Since the mid-70s there has been growing criticism of the existing archives and libraries, especially of the structure and classification of their collections. Points of criticism have been: 1) the lack of books and archives by and about women; 2) the inadequate library classification and subject catalogs for monographs, and incomplete "Findbücher" (finding aids) for archives; and 3) the very inconvenient opening hours, especially for women (FFBIZ 1989). That these institutions, which normally don't rate particular publicity, should find themselves in the crossfire of feminist criticism was the logical consequence of general dissatisfaction with the official system of education, which feminists saw as a "major tool for the maintenance and continuation of patriarchal values and structures" (Latz 1989, 11). Therefore, the establishment of women's archives and libraries was a logical element in a "comprehensive conceptualization of alternative education in feminist research projects" (26-27). According to this view education by, with and for women is only possible when material about women in the past and present is collected and made available at various centers. By the mid-80s a general and widespread dissatisfaction within the women's movement about traditional archive and library systems resulted in the establishment of many "autonomous" women's archives and libraries all over the Federal Republic of Germany.

In this development, the feminists were part of a historical continuum. The "old" women's movement had also initiated the founding of separate women's libraries. For example: the Allbemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein (General German Women's Association), the Verein Frauenwohl (Association for Women's Prosperity), and the Kaufmännische Verband für weibliche Angestellte (Commercial League of Women Employees) all had their own libraries in Berlin (Runkel 1979; Jank 1989, 1-6). The Commercial League's library was established with the help of 20 Articles

**Progressive Librarian 21**
of donations from several women prominent in the women's movement at that time: Minna Cauer, Helene Lange and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. At the time of its founding in 1892, the library consisted of 440 books. By 1900 it had grown to 6000, and by 1906 to approximately 7000. The first woman librarian in Germany, Bona Peiser, was in charge of that collection. In 1896 the library of the Verein Frauenwohl was opened in Berlin, founded by Maria Lischnewski, a teacher from Spandau (a city on the outskirts of Berlin). The previous year she had voiced the opinion in the journal Die Frauenbewegung (The Women's Movement) that publications of the women's movement, which were then reaching ever larger numbers of readers in the general population, should be collected in a special women's library. Women would be encouraged to become politically active by reading the works in such collections which would also serve future generations as research libraries. The original inventory of the Verein Frauenwohl included 300 books; when the library was integrated into the Berlin city library in 1909, it consisted of 4100 titles.

A motivating factor in the "old" women's movement's search for new ways to properly document and propagate women's knowledge and history was their dissatisfaction with the traditional male library system. The experimental "women's libraries" collapsed, however, usually after only a few decades because financing could not be firmly established for continuing operation.

It should be noted that women's libraries are not a phenomenon limited to Germany. The Lexikon der Frau (Encyclopedia of Women) published in 1953 has seven entries under the heading "feminist libraries" for facilities in Amsterdam, Brussels, London, Paris and 3 cities in the U.S. which were founded between 1920 and 1950 (Bibliotheken 1953, 433-4). Suzanne Hildenbrand published a survey in 1986 under the title Women's Collections, Libraries, Archives and Consciousness which described U.S. women's archives and libraries (Hildenbrand 1985, 70-80). In an appendix she also listed the most important women's libraries of the world.

For the area of the Federal Republic of Germany there are two relatively recent listings of women's archives and libraries. First a survey by Karin Schatzberg published in a second edition in 1986 and second a loose-leaf service published cooperatively since 1989 by the FFBIZ (Frauenforschungs-, Bildungs- und Informationszentrum / Women's Research, Education and Information Center in Berlin) and the Frauenanstiftung Hamburg e.V. (Women's Foundation Hamburg) (Schatzberg 1986). Both references are based on descriptions contributed by the women's libraries and archives themselves. In 1989 Birgit Latz published a research paper which attempts to analyze these institutions from a feminist point of view (Latz 1989, 2).

The Survey

On the basis of information contained in the three publications mentioned above, I will examine six aspects of women's archives and libraries: name, organization and financing, collection and its structure, library access, use, public relations and networking.

The traditionally defined difference between archive and library has not been heeded by autonomous women's groups. Schatzberg notes that "collections of feminist literature can be found under a wide range of different names which do not necessarily allow any conclusions about the way they are organized" (Schatzberg 1986, 19). They are most usually called "archives", but almost all are libraries on the basis of their actual collections.

