

# Seventy-Five Years of International Women's Collecting: Legacies, Successes, Obstacles, and New Directions

Rachel Miller, Danelle Moon, and Anke Voss

## **Abstract**

These three papers investigate the establishment and trajectories of three institutions devoted to the documentation of women's history: the World Center for Women's Archives in New York, the International Archives of the Women's Movement (now known as the Aletta Institute for Women's History) in Amsterdam, and the International Museum of Women in San Francisco. The panelists detail the challenges faced by each institution and discuss the key founding personalities.

## **Introduction**

*Danelle Moon*

This retrospective analysis of two women's archives and one women's museum illuminates the projects' attendant successes and obstacles, which speak to the historical, national, professional, and interpersonal contexts in which they were each founded. The authors also chart out the projects' legacies and their transmutations into the digital realm. We will evaluate the impact that the

Session 506 at the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Chicago, Illinois, Saturday, 27 August 2011. Danelle Moon chaired this session and speakers were Rachel Miller, Anke Voss, and Danelle Moon.

individual founders, largely comprised in 1935 and 1936 of suffragists and historians, of the New York–based World Center for Women’s Archives and the Amsterdam-based Aletta Institute for Women’s History, had on the early development of women’s collections. In examining the digital presence of women’s collections today, we will focus on the San Francisco-based International Museum of Women, established in 1985 by activists and community organizers as the Women’s Heritage Museum, which today functions as a virtual museum that captures the life experiences of women across the globe.

**“Kick Her in the Shin for Me”: The International Women’s Archives Projects of Two Warring Suffragists in the 1930s and Their Digital Footprints in the 2010s<sup>1</sup>**

*Rachel Miller*

In September 1935, in the Manhattan apartment of Hungarian émigré suffragist Rosika Schwimmer, a group consisting of Schwimmer, historian Mary Ritter Beard, and a dozen others gathered to plan the founding of an ambitious international archival institution, the World Center for Women’s Archives. As the women met, they were unaware that in Amsterdam discussions were underway regarding a similar venture. Three months later, Dutch suffragist Rosa Manus, historian Johanna Naber, and economist Willemijn Posthumus-van der Goot signed into existence the International Archives of the Women’s Movement (IAV).<sup>2</sup> The IAV opened in December 1936 under the umbrella of the newly founded International Institute for Social History. The World Center for Women’s Archives (WCWA) as it was originally envisioned never materialized, but had a lasting impact on the field of women’s history and on the acquisition of women’s collections in our field. I will look specifically at the suffragists behind these two archives projects, as well as at the commonalities between the projects and the divergent paths each took.

Rosika Schwimmer, born in 1877 into a middle-class, secular Jewish family in Budapest, is known for founding the first feminist and suffragist organization in Hungary in 1904. Schwimmer was a charismatic women’s movement speaker, whose force and eloquence earned her the nickname “Pied Piper of Hungary.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The slides for Rachel Miller’s presentation are available at [http://files.archivists.org/conference/chicago2011/506\\_Miller.ppt](http://files.archivists.org/conference/chicago2011/506_Miller.ppt).

<sup>2</sup> IAV is the standard abbreviation of the Dutch name, Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging. For more information, see Aletta Institute for Women’s History, <http://www.aletta.nu/aletta/nl>, accessed 18 December 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Harold Josephson, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Peace Leaders* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 864.

Schwimmer began corresponding with the prominent Dutch suffragist Aletta Jacobs around 1901, and as a mentor and voice of encouragement, Jacobs had a strong impact on Schwimmer's emergence onto the international stage of the women's movement. The relationship between Jacobs and Schwimmer was an intensely intellectual and personal one for fourteen years. With the onset of World War I, both Jacobs and Schwimmer funneled their talents as speakers and activists into the international women's pacifist movement, serving together as vice presidents of what would later be known as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Disagreements arose between the two women regarding publicity tactics, but the final blow to their friendship happened over finances in 1915. On behalf of the league, Schwimmer had received a pledge from Henry Ford for a massive sum of money, which fell through and left the league in substantial debt. The combination of tactical disagreement and financial failure precipitated a lasting breach in Jacobs's trust in Schwimmer, following which Jacobs even suspected that Schwimmer was a spy for the Germans. Jacobs then effectively worked to tarnish Schwimmer's standing in the international women's movement by spreading rumors about her financial incompetency and her alleged work as a spy. In 1921, Schwimmer fled the incoming Hungarian Communist government, immigrating to Chicago as a political refugee and eventually moving to New York, where she lived until her death in 1948. Her reputation never recovered from the beating it took during WWI.<sup>4</sup>

Rosa Manus, born in 1881 into an upper-middle-class Jewish family in Amsterdam, entered the international women's movement unexpectedly as a result of a clog dancing performance she participated in at the International Woman Suffrage Alliance's 1908 Congress in Amsterdam. Attracted by personalities such as Carrie Chapman Catt, Manus immediately joined the suffrage movement, becoming an efficient behind-the-scenes organizer and financial supporter. Aletta Jacobs was also an important figure in Manus's life. She willed her personal papers to Manus and died while visiting the Manus family. Rosa Manus's own life ended tragically when the Nazis seized her and transported her to Ravensbrück, where she died in 1943.<sup>5</sup>

Between 1904 and 1915, Rosika Schwimmer and Rosa Manus had a cordial, functional relationship within the International Woman Suffrage Association. When Aletta Jacobs turned against Schwimmer, however, Manus did as well. Evidence of the subsequent animosity between Schwimmer and Manus even

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of the transformation of Schwimmer's reputation, see Beth S. Wenger, "Radical Politics in a Reactionary Age: The Unmaking of Rosika Schwimmer, 1914–1930," *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 2 (1990): 66–99.

<sup>5</sup> For biographical information on Rosette Susanna Manus, see Selma Leydesdorff, "Rosa Manus, 1881–1943," in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia* (Brookline, Mass.: Jewish Women's Archive), Jewish Women's Archive, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/manus-rosa>, accessed 18 December 2011. Additional information is available, in Dutch, at *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Rosa Manus," [http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa\\_Manus](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Manus), accessed 18 December 2011.

arises in the language of the finding aids and indexes for their personal papers. One folder among Manus's papers is titled, "Documentation and press cuttings concerning Rosika Schwimmer, being suspected of spying for the Germans, of Bolshevism and of swindling Henry Ford."<sup>6</sup> A biographical card on Manus, written by Schwimmer's sister Franciska, in the New York Public Library's Schwimmer-Lloyd collection catalog reads: "Suffragist. Pacifist. Co-worker. Later enemy and liar."<sup>7</sup> Schwimmer's own professional and personal correspondence was considerably less restrained; to her Manus was a "piece of fat"<sup>8</sup> and an "unspeakable creature . . . who has neither intellect, learning, nor character."<sup>9</sup> She requested of her close friend Lola Maverick Lloyd, who would be seeing Manus at a conference: "Kick Rosa Manus in the shin for me."<sup>10</sup> We don't often look at the impact of interpersonal conflict on the histories of our institutions, but the trajectories of both these women's archives projects would be to some extent affected by the dramatic hostility between Manus and Schwimmer.

