

# Women's Memory



Women's Memory:  
The Problem of Sources

Edited by

D. Fatma Türe and Birsen Talay Keşođlu

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

Women's Memory: The Problem of Sources,  
Edited by D. Fatma Türe and Birsen Talay Keşoğlu

This book first published 2011

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-3193-X, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-3193-2

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## PREFACE

### D. FATMA TÜRE AND BİRSEN TALAY KEŞOĞLU

In Turkey there has never been a tradition of forming women's archives, or, consequently, of donating documents for the purpose of building such archives. It is therefore extremely rare for a women's archive to be preserved in an institution. For this to happen, generally one of the following conditions must be valid: either the woman in question was very famous or she was a member of a very important family. Until 1990, there existed no institution to collect women's private archives. Even in the most significant state institutions that keep archives, such as the Prime Ministry Archives or Ottoman Archives, researchers have not been able to find any women's archives in the true sense of the term. Documents relating to women found in these institutions were identified either by chance or are part of the archives of the concerned woman's father, brother, or son. The Women's Library and Information Centre Foundation, Istanbul, is the first institution of its kind, systematically working since 1990 to collect, catalog and preserve women's private archives in Turkey.

Women's archives and their use in women's studies has been the common concern of researchers in a large number of countries. Together with Kadir Has University, the Women's Library and Information Center Foundation organized an international symposium entitled "Women's Memory: The Problem of Sources" in Istanbul on April 17-19, 2009, in order to facilitate the sharing of knowledge on the subject and discuss possible solutions to problems faced in this field. A great number of researchers from various disciplines took part in the symposium and submitted papers on problems of sources and archives in women's studies. It is this symposium which has served as the departure point for this book, which, broadly speaking, contains two main sections: the first section comprises studies on efforts to acquire and preserve documents and make them available to researchers active in the field of women's history in Europe. In the second section, you can read papers on women's history in Turkey, discussing such aspects as difficulties in accessing documents, assessment of available documents, and the creation of new fields of research.

The articles in the book not only analyze the problems encountered by researchers in women's studies, but also examine perceptions of women in collective memories. Our aim is to present discussions about the products of oral, written, and visual culture that constitute the collective memory, and the formation of accessible archives of such, on an international platform, thus opening up new areas of research on the subject. The book comprises five parts: Women's Archives and Women's Libraries; Art, Literature and Journal; Letters and Petitions; Oral History; and Cinema. All the articles present fresh ideas on the collective memory, perceptions, experiences, and collection of documents on women.

Today women's archives are ceasing to consist of "fragmentary remnants" and are instead becoming easily accessible, systematic, open sources. There is still much to be done in this transformation. We hope that our book will contribute to this process.

**CHAPTER ONE:**  
**INTRODUCTION**

# WOMEN'S MEMORY, WHOSE MEMORY?<sup>1</sup>

TILLY VRIEND

Women have collected and disseminated information for many years. But it is only in the twentieth century that centres have been set up for the specific purpose of collecting and documenting what has come to be known as *women's information*. With the growing demand for information relating to women, be it for action, advocacy, education, empowerment, research or policy planning, the need for specialized women's libraries or women's information centres was a fact. Many European libraries concentrating on women's material either sprang out of the suffrage movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, or out of second wave feminism.

Everywhere in the world, from Iceland to Madagascar, from Yugoslavia to Yemen, Women's Information Centres can be found.<sup>2</sup> The role of information and communication services around the world is to ensure that women, women's organizations, public policy makers, researchers and media have access to relevant information to do their work. They are places where information on women is collected, where women's information specialists are working as information intermediaries. They link people that need information relating to the position of women and women's studies to people who have that information. One of those centres is the Istanbul Women's Library and Information Centre Foundation (WLIC)

At the occasion of her 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary the Istanbul Women's Library and Information Centre Foundation (WLIC) organised the symposium "Women's memory: the problem of sources" on April 17, 2009.

Societies seem to have short memories, especially when it comes to women. In over 25 years in the world of women's information, not much has changed in this respect. Addressing this topic at a symposium touches

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction is based on the keynote speech by Tilly Vriend at Symposium Women's Memory: The problem of sources, 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary symposium of the Women's Library and Information Centre Foundation (Istanbul, April 17, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of Women's Information Centers worldwide see:  
<http://www.aletta.nu/aletta/eng/collections/mapping-the-World>.

at the very essence of every Women's Information Center, -library or – archive.