The names are often long and sometimes complicated. Abbreviations are widely used which, unfortunately, are often not easily understood. Feminist imagination is evidenced in the inventive names given to some libraries and archives and to local and national feminist journals. Most important to the founders of women's archives and libraries has been the selection of names which indicate their integrated approach to research, education and information. A few examples are: FFBIZ (Frauenforschungs-, bildungs- und informationszentrum Berlin / Women's Research, Education and Information Center Berlin); IFF (Interdisziplinäre Forschungsgruppe Frauenforschung: Dokumentation-Information-Archiv Bielefeld / Interdisciplinary Research Group: Women's Research-Documentation-Archive Bielefeld); FlbiDoZ (Feministisches Informations-, Bildungs- und Dokumentationszentrum Nürnberg / Feminist Information, Education and Documentation Center Nuremberg). Some groups have tried to indicate in their name the fact that they are...
autonomous groups: the Koblenz Autonomous Women’s Archive, and the Autonomous Women’s Archive Wiesbaden-Research and Education Institute. Juxtaposed to these somewhat ponderous names are others which show a combination of creativity and objectivity: Spinnboden Lesbenarchiv Berlin (Spinning-Room Lesbian Archive Berlin); Bremen Women’s Archive and Documentation Center “Belladona”; and “Black Widow”—the Autonomous Women’s Research Office Münster.

The dissatisfaction with existing institutions that led to the creation of women’s archives and libraries naturally had consequences for the organizational structure of the new establishments. The women wanted to do things better. The founders of the FFBIZ criticized among other things “the partially rigid separation of research, education and information in the existing institutions, also the division between theory and practice, and, finally, the hierarchy among the women involved” (FFBIZ). The Münster group simply stated, “the Black Widow had come into being because of dissatisfaction with traditional methods of operation in the arts and sciences” (FFBIZ).

The women’s archives and libraries that characterize themselves as “autonomous” define that autonomy as “independence of political and confessional ties, and of male interference, but also the dismantling of hierarchical structures. That means independence in the sense of self-determination. However, autonomy is also related to organizational structure.” And, in differentiation to the earlier women’s movement, “While the first women’s movement was organized hierarchically [following the models of women’s] clubs and societies, the projects of the autonomous women’s movement have chosen the form of organization strictly for financial reasons” (Haiber 1983). In other words, the independence of the women’s projects, and, therefore, also of their archives and libraries, from any form of institutional control allows for experimentation with new conceptual models for doing research, learning and working. Some aspects of these new models are: the ability to determine work content; greater say in collection development; the removal of hierarchical structures in the workplace; removal of the division of non-professional tasks from professional responsibilities; avoidance of the service/consumer element in relationships between the women involved in the project and the libraries’ users; and a different relationship to the materials collected, since it is women’s “own” material (Latz 1989, 33-34).

In order to achieve these goals money is needed — to rent office space, to purchase books and archive material, to prepare materials for use, to maintain hours of operation, to initiate research, and to carry on public relations. Most of the women’s archives and libraries are registered associations, a status which allows them to collect membership dues and to apply for public funding. In order to grant tax deductions to contributors they must be officially recognized as non-profit organizations (37).

Money used to buy books and to pay other business expenses comes from membership dues and donations. Labor is usually contributed by volunteers, interns, and temporary employees hired through the National Employment Agency. Sporadically, full-time paid positions have been won after long and complicated battles. The combination of paid and volunteer labor had led to conflicts in many projects because of a tendency for hierarchy and specialization to develop.

The fact that operating budgets come from public agencies does not necessarily call into question their claims of autonomy. The FFBIZ declares, “If the traditional, male-oriented research, education and information institutions so clearly ignore our needs, then we want to put our tax money in projects which just as clearly pursue our interests” (39).

In addition to the autonomous women’s archives and libraries, there are also those integrated into institutions like universities (for example in Bielefeld and Dortmund). Such arrangements are not trouble-free and support from feminist researchers is absolutely necessary to maintain and secure their existence. Often the university-based projects are underfunded and the women working on them must spend much time and energy justifying their existence to university administrators (42-47). The situation of the Helene Lange Archive is an exception. Donated in 1945 to the Berlin City Archive by the Berlin Women’s Organization, it is fully supported and supervised by an archivist and a historian (Schuchard 1989, 81-84).