By 1934, Schwimmer had begun conceptualizing a plan for an international Feminist-Pacifist Archive Center and discussing it with various figures in the women's movement. Schwimmer had a strong historical consciousness, and she was struck by American college women's unawareness of many figures in the women's movement, a realization that she cited as the impulse behind her archives idea.<sup>11</sup> In July 1935, Schwimmer presented respected historian Mary Ritter Beard with the idea and asked her to lead the project. Known for her efforts to bring women into the male-dominated historical record and for her diplomatic connections to rival factions of women's rights groups, Beard agreed to take the project on. Over time, Beard broadened the scope of the archives to the entirety of women's historical experience, not just women's more recent roles as political and social reformers, and together Schwimmer and Beard decided on the project name of the World Center for Women's Archives

<sup>6</sup> Annette Mevis, Rosette Susanna Manus Papers Inventory, Aletta, Institute for Women's History, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, available, in Dutch, at [http://www.aletta.nu/aletta/zoek/ead\\_popup.jsp?id=IIAV00000099&lang=1&zoek=manuspapersinventory](http://www.aletta.nu/aletta/zoek/ead_popup.jsp?id=IIAV00000099&lang=1&zoek=manuspapersinventory), accessed 8 February 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Franciska Schwimmer, "Manus, Rosa," index card in Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection's Comprehensive Index of Individual Correspondents/Annotated Index of 'ABC' or Biographical Files, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library (NYPL).

<sup>8</sup> Rosika Schwimmer, letter to Lola Maverick Lloyd, 13 October 1936, Box 18, Lola Maverick Lloyd Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, NYPL.

<sup>9</sup> Rosika Schwimmer, letter to Wilhelmine van Wulfften Palthe, 23 March 1936, WCWA Microfilm Reel 118, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, NYPL. Also in Mineke Bosch and Annemarie Kloosterman, eds., *Politics and Friendship: Letters for the International Woman Suffrage Association, 1902-1942* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 235-37.

<sup>10</sup> Rosika Schwimmer, letter to Lola Maverick Lloyd, 25 August 1936, Box 18, Lola Maverick Lloyd Papers, NYPL.

<sup>11</sup> Meeting minutes, 10 September 1935, WCWA Microfilm Reel 118, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, NYPL.

(WCWA).<sup>12</sup> Although Schwimmer wanted to be affiliated with the project only unofficially, because she thought the notoriety of her name in any official capacity would harm the WCWA's reputation, she did wish to serve as contact for and collector of European papers. Schwimmer's direct involvement was short-lived, however.

In early 1936, an issue of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance's newsletter reported on the founding of the International Archives of the Women's Movement in Amsterdam, and the WCWA committee in New York asked Schwimmer for her take on this news.<sup>13</sup> Schwimmer, who was undergoing diabetes treatment in a hospital in Chicago, believed the Dutch project paled in comparison to the proposed WCWA, both in terms of the space and funding allotted to the project. She swiftly telegraphed Beard and other committee members to disregard the Dutch project and that she would send further explanation. But Beard had already begun to entertain the possibility of Amsterdam collecting and housing the European materials and thereby easing the WCWA's own collecting efforts in New York, and the news was so compelling to the committee that it decided against waiting for Schwimmer and contacted Manus for information on her project.<sup>14</sup> After hearing of this move, Schwimmer resigned in protest in March 1936.<sup>15</sup>

Schwimmer resigned in part because she worried she would lose her role as European collecting liaison. The swiftness and severity of her action highlights her need for control over the European archives. Conceivably, she wanted to recover a place for herself in the landscape of the European women's movement, regain a degree of power over her own reputation, and let documentary sources prove her innocence against the allegations she struggled with. The prospect of ceding the collection of European materials to Rosa Manus was unthinkable to Schwimmer.

Also at issue behind Schwimmer's resignation was her conviction that Manus had heard of the New York archives project through the press and shared contacts, and then stole the idea. She harbored her suspicion of intellectual theft for years after.<sup>16</sup> What Schwimmer didn't know was that Manus had started

<sup>12</sup> For background on the WCWA, see Anke Voss-Hubbard, "'No Documents—No History': Mary Ritter Beard and the Early History of Women's Archives," *American Archivist* 58 (1995), 16–30; Anne Kimbell Relph, "The World Center for Women's Archives, 1935–1940," *Signs* 4, no. 3 (1979): 597–603.

<sup>13</sup> "The Netherlands," *International Women's News* 30 (February 1936): 37–38.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Ritter Beard, letter to Lola Maverick Lloyd, 22 February 1936, WCWA Microfilm Reel 118, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, NYPL.

<sup>15</sup> Rosika Schwimmer, letter to Mary Ritter Beard, 26 March 1936, World Center for Women's Archives Microfilm Reel 118, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, NYPL; Minutes of "Confidential discussion for the reasons of Madam Schwimmer's resignation . . ." 1 May 1936, WCWA Microfilm Reel 118, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, NYPL.

<sup>16</sup> Schwimmer to Lloyd, 13 October 1936; Schwimmer, letter to Mary Ritter Beard, 15 April 1938, WCWA Microfilm Reel 118, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, NYPL.

to consider forming a women's archives just after Aletta Jacobs died in 1929, when Manus inherited Jacobs's papers. Shortly thereafter, Manus wrote about her archives idea to Jane Addams and Carrie Chapman Catt's secretary.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, a few years later, when Schwimmer approached Addams and Catt with her archives idea, they did not tell her that Manus was planning the same.