I have followed the activities of WLIC more or less from the start. And I know they are an active player in the international world of women's information. Their website states that:

“Documentation of women's history is a source of empowerment for women, because they have had limited access to education, to public expression and publication. The main aim of these is to document women's lives and deeds and to facilitate research in the area of women's studies, based on this multifaceted collection of material”<sup>3</sup>

With this mission in mind, the centre opened its doors on April 14, 1990. After hardly a year, in October 1991, they organized the First International Symposium on Women's Libraries in Istanbul. The proceedings of this symposium<sup>4</sup> were published in both Turkish and English and have become one of the prominent publications of the Library since then. The Library also actively participated in two major international events in Istanbul. The first of these was the Annual IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) Congress held in 1995 and the second was the Habitat II Conference of the United Nations held in 1996. And over the last years, WLIC showed great professionalism by translating, adapting and publishing the Turkish Women's Thesaurus<sup>5</sup>, based on the IAV women's thesaurus. A tremendous achievement. These are just a few of all the activities they have been involved in over the years.

It is only 4 years ago that the IIAV, the Amsterdam Women's library and Archive, (since August 2009 called Aletta, Institute for Women's History) celebrated its 70th birthday. Just like the celebration of WILC, we organised a seminar. In her opening speech Prof. Gloria Wekker stated: “show me your archive and I will tell you who is in power”<sup>6</sup> (Wekker, 2005)

Just as a book or article will reflect the viewpoints and biases of the author, an archive will reflect the interests of the archival staff.

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<sup>3</sup> WLIC. <http://www.kadineserleri.org>.

<sup>4</sup> *Kadınların Belleği=Women's Memory: Uluslararası Kadın Kütüphaneleri Sempozyum Tutanakları=Proceedings of the International Symposium of Women's Libraries*, 8-10 October 1991, Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1991

<sup>5</sup> Aslı Davaz, Sönmez Taner, Şeyda Talu, Zelal Ayman. *Türkiye Kadın Thesaurusu. Kadın Konulu Kavramlar Dizini 2009*. Istanbul: KEKBMV, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Gloria Wekker ‘Show me Your Archive...(Opening Statement at the Seminar Travelling Heritages, IIAV, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2005).

And just as history is never a value-free discipline, archives and libraries will never be value-free institutions. De Haan states: "economic, political and cultural factors influence or determine which archival material is saved; these factors include the impact of wars and other violent conflicts".<sup>7</sup> As is clear from the history of the institute I work for, Aletta, Institute for Women's History (formerly IIAV). During the Second World War, the Germans who occupied the Netherlands, removed the entire contents of the IAV and transported it to Berlin. The first reason was the word "International" in the institutes name; for the Nazi's an indication of communism and/or Jewish connections; the second reason was the peace activism of Rosa Manus (one of the founders).

Indeed political forces can determine what an archive can or cannot keep.

If there are no records of women's movements and women's lives (and the same goes for activities, emotions, and dreams), then future generations cannot be inspired by them. They may think these issues were not relevant to our times. Archives and libraries should not be treasure troves where one single truth can be dug up, but sources of inspiration and theoretical reflection for a large group of people with multiple identities.

Moreover: which countries in the world can afford to have well-equipped archival institutes with professional staff?

Especially now, with a global economical crisis, many women's information centres experience budget cuts. At the same time that resources are decreasing, staying current with technological and other developments in the field is expensive and demands internal capacity building. These developments make professional collaboration essential.

Who has access to information? Although the right to information has been recognized as a basic human right, not every individual has equal access to information resources. In many places in the world, it is difficult for women to find or access the information they need. The capacity to access information is greatly determined by one's socioeconomic and educational status. The path of empowerment can only be achieved when women themselves can participate in decision making processes that affect their lives, from family to international level. Access to information and knowledge is a key factor in facilitating change and development.