Women’s archives and libraries collect books, pamphlets, periodicals, newspaper articles, research papers, flyers, autographs,
photographs, and even objects. The size of the collections vary widely. The largest are: the Archive of the German Women's Movement in Kassel which has about 14,000 books, periodicals and documents; the FFBIZ in Berlin with roughly 7,000 titles and 350 domestic and foreign feminist periodicals; and Denk(t)räume in Hamburg with about 5,000 titles. Exact counts for the holdings of the collections are not usually available because the normal criteria for compiling library statistics have not always been followed by these groups. Some archives and libraries have made a special effort to collect ephemera and "gray" literature and have large collections of university term papers on subjects of interest to women (for example, the Women's Archive in Osnaabrück.)

The main subjects of interest in the collections are similar in almost all of the women's archives and libraries: women's work, research by and about women, feminist theory, genetic and reproduction technology, feminist linguistic theory, violence, sexism and lesbianism. Some collections refuse to define specific areas of collection development, like the women of the Black Widow who say that collection development is "the direct result of the current political situation and our own personal interests" (FFBIZ).

Often the groups try to tie into regional history. The unearthing of long buried traces of women's history has been the main goal of many women's archives and libraries in Aachen, Aschaffenburg, Berlin, Bonn, Bremen, Düsseldorf, Koblenz, München, Tübingen and other places. A second common goal of many groups is to actively influence the current women's movement, to collect information, and to document the results of investigations for future generations. Still other women's archives and libraries concentrate on specific subjects: the "old" women's movement in Kassel; the role of women in Islam in Münster; women and music in Kassel.

Cataloging and classification is not done according to universally applied standards — which is true of traditional libraries in Germany as well. In descriptions of women's archives and libraries subject catalogs and alphabetical author catalogs are mentioned as well as subject heading and key-word indexes. As a general rule they usually have an alphabetical catalog of authors and a subject catalog. Goals for bibliographic control are very high, though major difficulties do arise. The Feminist Archive in Marburg remarked that,

It is obvious that we can't simply classify everything under the heading 'women.' We attempt to assemble the material in categories, which represent the point of view of women, more precisely, the feminist analysis of society which take into account the political interconnections between separate phenomena. This goal is unfortunately not so easy to achieve. ... We do not want a continuation of patriarchal ideology in our choice of subject headings. As a result, instead of using the work 'Arbeitslosigkeit' which means "being without work," we choose the word "Erwerbslosigkeit" which means "unemployed." Instead of the heading "partnership," we have used "ideology of partnership," and instead of "mothers," we have established "women with children" (FFBIZ).

Content cataloging has been extended often far beyond that usually done in libraries. For example, the Feminist Archive and Documentation Center in Cologne catalogs periodical articles (FFBIZ). In Bonn the project women are endeavouring to create a new library order:

Fiction and non-fiction concerning central women's subjects stand side-by-side in order to join reading pleasure with theory building, and, hopefully, among other things to lower the threshold for women not usually accustomed to reading scholarly literature (FFBIZ).

The women's archive in Aschaffenburg offers an additional service and conducts independent investigations into the holdings of traditional archives and libraries of the area in order to be able to inform their users of further information sources (FFBIZ).

Women's archives and libraries are usually open only to women. Usually they are not lending libraries and there is normally a charge for use. The charges vary: FFBIZ, for example, charges 5 DM [$3.00] for one visit and 60 DM for a yearly permit; in the Denk(t)räume in Hamburg the library permit can be purchased for 40-60 DM. In some places inquiries cost 40 DM per hour of
search time, plus the cost of photocopies and postage, but there are also institutions which are free of charge (FFBIZ).

Operating hours vary, but in general they are shorter than in the established public and academic libraries. This is not surprising considering the difficult financial situation of women's archives and libraries.

Public relations activities are extremely varied. They include exhibitions, publications about regional women's history and general feminist topics, oral history projects with older women, conferences, lecture series and film showings.

In 1983 women involved in autonomous projects gathered for the first time to exchange ideas and experiences. At the conclusion of the second meeting in September 1984 (at the Free University's Women's Studies Center) the women joined together in a working committee on archives and libraries. Since then there have been meetings twice a year in different cities, in which the approximately 35 women's archives and libraries participate (FFBIZ). Representatives from women's archives and libraries from Switzerland and Austria also take part in these meetings.

In March 1989 the Baff (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Autonomer Frauenforschungseinrichtungen / National Committee of Autonomous Women's Research Centers) was founded in Frankfurt. It is an association of feminist scholars and research institutions. This organization is nationally and regionally politically active “to increase the resources available for women's research and to ensure continuity in the institutions concerned with women's interests” (Zentraleinrichtung 1989, 48).

