Writing Women at Duke into Wikipedia

On March 20, the Bingham Center sponsored the first Women at Duke Wikipedia Edit-a-thon in partnership with the Women’s Center and the University Archives.

Bingham Center staff provided instruction on editing Wikipedia and helped participants set up accounts and choose topics. Bridget Booher, author of the recently published book Women at Duke Illustrated, spoke about her experiences conducting research on Duke women.

After the training session, participants broke out individually or in pairs to start creating articles on alumnae, former professors, or women whose papers are housed at Duke. The event led to the creation of new articles on women such as chemist Rose May Davis, the first woman to earn a Ph.D. at Duke; anthropologist Ernestine Friedl; and feminist artist Irene Peslikis.

A number of other articles are currently in progress, covering topics ranging from alumna Sara M. Evans, a prominent historian specializing in American social and women’s history of the 20th century, to the Who Needs Feminism? global social media campaign which began as part of a class at Duke in 2012.

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Profiles in Research: Lauren Gutterman

With support from a 2013 Mary Lily Research Grant, I visited the Bingham Center to do research for my book manuscript about the personal experiences and public representation of wives who desired women between 1945 and 1985. I examined the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance’s archives, as well as the papers of prominent feminist thinkers Robin Morgan, Kate Millett, and Minnie Bruce Pratt.

Unprecedented numbers of married women began to recognize their same-sex desires—often through their participation in the feminist movement—and leave their marriages for lesbian lives in the 1970s. The details of this transition, however, are typically glossed over in oral histories and memoirs that conform to strict script of oppressive marriages and liberating lesbian love.

Minnie Bruce Pratt’s journals complicate this tale, providing rare insight into how one woman attempted to balance a lesbian affair with marriage in the mid-1970s. After sleeping with a female friend, Pratt confessed to her husband. At first, she insisted that she still loved him but wanted to continue her affair as well. While her husband initially accepted this arrangement, Pratt’s feelings for her lover deepened and her husband’s jealousy grew. Still, Pratt agonized in her journal over the path that she should take and what the repercussions would be for her two young sons.

Though Pratt did ultimately divorce her husband, the emotional and intellectual struggles documented in her journals undermine any notion that the transition from wife to out lesbian was simple or inevitable.

Contributed by Lauren Gutterman, Assistant Professor, Women’s Studies, University of Michigan.
Behind the Scenes with Samantha Crisp

I’ve also recently finished processing the Leah Fritz Papers. Fritz is a feminist poet, active in both the US and England for the past fifty years. After sorting through her papers, I discovered that, prior to dedicating her career solely to poetry, Fritz wrote prolifically on important political issues, including pornography, school desegregation and K-12 educational reform, socialism, feminist theology, feminist publishing, Jewish identity, sexuality and sexual ethics, and feminist consciousness-raising. She also corresponded with, interviewed, and reviewed dozens of women authors and feminist activists. I’ve highlighted all of these materials in the collection’s finding aid so they will be accessible to researchers in each of these subject areas.

Contributed by Samantha Crisp, Bingham Center Technical Services Intern
Dr. Georgina Colby, linguistics and cultural studies, University of Westminster, for a book on Kathy Acker combining philosophical analysis with literary and critical theory, to explore connections between feminist theory, Acker’s use of philosophy, and her experimental writing practices.

Dr. Donna Drucker, civil and environmental engineering, Technische Universität Darmstadt, for a journal article on sexual behavior and the science of contraceptive testing in the mid-20th century United States.

Sara Mameni, Ph.D. candidate, visual arts, University of California, San Diego, for dissertation research on Iran-US relations in the 1960s and 1970s—leading up to Iran’s Islamic Revolution of 1979—through the lens of queer theory, feminist theory, and postcolonial studies.

Ivy McIntyre, Ph.D. candidate, history, St. Louis University, for dissertation research on South Carolina families in times of personal crisis in the early Republic.

Andrew Pope, Ph.D. candidate, history, Harvard University, for dissertation research on radical social movements and the New South in Georgia from 1968-1996.

Dr. Georgina Colby spent time in April researching manuscript notebooks and artwork from the Kathy Acker Papers.

Dr. Jason Scott, Dr. Annalisa Castaldo, and Jennifer Lynn Pollitt, for an edited collection of essays looking at how kink identities, behaviors, and lifestyles are represented in popular and cultural studies.

Mairead Sullivan, Ph.D. candidate, women’s, gender, and sexuality studies, Emory University, for dissertation research on questions of breastedness in feminist and queer theory.

Hope Tucker, independent scholar, for an artist’s video on the fragility of reproductive rights in the American South, as seen through the work of those who labored for these rights in the second half of the 20th century.

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Mary Lily Travel Grants: library.duke.edu/rubenstein/bingham/grants

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This event was part of a worldwide movement to increase the number women editors and women-focused articles on Wikipedia. Studies show that currently only 9-13% of editors on Wikipedia are women, leading to imbalances in the creation of articles on or of interest to women. Additionally, women often report feeling intimidated by the editing community or the processes of editing. The Women at Duke Edit-a-thon was designed to encourage more women to feel comfortable editing Wikipedia and to increase the quality and quantity of information about women available on Wikipedia. Edit-a-thons allow people to come together in person or online to edit articles on specific topics. This March marked the third year of the WikiWomen’s History Month project. Participants created and improved almost four hundred articles at a series of international events and edit-a-thons held throughout the month.

Contributed by Claire Radcliffe, Bingham Center Public Services Intern

Bingham Center to Host Zine Librarians (un)Conference

This summer, a diverse group of energetic zine librarians from academic, public, and independent libraries and archives will meet in Durham to share ideas and skills for providing access to zines to readers in our communities. The Bingham Center’s collection of women’s and queer zines from the 1990s to the present, one of our signature collections, was one of the main draws for the selection committee in choosing Duke University as the location for the 6th annual Zine Librarians (un)Conference. Though some elements of the program will be planned in advance, the unconference format allows the attendees to determine their interests, goals, and priorities for learning and sharing their knowledge as a group at the beginning of the event.

The event will be held July 18-20 at Perkins Library. This conference will have no registration fee in order to increase accessibility to attendees, and will be open to all who are interested in zines and libraries. Elements of the program will be broadcast online to allow wider participation. Jenna Freedman of Barnard College is coordinating a scholarship fund to support travel for a person of color to attend this conference. Please contact Kelly Wooten (kelly.wooten@duke.edu) for information about this event or for details about how to donate to the scholarship fund.

*Radical South* zine by Niku Arbabi, from the Niku Arbabi Zine Collection