The initial correspondence between the two archives, which had so enraged Schwimmer sight unseen, was not much more than acknowledgment of one another's existence, an expression of intent to keep one another apprised of their activities, and a nod at the possibility of collaboration.<sup>18</sup> Potentially influenced by Schwimmer's extreme reaction to and dismissal of the IAV, the WCWA committee seems to have kept its distance from the IAV after this first exchange. An undercurrent of competition eventually developed between the two archives, as well as a discomfort regarding the overlap in their collecting scope. The IAV treasurer sent a particularly bold letter in December 1936, writing: "I would like to advise you to call your new organization not World Center, but American Center, as our foundation has been first and called already international."<sup>19</sup> Shortly after this letter, the same treasurer also met with the WCWA committee in New York, and when she returned to Amsterdam, she "reported back somewhat relieved that there was 'no Center, although they do seem to have some members'."<sup>20</sup> My research has not yet uncovered any serious discussion of collaboration between the two, even though both would likely have benefited from such a partnership.

There are interesting parallels in the early development and missions of both projects. Schwimmer and Manus focused on the collection and preservation of documentary material itself, and it took historians, Beard in Schwimmer's case and Johanna Naber in Manus's case, to expand the concept of the archives center to education as well; Beard and Naber intended that the archives not simply be repositories, but also educational and cultural institutes encouraging active use of the archives.<sup>21</sup> Schwimmer and Manus pushed for and represented the internationality of both endeavors. In the case of the IAV, "Rosa Manus's

<sup>17</sup> Rosa Manus, letter to Jane Addams, 29 July 1930, Rosette Susanna Manus Papers, Aletta, as quoted in Francisca de Haan, "Getting to the Source: A 'Truly International' Archive for the Women's Movement (IAV, now IIAV): From Its Foundation in Amsterdam in 1935 to the Return of Its Looted Archives in 2003," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 4 (2004): 151; Manus, letter to Clara Hyde, 20 May 1930, Rosette Susanna Manus Papers, Aletta, as quoted in de Haan, 166.

<sup>18</sup> Ruth Savord, letter to Rosa Manus, 27 February 1936, no. 19, IAV Records, Aletta; Rosa Manus, letter to Ruth Savord, 11 March 1936, no. 23, IAV Records, Aletta; Inez Haynes Irwin, letter to Rosika Schwimmer, 2 April 1936, WCWA Microfilm Reel 118, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, NYPL.

<sup>19</sup> Charlotte Matthes, letter to Mina Bruere, 4 December 1936, no. 23, IAV Records, Aletta.

<sup>20</sup> De Haan, "Getting to the Source," 167, quoting IAV board meeting minutes, 5 February 1937, no. 1, IAV Records, Aletta. For more examples of competitiveness, see Edith Wynner, letter to Rosika Schwimmer, 26 February 1936, WCWA Microfilm Reel 118, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, NYPL; Rosa Manus, letter to Bertha Lutz, 24 March 1938, no. 22, IAV Records, Aletta.

<sup>21</sup> De Haan, "Getting to the Source," 151.

death marked the end of the international orientation of the institute, at least for a number of decades."<sup>22</sup> Schwimmer's resignation also created a gap in the international mission of the WCWA for a time, until Beard reinstated efforts to collect global materials a year or two later. The archives also shared high-profile supporters like Eleanor Roosevelt.

By 1940, the WCWA collapsed, never having fully gotten off the ground, but the project left behind a wide and influential wake.<sup>23</sup> The publicity surrounding the WCWA stirred up an interest in women's collection acquisition at academic institutions, and the materials that donors had promised to the WCWA found homes at a variety of colleges across the United States. The three most direct repository or collection descendants of WCWA are the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College,<sup>24</sup> the Schlesinger Library at Harvard University,<sup>25</sup> and the Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection at the New York Public Library (NYPL).<sup>26</sup> I will address the latter and my colleague Anke Voss will discuss the first two.

The Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection came into being following the dissolution of the WCWA, when Schwimmer, her colleague Lola Maverick Lloyd, their colleagues, and their family members deposited their personal papers at NYPL. The collection, totaling 1,650 linear feet, opened to the public in 1974 as NYPL's largest collection of feminist materials and one of the largest collections in the Manuscripts and Archives Division. As for the collection's online presence today, there are eighteen finding aids available and 752 photos have been digitized and are in the NYPL Digital Gallery.<sup>27</sup>

During World War II, the IAV suffered severe setbacks. In July 1940, the Nazis confiscated the archives of the IAV and transported them to the Reich Security Main Office.<sup>28</sup> Then the Soviets took a portion of the collection, including Manus's and some of Jacobs's papers, which eventually ended up in the Moscow Special Archives. Only in 2003, after much negotiation, did Russia return the materials to Amsterdam. Though the IAV reopened in 1947, only in

<sup>22</sup> De Haan, "Getting to the Source," 159.

<sup>23</sup> For further analysis, see Voss-Hubbard, "No Documents—No History"; Julie des Jardins, *Women and the Historical Enterprise in America: Gender, Race, and the Politics of Memory, 1880–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); and Barbara Turoff, *Mary Ritter Beard as Force in History* (Dayton, Ohio: Wright State University Press, 1979), 51–69.

<sup>24</sup> See Smith College Libraries, Sophia Smith Collection, "Welcome," <http://www.smith.edu/libraries/lib/ssc/index.html>, accessed 1 January 2012.

<sup>25</sup> See Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, "Schlesinger Library," [http://www.radcliffe.edu/schlesinger\\_library.aspx](http://www.radcliffe.edu/schlesinger_library.aspx), accessed 1 January 2012.

<sup>26</sup> See New York Public Library, "Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection, 1852–1980," <http://www.nypl.org/archives/1871>, accessed 1 January 2012.

<sup>27</sup> The number of finding aids was confirmed in an email to the author from Melanie Yolles, 23 August 2011; the number of photographs was confirmed at NYPL Digital Gallery, "Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection," <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchresult.cfm?keyword=schwimmer-lloyd+collection>, accessed 21 August 2011.

<sup>28</sup> De Haan, "Getting to the Source," 157.

the 1970s, with the second wave of feminism, did it expand and flourish.<sup>29</sup> Two years ago, the institution was renamed the Aletta, Institute for Women's History. Aletta functions as an information center and collecting repository, housing about four thousand linear feet of individual women's papers and women's organizational records. It is highly active on Twitter, has developed an online thesaurus of women's studies index terms, and offers a selection of digitized visual materials on its site.<sup>30</sup> This past December, Aletta celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary, and it is shortly moving into a new space, which currently sports a portrait of Aletta Jacobs.

