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Exhibits at the Convention

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that subscriptions and other revenues do not match expenses, feminist journals must close their doors.

Over the years we have all witnessed the demise of a number of fine feminist magazines, and it is we who are the poorer for it. *Chrysalis* staff members attended the NWSA Convention hoping to sell enough subscriptions to pay the printer, who is holding Issue 8 as a hostage against previous unmet obligations. Other journal representatives expressed varying degrees of hopefulness about the future, but all agreed that unless many feminists determine to support publications through buying subscriptions, chances for long-term survival are very slim.

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Exhibits at the Convention

By Nanette Bruckner

Nearly 100 registered exhibitors utilized 72 reserved tables at NWSA's First Convention. In addition, five "free tables" allowed for the spontaneous participation of countless other individuals and organizations. In many respects, the displays area was a busy microcosm of the larger Convention. Exhibitors ranged in size from an independent poet showing her solitary book of verses to a large publishing house displaying more than 100 titles in women's studies. Books included scholarly anthologies and "pop" paperbacks. Indeed, almost every idea endemic to women's studies could be found somewhere. Several political organizations also reserved space to share their concerns, and a number of feminist entrepreneurs sold various wares. Amidst this cornucopia, the NWSA National Office sold, as fundraisers, T-shirts, buttons, calendars, music sheets, posters, and books (which are still available through the office in Maryland; see box on page 28 of this issue).

Four months prior to the meeting, invitations to reserve exhibition space were sent to 1200 relevant organizations. The

responses were enthusiastic. Anticipating that some organizations would not be able to send representatives, NWSA made a special offer: we would set up, display, and return materials if requested. We assumed this responsibility in part for nearly 50 percent of the registered exhibitors. This allowed many exhibitors to participate who normally could not — especially smaller women's presses.

The average costs per table were \$100 for large, profit-making institutions, \$50 for nonprofit organizations; in line with the Association's philosophy, no organization was denied access because of financial hardship. Likewise, no form of censorship was instituted, in order to allow for a truly free and open exchange of ideas and opinions. At the Convention, all exhibitors were treated alike, regardless of their philosophies or the financial arrangements they were able to make.

The exhibit area consisted of a third of the available space in the McCollum Hall cafeteria and a large adjoining room. All tables were covered with white linen; and beautiful, individually prepared, professionally lettered signs (constructed especially for us by the Audiovisual Department at the University of Houston/Clear Lake City) identified each of the preregistered exhibitors. The area was a women's studies smorgasbord. Next year the National Office should make shopping bags available for those laden with the hundreds of free flyers, magazines, books, and catalogues that were available to all.

Almost all exhibitors expressed positive enthusiasm about this center of exchange, and expressed their interest in participating again next year. For many, it was the first conference in which they really enjoyed a dialogue with the interested browsers.

Finally, this endeavor was a financial success, netting a profit of over \$3,500. This turned out to be the biggest fundraiser for the 1979 Convention.

On a personal note: coordinating the displays and exhibits was a difficult, time-consuming, sometimes anxiety-producing, always exciting, psychologically and emotionally uplifting experience. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. Throughout the many months that it took to develop and execute this function, I always felt as I worked in Texas the positive energies and strong support from the rest of the program committee throughout the country. I am impressed with the amount and quality of work that was done and by what we eventually accomplished. We can all take pride in this demonstration of dedication to women's studies that the Convention symbolized. We witnessed a major event in Kansas, of historical importance to the women's movement, and I am truly thankful to have had the opportunity to experience it first hand.

Nanette Bruckner teaches journalism and is co-chair of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Houston/Clear Lake City.



Nanette Bruckner surveying the results of her work.