Women's libraries and archives have a great responsibility in this respect; we are the eyes and ears of the women in our societies; we have

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<sup>7</sup> Haan, Francisca de., Annette Mevis. "The IAV/IIAV's Archival Policy and Practice" In *Travelling Heritages: New Perspectives on collecting, preserving and sharing Women's History*, edited by Saskia E. Wieringa, 23-43 Amsterdam: IIAV, 2008.

the task to record their lives; to document their stories; we have to claim authority over our own past and presence. We should encourage women to pursue their educational goals by providing them with non-sexist information. Information is Knowledge and Knowledge is Power.

We cannot lean back, but constantly have to ask ourselves:

- how can we continue and improve the preservation of women's cultural heritage?
- how can we contribute to women's empowerment?
- how can we support academic scholarship in the field of women's studies?

The articles in this anthology reflect on these questions and show the problems and relevance of sources on Women around the world. In Part 1 "Women Archives and Libraries from an International Perspective" aspects of the work within the field of women's information, like collecting, indexing and preserving women's cultural heritage are addressed. Daskalova focuses on the need of women's history archives in general. Metz, director of the Bibliotheque Marguerite Durand in Paris, describes feminist archives in France; Tagliavini, director of the Biblioteca delle Donne in Bologna, is looking at the future of the Italian Digital Women's Library; Allen shows in her contribution on "Finding and facilitating access to sources on Australian Women's History" that "Much more remains to be found"; Stickney discusses 'Old ideals and new horizons' and Douze, vice-director of Aletta, Institute for Women's History, Amsterdam, offers "New Perspectives on the Role of the Women's Library in the Digital World". This anthology illustrates the developments that take place within the world of women's information, the challenges we face and the choices we have to make.

Finally I would like to congratulate the founders, staff, volunteers and board of the Istanbul women's library on its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, for their commitment and the great achievements over the years! You've come a long way. Keep the torch burning!



**CHAPTER TWO:**  
**WOMEN'S ARCHIVES**  
**AND WOMEN'S LIBRARIES**

# THE ITALIAN DIGITAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPE

ANNAMARIA TAGLIAVINI

In the late '70, a group of feminist women with a passion for political and intellectual work decide to form a new institution, public but independent. They become "Associazione Orlando" (as Virginia Woolf's novel) and enter into negotiations with the Municipal Council of Bologna to create the "City of Bologna Women's Documentation, Research and Initiative Centre". The Convention was the contract signed at the end: a unique model of cooperation between private and public; now proved to be effective, yet very controversial at that time. Since then the support of the Municipal Council has been enforced by the Emilia Romagna Region and more recently by the endorsement by the Italian Ministry of Culture. European projects and European networks have been very effective in broadening the field of different kind of activities.

In almost thirty years, each division of the "Associazione Orlando" and "Women's Documentation, Research and Initiative Centre" constantly develops: in 1991 "Library" project, of nationwide interest started transforming a small size library in the major specialized institution in Italy. The Italian Women Library in Bologna is in Italy today the main library specialized in women's culture, gender and feminist studies. It holds a collection of more than 40.000 books and 495 periodicals. Documented subjects include: feminism, history of women's political movements, gender and women's studies, rights, body, care, sexuality, traditions, politics, information technology and gender digital divide, women's business and jobs, narrative arts, poetry, theatre, film, non-violent conflict resolution, women and migration. The library houses some special collections. Historical collection: 2000 books edited before 1945, Sofia Library: 3000 books devoted to children's and young girls literature. The Rosi Braidotti Fund: 350 books on feminist theories coming from the philosopher private collection.

In 2007 a new project started reorganizing the Archive of Women's History. An heritage of inedited documents: paper, iconographic, audio-visual; a chapter of history made available for research. It consists of 100 linear metres of documents, including: a) personal archives and materials coming from specific researches such as, for instance, a reconstruction of women's movement history in Emilia Romagna in the '70 and '80 (oral narratives, documents, flyers) b) Funds of single groups of women, active in the city and in the area in the late '30 c) Materials related to women's centers and networks, National and International.

This collection got established and came to its current form due to the centrality of Bologna in the landscape of contemporary neofeminism: a centrality secured by the originality of local experience, and by its role in representing a genuine crossroad for sharing, meeting, and network of relationships. Therefore, one can see the opportunity, by reading these materials, to reconstruct an entire chapter of city life in a gender perspective, and to enrich the cultural capital of this city by making visible an experience—that of women's public presence - which is often sidelined or misrepresented.