I'd like to conclude by returning to one final parallel between Schwimmer's WCWA and Manus's IAV—Aletta Jacobs's own personal papers were at the center of both their interests. Schwimmer was vehemently determined to preserve Jacobs's place in both her own record and in the general historical record. Among the earliest letters in Schwimmer's personal papers are Jacobs's letters to her—without this surviving half of their correspondence, the intimacy of their friendship would not be known, because, paradoxically and unbeknownst to Schwimmer, Jacobs had eliminated all evidence of Schwimmer from her papers.<sup>31</sup> Schwimmer, however, was on a mission to bring Jacobs's papers and books to the WCWA, and in her statements to the press, her presentations to the WCWA committee, and her personal correspondence, Schwimmer constantly referred to Jacobs's papers and library as examples of what her archives project would preserve and make accessible.<sup>32</sup> On the IAV side, of course, it was the inheritance of Jacobs's papers that sparked Rosa Manus's idea. At the opening of the IAV, a portrait of Aletta Jacobs "occupied a place of honour" over the proceedings.<sup>33</sup> Jacobs hovered over the event as an ancestor,

<sup>29</sup> For more on the IAV and its later incarnations, see de Haan, "Getting to the Source"; Bosch and Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship*; Mineke Bosch, "A Woman's Life in a Soapbox: The Collection of Personal Documents in the Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging in Amsterdam," *History Workshop: A Journal of Socialist and Feminist Historians*, no. 24 (1987); Claire Posthumus, "The International Information Center and Archives of the Women's Movement," *Collection Management* 15, nos. 1–2 (1992): 93–96; Annette Mevis, "The Archives Acquisition Policy of the IAV, 1935–1994," in *Women, Information and the Future: Collecting and Sharing Resources Worldwide*, ed. Eva Steiner Mosley (Fort Atkinson, Wis.: Highsmith Press, 1995), 131–35.

<sup>30</sup> On Twitter at <http://twitter.com/#!/AlettaNieuws>; Aletta's website at <http://www.aletta.nu/>; accessed 1 January 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Bosch and Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship*, xii.

<sup>32</sup> For examples of her pursuit of Jacobs's papers, see Schwimmer's notes, 25 December 1935, and Schwimmer, letter to Palthe, 23 March 1936, WCWA Microfilm Reel 118, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, NYPL; and Schwimmer, letter to Lloyd, 25 August 1936, Box 18, Lola Maverick Lloyd Papers, NYPL. For examples of her references to Jacobs's papers and library, see "Sketch of a Plan for Organizing an International Feminist-Pacifist Archive," 4 August 1935; "A Feminist-Pacifist Archive Center," 18 September 1935; "Rosika Schwimmer's Speech at the Meeting for a World Center for Women's Archives," 17 October 1935; Rosika Schwimmer, letter to Bess Furman, 17 February 1936, all at WCWA Microfilm Reel 118, Rosika Schwimmer Papers, NYPL.

<sup>33</sup> "International Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging, Amsterdam," *International Women's News* 31 (February 1937): 35–36.

authority, witness, and matriarch, just as her name now hovers over the Aletta Institute and her photograph is displayed at its new site. To play with Jacques Derrida's gendered terms "matriarchive" and "patriarchive" (the latter of which Derrida uses to describe the authoritative place of Sigmund Freud's papers and library in relation to the field of psychoanalysis), Jacobs's papers were a symbolic center of authority to Schwimmer's and Manus's matriarchive of the international women's movement, which in turn became a matriarchive to the field of women's history.<sup>34</sup>

### **Salvaging Their History: Initiatives and Challenges in the Early Development of Women's Archives and Documentation**

**Anke Voss**

It is an honor to have this opportunity to revisit a topic that led me to the archives and a profession that gives me a sense of great purpose and satisfaction. "No Documents—No History" was the title of a paper I wrote while a student at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany in the early 1990s, and which subsequently won SAA's Theodore Calvin Pease Award and was published in the *American Archivist*.<sup>35</sup> This is a motto that still inspires me today, as I consider the history of women, but also the thick layers of marginalized histories that are buried in the neighborhoods, families, and communities around me. It inspires me to work collaboratively with my community to gather the sources, and, more importantly, to take steps to make sure their histories are included wherever history is taught and written.

The early quest for women's archives is inextricably the story of many dedicated individuals, including historian Mary Ritter Beard, who called upon archivists, educators, and historians to support the study of women's history, moreover to gather the building blocks for this endeavor by focusing on collecting primary source materials.<sup>36</sup> Just as historian J. Franklin Jameson recognized the value in the preservation of federal records and the establishment of the National Archives, Beard recognized the value of primary source materials to

<sup>34</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 4, 36.

<sup>35</sup> Anke Voss-Hubbard, "'No Documents—No History': Mary Ritter Beard and the Early History of Women's Archives," *American Archivist* 58 (1995): 16–30.

<sup>36</sup> Mary Ritter Beard, "The Historical Approach to Learning About Women" (speech, Radcliffe College, 22 May 1944), Mary Ritter Beard Papers (A-9), Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, Harvard University; Nancy F. Cott, ed., *A Woman Making History: Mary Ritter Beard through Her Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 21.

study the past, specifically women's history.<sup>37</sup> Beard believed that women had always been partners with men in making history and in defining the values of the society. She disagreed fervently with feminist thought in the early-twentieth century, which argued that women had been subjugated throughout history. In her view, their contributions had been ignored and needed to be discovered by scholars and students in the archives. She was dedicated to teaching women about their past through women's history, seeking to challenge or expand the traditional historical consensus.<sup>38</sup>

In her recent review of a compilation of essays on women's sources and methodologies for discovering women in them, Kären Mason, curator of the Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa, notes that women's archives—such as the Schlesinger Library, the Sophia Smith Collection, and the Iowa Women's Archives among numerous other physical and virtual repositories—have made and continue to make great strides in collecting and uncovering women's stories.<sup>39</sup> With the surge of a new women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s, these libraries' collections grew very rapidly as feminist activists highlighted the importance of women's history and created their own documents and publications. This surge in collections also inspired the growth of women's history scholarship, initially led by second-wave feminist historians during the “golden age” of social history scholarship in the United States and Britain.<sup>40</sup>

Although Beard's 1935 vision for a center for the preservation and study of primary source materials did not come to fruition in the way she had envisioned, I argue that far more has been achieved. Centers such as Schlesinger and Sophia Smith, but also archives everywhere, are making laudable efforts to collect, uncover, and make accessible the missing and hidden voices of women and marginalized others. I believe Beard would be proud of the work that archivists and their allies have accomplished in just the last century.

In the mid-twentieth century, under the inspired leadership of its first director, Margaret Storrs Grierson, the Sophia Smith Collection (SSC) at Smith College evolved quickly from a collection of works by women writers into a

<sup>37</sup> Donald R. McCoy, “The Struggle to Establish a National Archives in the United States,” in *Guardian of Heritage: Essays on the History of the National Archives*, ed. Timothy Walch (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1985), 15.