Conclusion

I would like to add a few personal notes to the general subject at hand and to suggest some possible cooperative efforts between "established" librarians in public and special libraries and the autonomous women's projects. To begin with, I consider the existence of both library forms - established and autonomous - to be indispensable. Women from the autonomous groups have discussed such cooperation at least once. When they met in Berlin in 1984 a goal for the future was formulated: "An attempt should be made to introduce into library science institutes and training schools theoretical approaches and practical efforts which lead to improved collecting, cataloging, classification and distribution of women's literature" (Schatzberg 1984, 91-92). As far as I know, however, no action has been taken on this recommendation which could be a potential starting point for cooperative efforts. Before cooperative projects can begin, however, misconceptions held by both the established and autonomous libraries must be overcome.

The critiques of publicly-supported libraries by the autonomous women are not always justified. For example, Birgit Latz writes,

"From experience I know that I won't find much in a college library. In the keyword catalog under the heading "women" few works can be found which contain the word "women" in the title and they are scattered around the entire library. If I know the name of the author, then I am sometimes [surprisingly] able to find a book I am looking for in the alphabetical author-catalog. However, what about all of the books by women I don't know [yet] and which I can't even find by chance, because they are not available in the library? ... Bibliographies [on women] are rare [Latz 1989, 2]."

I don't know which college library Birgit Latz used and I don't consider the keyword-catalog the best key to the library, but certainly the placement of books on different shelves around the library is not an evil patriarchal invention, and the fact that Ms. Latz expresses surprise at finding a specific author's name in the alphabetical catalog seems to be merely a rhetorical means of encouraging her readers to look elsewhere for material on women's topics — i.e. in women's archives and libraries, which are not always better than university libraries (28).

Both sides must learn to be more open-minded with one another in order to share expertise and to supplement each other's efforts. So far this happens much to seldom. For example, a women's archive proudly announced its acquisition of the volumes for 1928-1945 of the journal Die Frau (which, by the way, ceased publication in 1943-44) and claimed to be the sole owner of the journal in the Federal Republic of Germany. This announcement only reveals the group's ignorance of such basic reference tools as the Periodical Data Bank for Germany. A glance at the microfiche catalog would have disclosed that the women's archive doesn't own a complete set of the periodical...

28 Articles

Progressive Librarian 29
and, furthermore, that the title is held by several university and other libraries (FFBIZ).

An important contribution of women's archives and libraries is that they root out and collect historically important material, a task not easy for large publicly-supported libraries to assume and often not even something that the state-supported institutions want to concern themselves with. For example, only with the help of a women's project was I able to track down part of a librarian's bequest which might otherwise have been lost forever. Everyone will have to develop their own opinion about the worth of the autonomous organizations and each opinion will undoubtedly be influenced by the degree of personal involvement in the women's movement. Some will perhaps welcome the opportunity to write women's history in an atmosphere free of male influence, others might value the different ways in which work is organized, and others will appreciate the language used in the formal cataloging and classification of materials having to do with women's topics.

Finally, it occurs to me that this last point might be the basis for a limited project in which to attempt cooperation between the autonomous and the established libraries. It is well known (and a nightmare to some) that many Germany libraries have created their own guidelines for subject classification and only now has an attempt been made, with the "authorized rules for subject headings," to create a nationally uniform code of classification. Unfortunately, however, these "rules" do not always meet feminist requirements for non-sexist classification. For example, the new "rules" recognize the female variation of the various occupational groups. If there is a book about a "Journalistin" (woman journalist), then, of course, that subject heading is used. But, if a book covers journalists both male (Journalist) and female (Journalistin), then only the male form (Journalist) appears as a heading. We should protest such cataloging practices and the terminology of the Standard List of Subject Headings should be scrutinized from a feminist point of view. Such cooperation could be of great service to both the established and the autonomous archives and libraries.

Translation by Grace Quitzow

This article is a slightly shortened version of "Frauenarchive und Frauenbibliotheken in Deutschland" which appeared in 81. Deutscher Bibliothekartag in Kassel 1991: Wissenschaftliche Bibliotheken im vereinten Deutschland, edited by Engelbert Plassmann, Hildegard Müller and Werner Tussing; Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann-Verlag, 1992: 199-210.

Works Cited