But how to preserve this huge amount of documents, often old, rare and damaged and at the same time make them available at a large public of users?

In 2004-2007: a special project named "Italian Women's Digital Library" was developed by the Associazione Orlando with the purpose of give a concrete answer to the question of how to make visible in the general digital libraries the relevance of women's documents. The project was succesfully funded by the Ministry of Culture and brings together archival and library holdings in a unique treasure to preserve and to make available in an easy and friendly way to researchers.

With the Women's Digital Library project we wanted to give on-line access to part of the archival materials held by the Italian Women's Library of Bologna and its historical archive. In other words, we aimed at building a mixed space capable of holding monographs, journals, women's history documents: we held, in the first place, documents pertaining to political history, then to emancipationists and suffragists movements of the early century, along with accounts of what Anglo-Saxon historiography defines "second wave", that is: contemporary neofeminism.

Together with this, we digitalized much older documents and accounts - held by the library's historical collection - which are important for a broader reconstruction of history of women's subjectivity, of gender relations, and most importantly, of the symbolic sphere, of social and collective representation produced about female gender.

Before turning to some images and analytic description of our digital collection, I would like to point out some of our choices and the path we chose to walk. We first formed an interdisciplinary work group: members trained in library science, ICT, history, were coordinated by an historian: Elda Guerra. This choice was motivated not only by the need of selection among the vast collection held by the library, but also in order to take into account the researcher's gaze in the way we presented the collection.

In terms of materials selection, our basic aim was to make accessible unique texts, hardly available. We also wanted to highlight the iconographic section of our collection as documents of great importance for history and cultural history of images. Moreover, we wanted to fully take advantage of the potentialities of the medium itself.

For the description of materials, we chose Dublin Core: we fine tuned a descriptive record that allowed us to select those fields more useful for those who access of collection. Of course, we chose to operate within the national standards and integrate all the digitalized collection in our National Bibliographic Service. Not only monographs and journals, migrating cataloguing data on the digital document, but also poster, which we had to catalogue from scratch. We then used a double level description in order to increase access possibilities.

One last note is about the subjects issue: we know then when a new subject becomes visible in history, in the public sphere, introducing her experience, her standpoint, giving voice to her thoughts, to her theoretical framework, current systems of description fall into crisis. New words, new semantic fields, must be introduced in order to signify that innovation. The emergence of female subjectivity has been one of those cases that put systems to a difficult test, forcing existing frameworks not only of disciplines, but also of cataloguing and indexing systems.

The limits of the Italian national subject index have been pointed out since 30 years ago by women trained in this field: beginning with the fundamental *Per un uso non sessista della lingua italiana* (for a non sexist use of Italian language) by Alma Sabbatini (1), and *Infinito singolare* (singular infinitive) by Patrizia Violi (2), to the groundbreaking contributions of Adriana Perotta Rabissi and Beatrice Petrucci of Rete Lilit, such as the *Perleparole conference* and *Linguaggiadonna* (3), the first gender thesaurus. Having such a background, we selected an ample list of subjects, suitable for internet browsing, too. It is also for this reason that we opted for a double language (Italian and English) for our Digital Library, and we used specific thesauri based on researches that give an account of the complexity of women's experience and culture.

The European Women's Thesaurus proved to be the richest in terms of subject organization and words reflecting those politics, cultures, organizational forms, jobs and profession, etc., which came along the transformation of female subjectivity and condition in contemporary societies.

The European Women's Thesaurus is the result of a long work conducted together with other centres and libraries of the WINE network, and we made continuous reference to it. Naturally, we also used the already mentioned *Linguaggiadonna*, that proved to be important to locate some keywords pertaining to Italian feminism and its history, even if it is in need of an update for what concerns new territories such as ICT, different aspects of multicultural societies, and transnational networks that characterize current feminisms.

The entire project has been managed by a group of experts with different skills: librarians, ICT professionals, and historians. They worked together to select documents in an appropriate format choosing among different kind of materials : books, periodicals, a collection of 180 posters, and giving chronological priority to the so called first and second waves of women's movement- the first at the end of the XIX century, the second around the Seventies of the XX.