<sup>38</sup> “Woman—the Pioneer” (radio broadcast, jointly sponsored by Columbia Broadcasting Systems and the Women's National Radio Committee, 1939), in *Mary Ritter Beard: A Source Book*, ed. Ann J. Lane (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 193; Mary Beard, Introduction, *America through Women's Eyes* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 5; and Beard, *Woman as Force in History* (New York: Macmillan, 1946).

<sup>39</sup> Kären Mason, review of *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in Sources*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); *American Archivist* 74 (2011): 352.

<sup>40</sup> For examples, see Gerda Lerner, “New Approaches to the Study of Women in American History,” *Journal of Social History* 3 (Fall 1969): 53–62; “Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges,” *Feminist Studies* 3 (Fall 1975): 5–14; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The New Woman and the New History,” *Feminist Studies* 3 (Fall 1975): 185–98.

historical research collection of materials documenting the lives and activities of women.<sup>41</sup> Today, the SSC is an internationally recognized repository with subject strengths in areas including birth control and reproductive rights, suffrage, the professions (especially journalism and social work), and the contemporary women's movement. It comprises over ten thousand linear feet of manuscripts, archives, photographs, periodicals, and other primary sources for the study of women's history.<sup>42</sup>

Current director Sherrill Redmon is especially proud of progress made by the SSC in the past decade in documenting women of color, working-class women, grassroots activists, religious and political radicals and their organizations, lesbian and bisexual women, and women in philanthropy. In her view, these holdings will help scholars and other researchers change the complexion of U.S. women's history and, of course, history itself. The SSC was fortunate to have received over \$1 million in Ford Foundation support to collect materials that will make the historical record more accurate by being more inclusive of women of all stripes and stations in life.<sup>43</sup>

Another one of the finest repositories of women's history, the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe College, Harvard University, also dates its origin from the mid-1940s. Its wealth of resources also reveals the wide range of women's activities at home in the United States and abroad from the early-nineteenth century to the present day. The library holds over 2,500 unique manuscript collections and more than 80,000 published materials. The topics of suffrage, women's rights, and social reform are especially well represented.<sup>44</sup>

Beard could have only imagined such spectacular results, when in 1935 she and Hungarian-born pacifist Rosika Schwimmer initiated the organization of the World Center for Women's Archives.<sup>45</sup> As detailed in the previous paper, during the brief period when Schwimmer was still a part of the planning process, the project moved from a feminist-pacifist focus toward an ever-broadening, even global, vision for a combined archives and education center for the

<sup>41</sup> From Margaret Grierson, handwritten draft to William Beard, 1959, SSC Donor Files, Smith College Archives; Mary Beard, letter to Herbert Davis, 5 August 1941, Records of the President's Office, Smith College Archives.

<sup>42</sup> Smith College Libraries, Sophia Smith Collection, "About the SSC," <http://www.smith.edu/libraries/libraries/ssc/about.html>, accessed 15 September 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Sherrill Redmon, email to author, 16 August 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Radcliffe, Schlesinger Library, [http://www.radcliffe.edu/schlesinger\\_library.aspx](http://www.radcliffe.edu/schlesinger_library.aspx), accessed 15 September 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Relph, "The World Center for Women's Archives," 601, 599.

study of women.<sup>46</sup> As the vision of the WCWA continued to gain traction and grow, more women pledged their support, including Carrie Chapman Catt and Jane Addams, whom Schwimmer herself had introduced to the idea of the center.

Following Schwimmer's withdrawal from the WCWA project, detailed in the previous essay by Rachel Miller, some members of the organization's board considered collaboration with the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress (LOC). It was Beard's view, however, that such collaboration would only serve to "again take women off the record" and that a separate women's archives was needed to recognize women as equally important as men.<sup>47</sup> The WCWA gathered further momentum and, in 1937, with the endorsement of Eleanor Roosevelt, Frances Perkins, Alice Paul, Fannie Hurst, and Georgia O'Keefe, it was launched at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City, under the motto "No Documents—No History." At last, Beard, it seemed, could be assured that source material would be systematically gathered and women would be recognized as co-makers of history.<sup>48</sup>

Despite its initial success, lack of financial support and disagreement among the leadership, notably about racial issues, prevented the WCWA from reaching its goals. Mary McLeod Bethune, founder and president of the National Council of Negro Women, briefly committed her organization to collaboration with Beard and the WCWA to promote African American women's history. African American women, however, soon declined further involvement, pointing to what they saw as only lackluster support for their work or participation with the center's leadership.<sup>49</sup>

The lack of solidarity among WCWA leaders and continuing financial woes finally led Beard to resign in frustration in 1940.<sup>50</sup> Despite the center's demise, in just five years, its efforts resulted in pledges from women to donate their papers, the identification of historically valuable records in various repositories, and promotion of exhibits at LOC and the National Archives. The WCWA had compiled bibliographies of women's sources and served as a clearinghouse for information about women. The efforts of Beard and the WCWA, furthermore, sowed the seed at institutions like Smith College, Radcliffe College, Syracuse

<sup>46</sup> Mary Beard, letter to Rosika Schwimmer, 14 February 1936, in Cott, *A Woman Making History*, 148; Mary Beard, letter to Sue Bailey Thurman, 25 March 1940, in Cott, *A Woman Making History*, 198; Mary Beard, letter to Rosika Schwimmer, 12 May 1936, in Cott, *A Woman Making History*, 151; Cott, *A Woman Making History*, 145.

<sup>47</sup> Beard to Thurman, 25 March 1940, in Cott, *A Woman Making History*, 198.

<sup>48</sup> World Center for Women's Archives brochure, International Organization Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

<sup>49</sup> Bettye Collier-Thomas, "Towards Black Feminism: The Creation of the Bethune Museum Archives," *Special Collections* 3 (Spring/Summer 1986): 43–66.

<sup>50</sup> Mary Beard, letter to the members of the board of the World Center for Women's Archives, 26 June 1940, in Cott, *A Woman Making History*, 211–12; Mary Beard, letter to Miriam Holden, 15 August 1940, in Cott, *A Woman Making History*, 216, 220.

University, and even the New Jersey Historical Society, for collecting source materials on women.<sup>51</sup> Beard had indeed reached several repositories and institutions of higher learning attempting to influence their collecting policies.<sup>52</sup> When the center closed its doors, she was responsible for distributing to a number of institutions of higher learning the source materials, including some scant remnants of her own papers (paradoxically Beard did not consider her own papers of any value and saved very little), collected by the WCWA. This in essence promoted a concern for the preservation of women's records that would have a lasting effect, in particular at Radcliffe and Smith where Beard's dual vision of the WCWA as a place of preservation and education could at last be achieved.

