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Teaching Gender with Libraries and Archives
The Power of Information
A book series by ATGENDER
Edited by Sara de Jong and Sanne Koevoets

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Theoretical context: "archival turn"?

- (cultural) theories of the Archive (Derrida)
- Postcolonial critique: Ann Laura Stoler
- from *The Archive to archives*: Carolyn Steedman – "Something she called a fever"

The library as a symbol of culture

- Library architecture: churches, temples, glass houses (Hart, Baines & Jones)
- Library narratives: Gothic castles, labyrinths (Koevoets)



Library Theory?

- Symbolic function of *The Library* (as ideal type, as metaphor, as point of identification) vs. the specific histories, dynamics and practices of *libraries*
- Epistemological innovation: fantasia of the library (Foucault)



MAKING THE (gender politics of) THE LIBRARY VISIBLE



“Librarians are the housewives of gender studies: the work we do is simply expected to be done, but we are invisible and the work we do is invisible. It’s only when things go wrong that we are noticed.”

Three dimensions of invisibility

- Of information specialists: the image problem of a feminized profession
- Of libraries as institutions: either ‘containers’ or ‘monuments’
- Of indexing and cataloguing: presented as transparent instead of *political* practices

Aims:

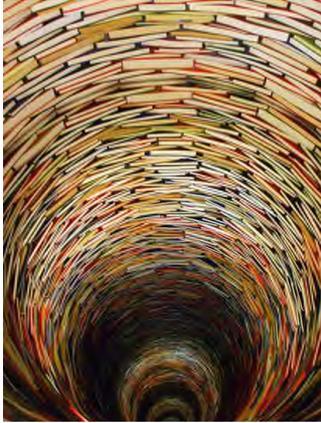
- To highlight how gender studies and the institutions that preserve and disseminate knowledge are systematically intertwined;
- To reflect on the effects of new technologies on the meaning and practices of libraries and archives;
- To investigate new ways of producing, preserving and disseminating feminist knowledge.

THEME 1: FEMINIST HISTORIES AND LEGACIES



- De Jong & Wieringa – The library as knowledge broker
- Aleksander – Parallels in the history of women's/gender studies and its special libraries
- Radicioni & Virtú – Institutionalizing activist legacies

THEME 2: PRACTICES



- Bogadóttir – Searching for women in the archives
- Vriend, Meulmeester & De Jong – Core feminist texts in Europe online
- Perry – Teaching gender sensitive EFL through databases
- Baider & Zobnina - (Re)searching gender in a library
- Claeys – Information as a tool for the empowerment of women

THEME 3: UTOPIAS



- Maxwell – Reflections on Glasgow's Women's Library: the production of cultural memory, identity and citizenship
- Koevoets – Beyond the *bun lady*: towards new feminist figurations of librarianship

Ethics of the library

- situated perspectives
- searching for the silences
- addressing systems of marginalization and exclusion
- From “collections to connections” (Niegaard 2011)

This is a task for researchers, teachers, students *and* information specialists.

Assignments

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the different technologies of knowledge that your library offers; books, diaries, posters, sheet music, DVDs, photographs? What are the implications of these different modalities of materiality for knowledge production and dissemination? Reflect on opportunities offered by the technologies and its limitations. • How does your women's/gender/feminist library define women/gender/feminism? What silences, exclusions, and gaps are present in these definitions? • Ask students to look for their family's private archive: who is in charge of preserving it? How is it preserved? What are the criteria for preservation? How is it organised? • Reflect on the processes of the production of the (FRAGEN) database. What are the implications of analysing 'old texts' on the basis of 'new terms'? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare the organisational structure of two women's/gender studies centers that are affiliated with libraries. How did they develop over time? How does the structure influence the library work, e.g. the acquisition policy, location, cooperation partners? • Identify the fifty most included books in five catalogues from different women's/gender libraries. Could these books be seen as a canon of women's/gender literature? Compare the list with the collection of the national library. • Interview librarians in women's/gender libraries about what they do to avoid canonization, if anything at all. |
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