The results are actually visible at the website [www.bibliotecadigitale.delledonne.it](http://www.bibliotecadigitale.delledonne.it) and consists of three main sections.

1. An impressive collection of posters documenting more than twenty years of activity of the Center in Bologna as a relevant chapter of Italian feminism of the Seventies.

2. A selection of antique and rare books the older one *La nobiltà delle donne*, dated 1549

3. A selection of periodicals coming from different historical periods: *La Donna*, *Cordelia*, *La Donna fascista* (coming from late Nineteenth century and beginning of the XX), while *Effe* and *Memoria* has been prominent feminist periodical of the Seventies.

But how to make visible the great cultural and documental capital of women at European level? How to make women's document visible as a cultural and political european tradition? The Women's Digital Library project was born within the European sphere: we presented a proposal among with partners of WINE network (Women Information Network Europe-[www.women.it/wine/](http://www.women.it/wine/)) to the eContent Plus programme.

We aimed at creating-within the European digital library-a space for knowledges and experiences of different feminisms, by means of archival sources.

The EWDL-European Women Digital Library was not funded; however, each partner was able to locate national funding to start the digitalization.

But EWDL failed and Europeana (<http://www.europeana.eu>) has born as a huge and broad Digital Library.

A new opportunity: appeared in the framework of the 6<sup>th</sup> Programme of the European Union with a special research project named QUING-Quality in Gender Equality Policies, FP6 Integrated Project - 2006-2011

The materialisation of Europe as a whole is just as much a challenge for academics, because dominant theories have been developed and tested mainly in Western Europe. Changes in Europe require changes in data collection, data analysis and in theory too.

QUING contributes to this. In its aim to compare gender equality policies across Europe doing pioneering work and gathering new data for the whole of Europe.

The comparative analysis of gender and equality policies is the heart of QUING, and will generate new theory, explaining the differences and similarities found. QUING will also be preparing the ground for comparative research on the history of feminist ideas in Europe. One of the activities to reach this goal is FRAGEN. FRAGEN means FRAMES on GENDER. The first goal is to create a database of the original texts on gender and equality frames that have emerged from feminist movements in Europe. The other one is to organize and facilitate open access for researchers to this database. The selected texts must assure that both goals are met. The selection criteria come from a need to cover as many as possible (political) positions on feminist issues and a need to include as many intersections with other inequalities as are present in a specific context, given that at this point in time, we cannot put a large number of texts in the database yet.

In general the database intends to start from what is commonly called the Second Wave of feminism of the late sixties. Depending on the political situation in the different countries the time period should be adjusted to local circumstances, as in many European countries feminist movements started much later than the sixties. In cases such as texts originating in countries no longer existing (such as Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia) the teams from the involved countries have to consult each other and determine in which country the text should be classified. As QUING collects texts from all the countries of the European Union, the first focus should be on texts that originate in each country. This sort of European women digital library will follow different criteria.

First of all historical relevance: this means the degree to which a text has had an impact on the nature and success of feminist movements in a certain country, and the degree to which it is seen to have impacted on changing gender relations. The selected texts must be among the most relevant ones in their context.

Secondly diversity of approaches: this criterion covers the various strands of feminism as they are seen to exist or have existed. The database should include a variety of positions, including the most radical ones. Both popular and marginal ideas should be taken into account, and the selection should be made keeping in mind that there might have been strong 'struggles' between different voices, and even processes of exclusion.

A special focus will be on the three issues that are in the centre of the QUING analysis of gender and equality policies, namely intimate citizenship, non-employment and gender based violence. Last but not least, multiple inequalities: priority is given to those texts that articulate gender as intersected or combined with other inequalities such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, class, disability, citizenship status, among others. European women's libraries and scholars from all over Europe are working together on the Fragen project which aims to collect the most important texts from the feminist movements of the second part of the 20th Century and will work as a kind of starting point of an European Women Digital Library still to build up.

This new project must start putting together digitalisation projects belonging from different countries and different traditions of the European Women Movement and the Italian one is part of the process.

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# NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY IN THE DIGITAL WORLD<sup>1</sup>

MARJET DOUZE

In our increasingly global and digital world, women's libraries are experiencing major changes. As more and more material is digitized and becomes accessible through international giants like Google, what does a relatively small institution like Aletta<sup>2</sup>, Institute for Women's History have to offer?

