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FEMINIST PERIODICALS CONFERENCE

June, 1985

OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

There was minimal follow-up to the 1980 Conference as we did not have the collective financial or human resources needed to facilitate the informal networking suggested at that conference. It was felt by some that concrete follow-up measures and structures were necessary if this year's conference is to bear fruit.

As the periodicals are a voice and a visible element of the feminist movement, we may, as publishers, look at ourselves in reference to the objective of giving feminism a higher profile. We need to look at innovative ways to broaden our readership and to connect with other women in their respective communities.

We must remember that our needs vary, stemming in part from our diverse locations. We might consider meeting regularly to discuss issues and to share information.

Networking

Effective networking must be coordinated and animated, but must not impose great demands on our already hectic schedules.

Forms Networking Could Take:

- using our collective sub. base for numerical strength
- sharing information, particularly on controversial issues,
- skill-sharing: each publisher could prepare a kit focusing on an area of particular interest/expertise, e.g. layout
- periodical exchange: each publisher is to undertake this
- joint promotion (ad exchange): Kinesis
- joint promotion (direct mailing): CPPA, pending their approval, perhaps in co-sponsorship with the Women's Program,
- creating an art, photography and graphics bank (clipping, crediting and mailing): Atlantis
- identifying and defining crises and relevant solutions, including the support of those periodicals whose funding is diminishing,
- mailing list exchange: RFR/DRF
- other suggestions discussed below.

Networking (cont'd)

The following options were discussed:

a) The setting up of a committee to coordinate joint ventures.

It was suggested that a steering committee be set up in order to give direction and support to a salaried person. This committee, centrally-located, would handle the day-to-day affairs. An executive committee, on the other hand, would handle policy- and decision-making and would therefore necessitate being inter-regional.

If it were decided that lobbying would be a function of such a committee, the committee would then necessarily be located away from the Montréal-Ottawa-Toronto triangle. There was controversy as to whether or not to separate the lobbying and the promotion functions.

A feasibility study could be undertaken as to the forming of a pan-Canadian organization, exploring permanent structures, salaried positions, etc. We need to decide whether or not such an organization is desirable in principle before considering details, e.g. incorporation. It was suggested that a proposal be submitted at the next conference, but no one took responsibility for this item. This ambivalence may be rooted in our lack of resources. Short-term projects are feasible, but setting up a separate formal network may necessitate further collective dependence on state support.

b) The joint hiring of consultants to be responsible for certain tasks, such as the designing of a joint display. Hiring would help to assure both accountability and recognition for the work.

c) Each publisher taking responsibility for the follow-up of an item. This may well strengthen our interaction and could, be it successful or not, provide a measure as to how well we could work together.

Networking (cont'd)

It was decided that certain participants would take responsibility for coordinating the follow-up of items of particular interest to them, setting that as their priority for home-based ACTION. This would include consideration of options and structures pertaining to the item and also the establishment and maintenance of contact with the other feminist periodical publishers. Grant applications would ideally be done jointly, but as no one agreed to coordinate the grants, they will be submitted individually.

Lobbying

There was controversy as to whether lobbying presents a worthwhile strategy for us when our resources could be put to work in an essentially more feminist way. Some felt that lobbying is necessary in order to protect that which we have gained in terms of state financial support. Successful lobbying strategies are something to be knowledgeable about, but not necessarily to emulate. It was pointed out that those who are successful lobbyists are those whose interests are perceived to be aligned with current Political interests. Our (necessary) reliance upon government funding poses a problem since the acceptance of public, institutional or private funding is a political decision in itself. Some felt that it would be more appropriate to take our concerns to our readership, for grassroots support, rather than to employ a lobbyist.

Press Release

The majority of publishers decided to issue a press release in support of HERizons, under attack in recent months for its support of women's rights.

Canadian Periodical Publishers Association (CPPA)

There was discussion as to the benefits and drawbacks of membership within CPPA, and as to why certain periodicals are/are not members of CPPA and/or l'Association des périodiques du Québec.

Although CPPA has offered joint promotion ventures for magazines, many feminist publishers are unable to afford the CPPA membership fee. CPPA services are presently unilingual. Also, rural magazines are not served by the CPPA distribution system which is concentrated in Southern Ontario.

It was suggested that a strong feminist caucus be developed within CPPA, that this caucus meet at the CPPA AGM, and that it be allocated space in the CPPA newsletter. More of our periodicals should be represented on the CPPA Board.

It was suggested that we also form a periodicals caucus within NAC. Although there may be divergencies with certain positions taken by NAC, a caucus within NAC (National Action Committee on the Status of Women) could provide a vehicle for keeping us in tune with a number of concerns within the women's community.

These caucuses would provide us with the opportunity to promote women's publishing within NAC and to promote women's concerns within CPPA.

It appears that l'APQ is restrictive as to whom it admits. It is a Québec-based organization, for instance, and any magazines published outside Québec are refused membership. Two publishers present at the Conference did apply, but were rebuffed.

There was discussion as to the possibility of French-language or Québec-based periodical publishers linking together and then approaching CPPA.

L'Une à L'autre presently exchanges magazines with American magazines publishing similar content. It appears that the spirit of sharing can override the language barrier.

CPPA has offered member periodicals the use of its office space.

Site of the 1986 Conference

It was decided that feminist periodicals from across Canada would meet annually. Where possible, publishers might send new delegates to each annual meeting in order to enhance networking and information flow. There was a suggestion that publishers meet more frequently on a regional basis.

The choice for the site of next year's Conference was either Thunder Bay or Toronto. Toronto was chosen, despite hesitation regarding its centrality.

There was interest in hooking up with either Women and Words or with CPPA's AGM. Various considerations were discussed. The CPPA AGM is in May whereas Women and Words is in July when fewer women are available (i.e. Summer break = child care, etc.). Holding two women's conferences back-to-back would be exhausting to the point of being ineffective. CPPA provides elementary technical skill workshops, but there was concern expressed regarding the expense of these workshops. It was suggested that our Conference offer a subsidy to cover workshop costs. The Canada Council presently offers travel subsidies to CPPA members attending the AGM, and this could offset workshop costs for those CPPA members coming some distance.

Linking up with CPPA would be more feasible because some of the Toronto-area periodical publishers are already involved in Women and Words. The caucus already established in Toronto could work on the Conference planning. All Torontonians present were to go back to their colleagues for a decision on this. Individuals from Broadside, Healthsharing and OtherWise expressed an interest in being part of the conference coordinating team. It was agreed that the 1986 conference grant would be coordinated by the Toronto caucus.

The majority of publishers preferred holding the conference just prior to the CPPA AGM. CPPA is to be contacted as to whether or not they would welcome this proposal.