In the mid 1940s, when Beard approached the Radcliffe College administration to expand its recently established Women's Rights Collection, to her great dismay Radcliffe chose not to commit to the plan as she envisioned it.<sup>53</sup> As her discussions at Radcliffe seemingly would not have the outcome for which she had hoped, Beard also contacted Smith College, where the college archivist, Margaret Grierson, embraced her vision. The two women shared a great respect for each other and a commitment to promoting women's history and establishing a women's archive.<sup>54</sup>

With the college administration's support, Beard began sending source materials from WCWA headquarters to the new women's archives at Smith, which the college's president, Herbert Davis, introduced as a special project under the direction of the Friends of the Smith College Library.<sup>55</sup> It soon became clear, however, that Davis and Margaret Grierson did not exactly share the same vision. Herbert Davis preferred a literary collection, while Grierson recognized and advocated successfully for a collection that embodied Beard's vision for the

<sup>51</sup> For a brief history of two of these collections and their holdings, see Patricia M. King, "Forty Years of Collecting on Women: The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America," *Radcliffe Special Collections* 3 (Spring/Summer 1986): 75–100; Mary Elizabeth Murdock, "Exploring Women's Lives: Historical and Contemporary Resources in the College Archives and the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College," *Radcliffe Special Collections* 3 (Spring/Summer 1986): 67–74.

<sup>52</sup> Mary Beard, letter to Alice Lachmund, 7 December 1942, Mary Beard Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Beard's correspondence discussing these efforts can be located in the papers of women who supported the WCWA and donated their papers to Smith College; also see WCWA records in the Mary Beard Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, Harvard University. For studies about new sources of women's history, see Martha S. Bell, "Special Women's Collections in United States Libraries," *College and Research Libraries* 20 (May 1959); Eva S. Moseley, "Sources for the 'New Women's History'," *American Archivist* 43 (Spring 1980): 180–90; Eva S. Moseley, "Women in Archives: Documenting the History of Women in America," *American Archivist* 36 (April 1973): 215–22.

<sup>53</sup> Among the many letters, see Mary Beard, letters to Wilbur Jordan, 14 January and 7 June 1944, Mary Beard Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, Harvard University.

<sup>54</sup> Lane, *Mary Ritter Beard: A Source Book*, 54.

<sup>55</sup> For her offer of materials from the WCWA, see Mary Beard, letter to Herbert Davis, 24 October and 6, 16, and 21 November 1941, Records of the President's Office, Smith College Archives.

abandoned WCWA, one that would enable scholars to reshape history by studying the lives of women.<sup>56</sup>

While the collection began to take shape as a literary collection of works by women writers, by 1946, the archives was renamed the Sophia Smith Collection, in honor of Sophia Smith's gift of her fortune to found Smith College in 1870. By the close of the decade, Grierson's annual reports attested to the growing list of donations to the Sophia Smith Collection of books and manuscripts.<sup>57</sup> In spite of the reluctance of the college's new president, Benjamin Fletcher Wright, to further expand the collection, the Sophia Smith Collection's holdings and use continued to grow. In the late 1950s, Grierson reported to Beard's son that Smith faculty finally changed their habits to include women in their research and in class assignments.<sup>58</sup>

The collection's holdings continued to grow in the 1950s and 1960s both because of Beard's association and the role she played in identifying possible donors. Although Beard did not think much of her influence on the growth of the Smith collection, Grierson recognized the power of this association even after Beard's death in 1958 and toward the end of her career credited Beard's sound ideas.<sup>59</sup> Grierson's own records demonstrate, nonetheless, that her own proactive approach to collection management, her detailed knowledge of and reporting about collections, and her skillful relations with donors were the key elements in the growth and success of the collection.<sup>60</sup> There were many hurdles to overcome to establish women's archives like those at Smith and Radcliffe and many others that have now been established in the United States and around the world. The SSC also exemplifies how much can be achieved when archivists collaborate and listen to the voices and visions of a large community, when we recognize that although we play an important role in gathering the sources, we might do even better if we work with others to define and build the vision.

As noted several years ago by Nancy Cott, renowned women's historian and director of the Schlesinger Library, it was because of the existence of archives such as Sophia Smith and Schlesinger that historians like herself could study

<sup>56</sup> *Annual Report of the Friends of the Smith College Library*, March 1942, Smith College Archives; Margaret Grierson, letter to Nina Browne, 8 April 1943, Nina Browne Papers, Smith College Archives.

<sup>57</sup> For Grierson's comments on the arrangement of the collections, see Margaret Grierson, "Consideration of Several Aspects of the Sophia Smith Collection in Comparison with the Radcliffe Women's Archives," September 1950, Records of the SCA/SSC, Smith College Archives; *Annual Report of the Friends of the Smith College Library*, 1947, Smith College Archives.

<sup>58</sup> Mary Beard, letter to Margaret Grierson, 17 February 1951, Mary Beard Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College; Margaret Grierson, letter to William Beard, 1959, SSC Donor Files, Smith College Archives.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Beard, letter to Margaret Grierson, 6 March 1944, Mary Beard Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

<sup>60</sup> Margaret Grierson, letter to Amy Hague, 17 September 1992, Margaret Grierson Papers, Smith College Archives; Margaret Grierson, letter to Margery Steer, 4 April 1961, SSC Donor Files, Smith College Archives.

and teach women's history.<sup>61</sup> However, she also stated that, unfortunately, public knowledge of women's history remains a reductive, polarized view of women either as oppressed in the past, or as great leaders. Although archivists alone are not to blame for this limited public knowledge, I certainly know we can choose to do more. As I stated at the beginning, I think repositories across the nation have made enormous strides in collecting the evidence of women's lives and the stories of other marginalized communities. As Cott argues, "Our job is to keep doing what we are doing, only better. To make sure that whenever history is written, women are a central part of the story."<sup>62</sup> I encourage us all to work even harder to bring the rich content of our collections to light. Don't wait for the graduate students and scholars to mine your holdings for the nuggets. Reach beyond the traditional community of archival users, beyond senior scholars, graduate students, and undergraduates. Work with social science teachers to bring primary sources to the classroom. I don't want our children to wait until they are in their twenties to recognize that they, their sisters, mothers, and grandmothers are a central part of the story.