Aletta has an internationally renowned library and archive collection—a coherent collection in which information can be found on various aspects of the position of women in society. Like many libraries in the Netherlands—and throughout Europe—Aletta is experiencing a decrease in the number of visitors to its physical space and in the amount of materials borrowed by its users. At the same time, there is a marked increase in the use of Aletta's websites.

Aletta is on the threshold of a new era in policy making in which crucial choices have to be made. In this paper, I will focus on the challenges that Aletta is facing and will try to answer the following question: How can we, in the digital world, maintain our unique position as the major repository of information on women's history and the position of women in society?

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based partially on (Wieringa 2008a), especially the following articles: (Haan&Mevis 2008), (Mourik 2008) (Wieringa 2008b), (Vriend 2008) and updated for this publication in July 2010. (Published in: *Women's Memory : the Problem of Sources: 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary symposium of the Women's Library and Information Centre Foundation*, 17-19 April 2009, Kadir Has University, Istanbul Turkey/ ed. D.Fatma Türe and Birsen Talay Keşoğlu, Istanbul, 2009)

<sup>2</sup> In August 2009 the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement (IIAV) changed its name to Aletta, Institute for Women's History.

## **Introduction**

### **Facts about Aletta**

First, some facts about Aletta:

Aletta is one of the oldest women's libraries and archives in the world. It was founded in 1935. From the beginning, Aletta collected books, journals, photographs, paraphernalia, and personal archives.

The library collection grew to almost 100,000 books and the archive collection alone grew to nearly a kilometer of shelf space (2009). The number of people who used the library grew dramatically from around 1,400 (1976) to around 6,500 (1990's) and decreased to 4,400 (2009).

### **Developments in the digital world**

In the last twenty years, a revolution has taken place in the world of information. Developments in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT—or IT) have changed the scope of the library profession entirely. Digitization and automation present libraries with major challenges and, at the same time, they enable us to provide our services to a much larger public. At the same time, users of archives no longer need a physical library to find the information they are looking for; they browse the Internet or “google” the information they want to find. The library, which was for centuries the repository of information and knowledge, no longer holds a monopoly on information.

The computerization of libraries began in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Little did we know, in those days, what the consequences would be for our libraries. Now it is obvious that automation and digitization have had a major impact on both our society and our information services. The introduction of ICT has entirely changed the concept of what a library is and the needs it should try to meet.

Moreover, the Internet is “spoiling” the modern library user, creating a situation in which the physical collections maintained by libraries are becoming much less important. Everyone wants comprehensive information to be immediately available on his/her own computer at the click of a mouse—and free of charge, of course. Printed periodicals are being replaced by new, often expensive, digital versions.

Entire library collections are being digitized by Google and Yahoo.

Focus is shifting away from websites developed as independent entities and towards community-created sites like YouTube, Flickr, Wikipedia and blogs where information is posted and shared by the users themselves.

People don't meet each other at a physical library to exchange information; they meet on social networking sites like Hyves, LinkedIn and Facebook.

What, then, is the role of a relatively small women's library and archive in light of these tumultuous developments and what should its position be in relation to large library and archive consortia and powerful Internet giants like Google and Yahoo?

### **Aletta in the digital world: challenges we face**

The developments mentioned above have, of course, affected Aletta. In 1988 the first library software was introduced and the physical catalogue was converted into an automated database. In 1996 Aletta connected to the Internet. Our first website can still to be seen at the Wayback Machine.<sup>3</sup> When one compares that first website to the websites currently maintained by Aletta, it is easy to see the enormous progress Aletta has made in the way it presents itself on the Internet.

Thanks to the information age, we can now offer our services to the whole world. The number of online visitors has grown steadily over the years. Statistics compiled on Aletta's websites show that nearly a million users visit our websites annually. Nowadays we do not see many of our users anymore.

The Internet requires a completely different way of thinking, different forms of expertise and a different attitude towards information and our users. Strategies focused on collection acquisitions and attracting visitors have to be adapted to function in this changing environment.

### **The collections—the cultural heritage of the women's movement**

What are the consequences for the collections of Aletta in this new digital world?

