarian-driven, and this stretches the librarians. The librarians from participating Long Island libraries are now meeting on a regular basis as support for their new role in cooperative programming with patrons.

In partnership with Stony Brook University MCPL also provides health programming that includes sessions for women. For example, in the Health and New Technology series there was a program on breast and cervical cancer. MCPL also sponsors a popular Introduction to Women’s Weight Training and Body Toning class.

The primary partner for MCPL in programs targeted at women has been the Long Island Fund for Women and Girls, an island-wide fund-
ing organization. Middle Country has hosted fund programs and has gotten other libraries involved with the fund. NOW and the League of Women Voters also meet at the library, and MCPL has worked with county women’s services and the town office for women. The library is regularly asked to partner with local organizations, which see the library as centrally located, welcoming, and a community resource, “all the things you want them to say” according to MCPL director Sandra Feinberg.

**Conclusion**

Public libraries that actively programmed to women and on women-related issues in 2006 are generally characterized by the same combination of factors that were present in libraries that developed such services in 1980. These libraries

- use legitimizing factors or partnerships with established community organizations and government agencies,
- have a well-developed library adult service philosophy,
- employ staff members interested in women’s issues,
- solicit partnerships and funding for projects designed to serve women,
- participate in organized and sanctioned discussion of library service to women, and,
- work in concerted effort with local agencies and organizations to deal with women-related issues.

Does this mean that nothing has changed in the twenty-six years since we wrote our first assessment of library service to women and on women-related issues? The answer is yes and no.

The nature of the legitimizing factors has changed. National Women’s History Month, now a cornerstone for library programming, did not exist in 1980. In some ways the active women’s movement was itself a legitimizing factor for library programs and services in the 1970s and 1980s. Certainly the United Nations–declared International Women’s Year in 1975, and to a lesser extent the United Nations Decade for Women (1980–1990), served as legitimizing factors for library programs, as did the United States 1977 International Women’s Year Conference held in Houston and the state conferences that preceded it.

The difference today lies more in the focus than the names of these legitimizing factors. The International Women’s Year and Decade, and certainly the women’s movement, were policy focused. National Women’s History Month is about celebrating the history and achievement of women. Is there more public programming focused on looking back because this is safer than examining the current situation? Perhaps it is because this type of program is readily available from local cultural and educational organizations. Or is it because National Women’s History Month is the only national-level...
women-related legitimizing factor? For whatever reason, we women are still reclaiming our past and public libraries are a part of that process.

In current public library programming for women or on women-related issues there is less emphasis on public policy issues and more on personal well-being and fulfillment. This may reflect the public library’s growing role in personal development rather than a more traditional civic role, but this may also be a reflection of women’s perceived needs and the spa-ing of America.

There are certainly more author appearances than in 1980, but this is true for male as well as female authors. Health and personal finance are more prominent topics than in 1980 but, again, this is a growing focus for public library programming and the wider culture overall. Instead of being the focus of dedicated programming, women’s information needs are subsumed within these program frameworks, which appear gender-neutral on their surface (although there are exceptions to this).

Partnerships figure more strongly than they did in 1980. Business is a more visible partner in women’s programs, and there are more governmental agencies involved, such as status-of-women commissions. Partnering, particularly for programming, is a major thrust, in public libraries these days, so this too may be a result of library philosophy more than a tactic to attract female audiences.

We think there is a relationship between staff interest in women’s issues and the strongest programs identified in our survey; this is an area that merits further exploration. In state and national library associations there are fewer opportunities for public library staff (as opposed to academic women’s studies librarians) to discuss and network on their women’s programming than in 1980, but we do see examples of organized and sanctioned discussion of library service to women taking place at the local level with others, not necessarily librarians, interested in serving women.

