

**Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women's History.** SASKIA E. WIERINGA, ed. Amsterdam: Askant, 2008. 307 p. ISBN 978-90-5260-299-8.

*Traveling Heritages* is a collection of essays reflecting on the acquisition, accessibility, and interpretation of archival materials and other information resources concerning women's history. Specifically, these essays relate to materials collected by, resources developed for, and projects associated with, the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement (IIAV), located in Amsterdam. The book's inspiration was the IIAV's seventieth anniversary celebration in December 2005, which included a seminar with presentations by information professionals and academics focusing on archives and libraries whose collection mandates include women's history. Since the publication of *Traveling Heritages*, IIAV has been renamed Aletta: Institute for Women's History, in honour of Aletta Jacobs, the first university-trained female doctor in the Netherlands, a suffragist, and social and peace activist, whose fonds forms the core of IIAV's early archival holdings. The change in the institutional name reflects a major departure from IIAV's original mandate to collect women's history from around the world, in order to focus primarily on information resources about Dutch women.

*Traveling Heritages* situates IIAV's past work in the context of first and second wave (predominantly European) feminist movements, and also sets out to consider assumptions of truth in collecting, representing, and teaching about women's experiences. In different ways, each essay supports the notion that the selection of women's documentary heritage for long-term preservation, and its subsequent use, is a process that was, and is, affected by gender and class, and political and racial subjectivities of the participating individuals and institutions. The social construction of objectivity is critiqued throughout the book, and information professionals, researchers, and educators are encouraged to consider how their work contributes to understanding the diverse realities of women.

The use of the word "traveling" in the book's title connotes movement, while "heritages" implies multiple traditions and in her introduction, editor Saskia

Wieringa, the director of IIAV and co-editor of a number of publications on gender studies and women's movements, explains her intention to capture in the title "both the migration histories (physical and/or mental, or intellectual) of the [IIAV's] visitors ... and donors ... but also the shifting truth claims and concepts used in women's studies and women's history" (p. 16). The book's title can also be regarded as an indication of the post-structuralist and postmodernist approaches of a number of its contributors, which include archivists, librarians, historians, and educators, some of whom participate in activist communities. The seventeen essays are grouped under three sections: "Preserving the Heritage of Women's Movements," "Old versus New Media?," and "Identity, Citizenship, and Archives." The authors cover IIAV's history and present-day concerns and initiatives such as feminist approaches to conducting oral and video histories; the documenting of contemporary immigrant women's experience in Dutch society; the current state of feminist academic work, including the politics surrounding the displacement of women's studies in favour of gender studies in some universities; the role of information technologies in expanding networking opportunities for members of activist organizations; analysis of past and present archives and museum exhibitions concerning women and migrant communities; and the construction/deconstruction of national historical canons.

As a wide-ranging examination of the challenges related to identifying, collecting, and presenting women's history, some portions of *Traveling Heritages* may hold greater or lesser interest for different readers. While space constraints prevent a thorough assessment of all contributions in this review, the collection's first essay, entitled "The IAV/IIAV's Archival Policy and Practice – Seventy Years of Collecting, Receiving, and Refusing Women's Archives (1935–2005)," by Francisca de Haan and Annette Mevis, will be of particular interest to archivists. Citing Derrida, the authors discuss the moments in archival acquisition where donor selection, institutional policies, and archivists' arrangement and description decisions affect what is left to researchers. De Hann and Mevis quote the IIAV 2005 *Annual Report*: "... collecting cultural heritage is not a neutral activity, and special efforts are required to ensure that the heritage not only of dominant groups in society is preserved" (p. 27). The essay goes on to describe the origins of the institution, from its founding in 1935 (then called the International Archives for the Women's Movement [IAV]) by Johanna Naber, Rosa Manus, and Willemijn van der Goot, to the institution's subsequent growth and challenges. Significant milestones in IIAV's history include the repatriation of archival holdings seized by the Nazis (including records of Aletta Jacobs); the development of an acquisitions policy and criteria for the digitization of holdings; the institution's active acquisition program of the 1990s and 2000s; and the role of IIAV in supporting feminist scholarship at Dutch universities. De Hann and Mevis also identify the increasing efforts of IIAV, in collaboration with groups from the black, migrant, and refugee women's movements, to acquire and make accessible material that reflects the increasing ethnic divers-

ity of Dutch society.

Clearly, the essays presented here are meant to form a continuum along which the practices of locating, preserving, and providing wide-ranging access to information resources documenting women's lives play a valued role in advancing women's equality around the world. As such, *Traveling Heritages* blurs the boundaries between archivist and activist. Interested readers are left to consider where their own professional practice may fit in such a continuum. As an archivist working in a university archives with a women's movement collection dating predominantly from the 1970s to the 1990s, I have asked myself: Has my community become more culturally diverse since we began collecting women's history? Are there organizations providing services to women of colour and migrant women? Do we need to expand our collecting areas to consider fonds relating to gender and LGBT studies? Does my archives have a more active role to play in documenting the community's social/cultural/political shifts? These essays may inspire archivists who work in Canadian archives collecting women's history to consider their communities and their contacts within those communities, their institutional mandates, and their future plans to preserve the records of activists and organizations.

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