Aletta's focus is on preserving the cultural heritage of the Dutch women's movement. The archives at Aletta are filled with the most beautiful material illustrating the struggle to improve the position of women in society: banners, pamphlets, posters, archives from individuals and organizations, cartoons and all the other paraphernalia related to political and social activism. There is also a large library collection containing books and periodicals on a wide range of topics related to women: from childcare to sexual violence, from women in music to

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<sup>3</sup> The Wayback Machine has been archiving all websites on the Internet since 1996. <http://web.archive.org/web/19970626063224>. (Viewed October 2008).

women in mathematics, from theoretical pieces on women's studies to women's magazines from around the world. The collection is both national and international in scope.

Aletta is seen—and promotes itself—as the largest and most important library/archive collection in the Netherlands relating to women's issues and women's studies—both modern and historic—and we aspire to be one of the most important women's libraries in the world.

### **The physical collection of the library**

As discussed previously, the number of visitors to Aletta and the number of items borrowed by visitors has fallen. The number of borrowed books declined from 5.800 (1991) to 3.140 (2007). This is by no means unique to Aletta; various studies have shown that the number of people checking books out of libraries and/or reading printed periodicals is on the decline.

Why continue collecting physical objects if the physical collection is rarely used? Before the Internet became what it is today, bringing together a coherent library collection was of the utmost importance. Aletta's collection development policy was focused on collecting—as exhaustively as possible—materials related to the “position of women”, assuming the broadest possible interpretation of this concept: not only scientific and academic literature, but also popular literature dealing with scientific and academic themes for a general audience; not only published mainstream literature, but also “gray” literature (reports and documents that have not been formally published). Aletta aspired to provide the visitor with “one-stop- shopping”; as much as possible, we aimed to offer our users everything they were looking for under one roof.

The evolution of the online world has had a profound effect on this policy. If Google acts as one huge virtual library—with access to hundreds of thousands of digitized books and periodicals and with the ability to search in the collections of thousands of “physical” libraries around the world with the help of Worldcat—what should the library/archive of Aletta collect, and what should it not collect? With the advent of the digital world, the physical collection, by definition, can no longer be a complete collection. Why should Aletta strive to maintain the most complete collection possible of printed publications when most users would rather consult digital sources?

Aletta has decided to be more critical in determining what is important: collecting and preserving both the physical and digital legacy and heritage of the women's movement and the acquisition of publications that are

difficult or impossible to find in the Netherlands. The cohesiveness and coherence of the collection will then be more available on the Internet than it is in the physical space of Aletta.

In view of all of these considerations, Aletta's collection development policy will focus on acquiring unique materials. This will reduce the yearly expansion of the physical library collection by half. In addition, Aletta's catalogue records has been included in the national Dutch Central Catalogue and Worldcat. Aletta's collection—including its unique pieces—is visible now to a much larger public, increasing the exposure of Aletta's more unique holdings.

Restricting the collection development policy and slowing the expansion of the physical collection will allow Aletta to focus more financial resources on the digitization of the current collection and on web-based information dissemination: making all information available to the client at home. Aletta can make the move from the physical to the digital world.

## **Moving from a physical to a digital collection**

### **Digitizing the collection**

If Google Book Search and Yahoo are digitizing books by the thousands, what can Aletta contribute? Aletta has made the first steps towards digitizing parts of its collection, starting with the "treasures" in the collection. In this way, Aletta is able to showcase exceptional and valuable pieces found in the collection and to use them to entice clients to visit the physical library and archive.

Digitization at Aletta, however, is being done principally to meet the needs of current clients: to make the information available online and with fully searchable content. Aletta established criteria in the Digitization Policy Plan published in (Zandhuis 2007):

- the digitization of the collection will start with and focus on material that is relevant for scholarly research
- the material should be rich in information, like periodicals and conference papers and reports.
- either market research or frequent requests should have demonstrated a demand for the information.
- the vulnerability or fragility of the material will be taken into account (i.e., physical use may harm the document).
- But most importantly, does it have unique value?

The emphasis placed on the final criterion means that most digitization efforts at Aletta will focus on the "gray literature" in the collection—

publications and archival material from women and women's organizations that fall outside the scope of what the "big players" like Google will be digitizing. This is the niche that Aletta will focus on.