### **From Paper to Bytes: The Creation of the International Museum of Women**

**Danelle Moon**

Mary Ritter Beard and Rosika Schwimmer played a critical role in building the World Center for Women's Archives, as has been amply illustrated in the previous essays by Rachel Miller and Anke Voss, and through their work and the creation of women's archives in the United States, students, scholars, and the scholarly community can access records that document women's social and political experiences across three centuries.

I will focus on the International Museum of Women (IMOW), a virtual museum that began as the Women's Heritage Museum (WHM). The WHM was conceived as a museum without walls, and this original idea has thrived with the creation of the IMOW's virtual museum website. The IMOW donated its organizational records to San José State University (SJSU) in 2010. The finding aid is available through the Online Archives of California, and some of the

<sup>61</sup> "Pioneering Women's Historian Joins FAS, Schlesinger," *Harvard University Gazette*, 17 October 2002, <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/2002/10.17/03-cott.html>, accessed 16 September 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Joan Wickersham, "Women's Stories: Why the Schlesinger Library Matters," *Radcliffe Quarterly*, Winter 2008, [http://www.radcliffe.edu/about/quarterly/w08\\_library.aspx](http://www.radcliffe.edu/about/quarterly/w08_library.aspx), accessed 16 September 2011.

exhibit posters have been digitized and are available through the King Library Digital Archives.<sup>63</sup>

The IMOW is a beneficiary of the hard work of twentieth-century feminists to secure a voice for women around the world. The history of the IMOW, while not a traditional women's archives, emerged out of the desire of California women to create a WHM that provided education, resources, and curated traveling exhibits that recognized the contributions of women in history.

Plans to form the WHM began in 1983. Jeanne McDonnell, one of the founding board members, spelled out the goals of the museum: "[To] . . . focus on excellence in women's achievements, restoring women to their rightful place in history, and assuring recognition of the value of women's current contributions." Part of their vision was to research and build women's history exhibits that present artifacts and sources documenting the contributions of women in the arts, sciences, and humanitarian achievements.<sup>64</sup>

Jeanne McDonnell, Anne Murray, Linda Liebes, Autumn Stanley, Linda Sutherland, and Jane Van Dusen formed the WHM in San Francisco in 1985 with the goal of building a social change museum focused on women's history and educational programming. Each of these women had experience as community activists and organizers. McDonnell and Liebes were involved in environmental education; Murray worked as a program officer of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; Stanley was a writer; Sutherland was a local community activist; and Van Dusen had expertise as a management consultant for nonprofit organizations.

The early exhibits and programs were designed to educate the public about the contributions of women in U.S. history, with a specific focus on the suffrage movement and international feminism. Modern feminism and the desire to raise public awareness of the need to improve women's status in society clearly influenced the WHM agenda. Its most popular exhibit program, "California Woman Suffrage; 75th Anniversary Exhibit," traveled from city to city and was displayed at the state capitol and later at the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York. The artifacts displayed in this popular exhibit included historic suffrage posters, poster boards with timelines and images, a typewriter, buttons, banners, and textiles—including a black lace scarf from California suffragist Sara Bard Field. Field is most well known for her road trip from California to Washington, D.C. She had been hand-selected by suffrage leader Alice Paul and, with the help of two Swedish drivers and the press work

<sup>63</sup> See Online Archives of California, "Guide to the Women's Heritage Museum/International Museum of Women Records," <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt4m3nf2sh> and Digital Collections, King Library Special Collections, <http://digitalcollections.sjlibrary.org/>, both accessed 2 January 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Jeanne McDonnell, letter to the National Museum of Women's Art, 10 October 1983, WHM/IMOW Records, Box 2, Folder: Early Correspondence, SJSU Special Collections and Archives.

of Mabel Vernon, she delivered a suffrage petition with half a million signatures to President Wilson on the opening day of Congress in 1916.<sup>65</sup> During the 1986–1987 suffrage celebrations, local Bay Area women re-enacted the road trip and celebrated the early history of California.

As the WHM launched programs, it faced many challenges in building a financial base to secure a permanent space for a physical museum. Fund-raising was a critical part of the organizational structure, but it was competing for public and private donations to support the building of a women's history museum while other feminist groups focused on funding rape crisis centers and other needed community programs to improve the lives of woman and families. At the same time, the rightward shift in the political environment and a growing anti-feminist agenda made for a challenging fund-raising environment.<sup>66</sup>

Between the years 1986 and the late 1990s, the WHM focused on securing museum space in the Presidio in San Francisco, part of the National Park System. In its application to secure space, the WHM tied its programs teaching women's history to Presidio programs focused on multicultural and racially diverse audiences, proposing to build a Presidio component focused on women's history. The WHM proposal focused on Hispanic California and California woman suffrage, and its work to preserve the Juana Briones House in Palo Alto provided the basis for its application. Juana Briones was a well-known Mexican/Californio business woman, landowner, and humanitarian. She grew up in the Presidio and later became a cattle rancher. In 1844, she bought the 4,400-acre Rancho La Pursima Concepcion, located in the Los Altos hills and built an adobe house (part of Palo Alto today) where she raised her eight children and operated a successful cattle ranch. Following the American take-over of California, she fought to preserve ownership of her land and eventually won her case.<sup>67</sup> The WHM had direct experience providing interpretative tours of the Briones house, and it tied these education programs to the Presidio grounds and the place of San Francisco in early California history. Its education programs clearly matched the requirements of the Presidio programs, and the WHM made a strong case that it could expand the traditional museum audience to include people of diverse backgrounds, races, religions, sexual orientations, and political beliefs. The park system educational programming was extremely slow in adopting curriculum focused on women, and the WHM had

<sup>65</sup> Amelia R. Fry, "From West to East for Freedom Now," *American West* 6 (January 1969): 16–25.

<sup>66</sup> Women's Heritage Museum Board Report, WHM/IMOW Records, Box 2, Folder: Board 1984–1985, SJSU Special Collections and Archives.

<sup>67</sup> Juana Briones Heritage, <http://www.brioneshouse.org/index.htm>. See also Jeanne McDonnell, *Juana Briones of Nineteenth-Century California* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008).

a specific niche teaching racially diverse students about the history of women as part of its organizational mission.<sup>68</sup>

In 1994, the WHM submitted an application to the Presidio, which included an ambitious strategic plan, “Shooting for the Stars (A Plan for the Women’s Heritage Museum at Presidio) 1995–2035.” This plan outlined WHM’s goals for the Presidio museum, which included the creation of similar national women’s museums in South America, Africa, China, Japan, Eastern Europe; creating its own TV channel; reaching out to cultural organizations; creating preschool programs, afterschool programs, summer programs for high school students, and college scholarships; and developing corporate sponsors to contribute funds for interactive programs. The WHM envisioned a scaled-down version of the Smithsonian, with a proposed budget of \$2,864,900.<sup>69</sup>

The WHM’s application to lease one of the buildings was initially approved, but political changes in the leasing process imposed by the creation of a Presidio Trust, a government/corporate trust to manage the park, derailed nonprofit efforts to lease space there. While the WHM’s attempt to secure space in the Presidio failed as a result of politics, the Presidio application process provided a roadmap for strategic planning that ultimately led to the creation of a virtual museum.