We said in 1980, and still believe today, that “library service to women and on women-related issues is, after all, nothing more than good public librarianship” (Cassell & Weibel, 1980, p. 75). We also believe that we need to actively seek to know and serve the women within our communities. We are dismayed that with a few notable exceptions this is not happening in public libraries. Public librarians’ belief that programs must have universal appeal limits their ability to serve both women and men. Some programs cut across gender, some don’t. Who is most likely to show up at a scrapbooking program? Who is most likely to be attracted by a program on collecting classic cars? Public librarians plan these programs, but they do not readily admit that they are seeking or serving a gender-based audience. Wouldn’t we all, men and women, be better served if our unique interests and needs, whatever the source of these, were acknowledged and represented in the programming schedule of our local public library? Despite some exceptions that can serve as models, for the most part, we are still a long way from doing this.
## APPENDIX A: WOMEN’S PROGRAMMING IN LIBRARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>WHM programs</th>
<th>Other women’s programs</th>
<th>Partnerships with local groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Brooklyn Public Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Broward County Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Chicago Public Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Cleveland Public Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* County of Los Angeles Public Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Cuyahoga County Library</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Enoch Pratt Public Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Free Library of Philadelphia</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Harrison County Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Houston Public Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Kalamazoo Public Library</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Los Angeles Public Library</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Miami-Dade Public Library</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Middle Country Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* New York Public Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Ocean County Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Phoenix Public Library</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Queens Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* San Antonio Public Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* San Diego Public Library</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># San Francisco Public Library</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One of the fifteen largest public library systems in the United States as defined by the Urban Libraries Council
# Library recommended by Deborah Robertson, Director, ALA Public Programs Office
+ Library partner on the National Women’s History Month Web site

### REFERENCES


**INTERVIEW INFORMATION**


Chun, Terrilyn, Public Relations, Public Programs and Exhibits Officer, Multnomah County Library. Email communication to Kay Cassell, November 16, 2006.


Feinberg, Sandra, Director; Barbara Jordan, Assistant Director for Community Relations; and Sophia Serlis-McPhillips, Coordinator of Adult Services, Middle Country Public Library. Telephone interview with Kathleen Weibel, November 21, 2006.


Kuhn, Joan. Cultural Program Officer, Chappaqua (NY) Public Library. Telephone interview with Kay Cassell, November 8, 2006.

Leavitt, Ellen, Eastside Branch Coordinator, and Ron Antonucci, Head of Literature, Cleveland Public Library. Telephone Interview with Kathleen Weibel, December 12, 2006.


Mahr, Nancy. Public Information Officer, County of Los Angeles Public Library. Telephone interview with Kay Cassell, November 1, 2006.


Pellington, Mary Ellen, Assistant Director; and Glynis Wray, Principal Librarian-Public Relations, Ocean County Public Library. Telephone interview with Kathleen Weibel, December 12, 2006.

Persic, Peter. Director of Public Relations, Los Angeles Public Library. Telephone interview with Kay Cassell, December 21, 2006


Simons-Oparah, Tanya. Outreach Services Director, Broward County (Florida) Library. Telephone interview with Kay Cassell, November 3, 2006.


Thompson, Sonja. Coordinator of Adult Services, Queens Library. Telephone interview with Kay Cassell, November 2, 2006.


Kay Ann Cassell is an assistant professor at the School of Communication, Information, and Library Studies at Rutgers University. She was previously the Associate Director of Collections and Services for the New York Public Library and has been a public library director and an academic library director. Cassell is the co-author of Reference and Information Service in the 21st Century (Neal-Schuman, 2006), the editor of the journal, Collection Building, and the author of numerous articles for library publications including articles on women’s presses and publications. She has been active in women’s activities in ALA and in the community and in 1986 won the ALA Equality Award for her work on women’s issues.

Kathleen Weibel recently retired from the Chicago Public Library where she served as Director of Staff Development. She is currently taking classes at the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science so that she can return to public librarianship as a youth services librarian. Weibel has also been an academic library director, state library consultant, independent library consultant, and young adult librarian. Active in state and national library association feminist organizations, Weibel has written a number of other articles on women and librarianship and with Kathleen Heim (McCook) edited Women in Librarianship 1876–1976 (Oryx Press, 1978). Weibel received the American Library Association’s Equality Award in 1988 for her work on women’s issues.