At this time, most of the photos and posters has been digitized and we started with some older periodicals—from before World War II—which will be available on Aletta website in digital format in the spring of 2009.

The oral history interviews are the latest addition to the digital collection. In 2008, Grietje Keller and Josien Pieterse made video portraits of women who played key roles in the 1970s and 1980s in the women's health movement in the Netherlands (Keller & Pieterse 2008). These interviews are the first in a much larger project which aims to supplement the written archival records with video interviews with key figures in the Second Wave women's movement. The video portraits are available on Aletta website and are fully searchable using the latest in searching and indexing technology.<sup>4</sup>

Digitizing more recent pieces in our collection can, however, be problematic. Copyrights can become an issue. In 2007 and 2008, Aletta worked together with the publisher of the magazine *Nemesis* to digitize the first 20 years of the publication.<sup>5</sup> The publisher assumed all responsibility for any issues that might arise with regard to copyrights. We do not expect there to be any issues because the writers all worked pro bono and, therefore.

We digitized two periodicals<sup>6</sup> which are a bit more complicated with regard to copyrights. In addition to text, these publications contain photos and cartoons. Photographers and cartoonists were paid at the time and could claim loss of income if their work is published online. Requesting permission from all copyright holders is a nearly impossible task. Aletta is working with the Dutch organization Surf, a collaborative organization for higher education institutions and research institutes, to develop a pilot project to find possible solutions for this problem.

Digitizing Aletta archive raises another very different question: How should Aletta deal with privacy issues on the Internet? A simple Google search can easily bring activities from one's past to light. Aletta deals with subject matter that can sometimes be sensitive—even in the Netherlands, which is supposedly a modern, progressive country. Not

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<sup>4</sup> Video history (2008) International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement. <http://vuurvink.ewi.utwente.nl:8080/iav/iiav.jsf>. (Viewed 7 December 2008).

<sup>5</sup> *Nemesis*, tijdschrift voor vrouw en recht (1984-2003) See: [www.tijdschriftnemesis.nl](http://www.tijdschriftnemesis.nl).

<sup>6</sup> The magazine *LOVER* (1973-2007) and *Dolle Mina* (Mad Mina) (1970-1979).

everyone wants to have her (or his) personal activist history or homosexuality depicted on the Internet. Aletta has already received requests to remove digitized publications from the website.

Publishing oral history interviews on Aletta website has also raised the privacy issue. Segments from some interviews—sometimes entire interviews—are not available online at the request of the interviewees who were not comfortable with this level of openness.

Only time will tell how significant this issue is or may become.

### **Born digital publications**

In the late 1990s, as digital books, periodicals and articles grew in popularity and began taking the place of printed matter, Aletta decided to collect these “born digital” publications and make them available in full text form. Aletta statistics in 2007 show that, of the new library acquisitions, approximately 20% of books and articles and 45% of new journals are digital<sup>7</sup>. These publications are all “open access” publications—meaning that they are available online free of charge. Most of the digital publications archived by Aletta are copied to Aletta server so that they can be saved as part of our cultural heritage. This is, however, not a long-term solution that guarantees the information will remain safe and accessible! There are several initiatives in the Netherlands to set up and maintain repositories of full text electronic publications, and Aletta will certainly be participating in these efforts in the future.

At the moment, Aletta has (almost) no paid digital magazine subscriptions.

As a so-called “stand-alone” library, Aletta is bound by restrictions: If we buy or lease online material, we are only permitted to offer it to the public in our own library. This restriction eliminates the ultimate advantage that online accessibility offers, namely providing access from the user's own desktop. The stand-alone library have not its own users in the way as (non-commercial) university libraries or businesses and other organizations that offer access on the site by ip address and via authenticated remote access. They have a fixed group of users and the costs to license the material are based on this.

We will start negotiating with publishers to allow us to provide remote access for “our” users within the limits of the license and for a reasonable price. Of course, we will focus on the periodicals that have limited or no distribution in the Netherlands.

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<sup>7</sup> 20% of the annual growth for books (2,000 to 2,500) and articles (800-1000) en 45% of 550 current journals is born digital.