Following the Presidio building project, the WHM began a new capital campaign to build a physical space on Pier 39 in San Francisco. An enormous amount of energy went into the capital campaign, and the project plan files contain bids from various architecture firms, full-scale building plans with architectural elevations, and artistic and photographic renderings of the future museum.

In 1995, the international component of the museum program began to take shape as the WHM developed new global programs. Writing to historian Vivien Rose, Jeanne McDonnell, WHM executive director in 1995, articulated its mission: “We have been working for ten years in the field of public education in women’s history. We have not limited our subject boundaries geographically because we believe that women’s mutual concerns transcend political boundaries.” The WHM sponsored the UN50 celebration, hosting Blanche Wiesen Cook’s lecture, “Eleanor Roosevelt, the UN, and the Challenge of Human Rights,” and re-enacted Sara Bard Field’s 1915 auto trip from the Panama Pacific Exposition to Washington D.C. and her delivery of the suffrage petition to President Wilson.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Presidio application, WHM/IMOW Records, Box 7, Folder: Presidio Application, 1992, SJSU Special Collections and Archives.

<sup>69</sup> “Shooting for the Stars,” WHM/IMOW Records, Box 7, Folder: Presidio, 12 January 1994, SJSU Special Collections and Archives.

<sup>70</sup> Jeanne McDonnell, letter to Vivien Rose, 26 May 1995, WHM/IMOW Records, Box 7, Folder: Presidio Project, SJSU Special Collections and Archives.

By 1998, the focus on international women's issues led the board members to create a global museum, resulting in a name change to the International Museum of Women (IMOW). Since the late 1990s, the IMOW has grown from a localized Bay Area museum to become a virtual museum. The Pier 39 project fell through in 2005 as a result of significant structural problems with the pier; the cost to replace the pier was too exorbitant during a severe economic downturn. The IMOW canceled its plans to build a physical museum and refocused on the original mission to build a museum without walls using the Internet.

Some of the early physical programs in the years 2000 to 2006 provided the foundation for a virtual museum. The *Women of the World* exhibit in 2003 highlighted the artistic talent of women from around the world and included artwork from over 180 different countries.

Today, the IMOW is a museum without walls.<sup>71</sup> Through the global Web and social networking technology, it connects to people around the world and attracts over six hundred thousand unique visitors from more than two hundred countries each year to its multilingual exhibition program. The IMOW serves as a "creative catalyst" using art and new creative media to spark conversations, engagement, and activism on global issues of women's rights. It launched its first curated exhibit, *Celebrating Women*, featuring seventeen different festivals that honor women. The exhibit included photographs, film clips, and costumes.

In 2006, inspired by the work of Paula Goldman, author of *Imagining Ourselves: Global Voices from a New Generation of Women*, the IMOW launched its first virtual exhibition based on the book on International Women's Day, 8 March 2006. Web traffic of over sixteen million hits and visitors from over two hundred countries highlights the power of the Web and the viability of a virtual museum. In an effort to mirror the diversity of the virtual content, the board of directors assembled a Global Council of twenty-five members. Since its hallmark launch, the IMOW has created several curated online exhibits, including *Women, Power, and Politics* and its most recent exhibit, *Economica: Women in the Global Economy*. In addition to the exhibits, the IMOW offers teaching tools with curriculum geared toward high school students, pilot school programs in Oakland and San Francisco, speaker series events, fund-raisers, a community page with live chats, and the *Her Blueprint* blog.<sup>72</sup>

As Catherine King, vice president of exhibitions and programs, notes in a recent publication, the idea of *museum* is transforming. "They are increasingly

<sup>71</sup> International Museum of Women, <http://www.imow.org/>, accessed 2 January 2012.

<sup>72</sup> Karen Offen and Elizabeth L. Cohen, "The International Museum of Women," *Museum International* 49 (4 November 2007): 19–26; Tisha Carper Long and Catherine King, "Is a Virtual Museum Still 'Real'? A Conversation bAbout the International Museum of Women," *Exhibitionist* (Spring 2011): 42–48; Paula Goldman, ed., *Imagining Ourselves: Global Voices from a New Generation of Women* (Place: New World Library, distributed by Publishers Group West, 2006). See also *Her Blueprint*, <http://imowblog.blogspot.com/>, accessed 2 January 2012.

(and progressively) contextual and human-centered and can encompass many things besides physical and permanent ‘collections’. Moreover, IMOW prides itself on “. . . providing connections between museum work and social change.” The IMOW offers a gateway for multiple generations to interact and provides a platform for social activism. In contrast to physical museum sites, it does not collect or conserve artifacts and objects, but, as a nonprofit, it is committed to “curating the art and ideas of women around the world” on critical social issues and human rights.<sup>73</sup> The IMOW follows in the footsteps of Mary Ritter Beard and Rosika Schwimmer to build a unique yet global museum that provides a forum on women’s social justice issues around the world.

The IMOW, while not a traditional museum or archives, is attuned to the challenges of archiving electronic media and records. Its current strategic planning includes investigating new technology that will enable the museum’s content to be sustained over time. The IMOW will continue to donate its administrative records to SJSU.

## Conclusion

*Danelle Moon*

The legacy of the work that Mary Ritter Beard, Rosika Schwimmer, and Rosa Manus devoted to collecting women’s history can be seen today with the growing number of women’s collections and physical and virtual museums. As Kären Mason and Tanya Zanish-Belcher demonstrate, “women’s collections have grown exponentially.”<sup>74</sup> The landscape of collecting women’s history in the twenty-first century is shifting from largely print-based collections to electronic records, born-digital archives, and virtual museums like the IMOW.

<sup>73</sup> Long and King, “Is a Virtual Museum Still ‘Real’?,” 44–45.

<sup>74</sup> Kären Mason and Tanya Zanish-Belcher, “A Room of One’s Own: Women’s Archives in the Year 2000,” *Archival Issues* 24, no. 1 (1999), 37–54.

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