



## Preface

Being an editor of a feminist journal is a strange business. On the one hand, you are responsible for a feminist mandate to publish and distribute "feminist knowledge" however understood, to the widest audience possible, and to do this you must stay in touch with all the many aspects of feminist knowledge creation in your geographical or topical "area." But on the other hand, you work largely in isolation - securing material, reviewing it, editing it and publishing it either in a small office or almost entirely on e-mail. I found all this out when I became editor of *Atlantis*. *Atlantis*, like most other feminist publications, has a massive and intimidating vision of the breadth of knowledge we include and the seriousness of our commitment to feminist politics and practice. We are focussed on Canada - on the issues of importance to Canadian women and to sharing the knowledge created in Canada by Canadian scholars and activists: we are also connected to the global feminist movements and scholarship. But in practice, I found myself editing *Atlantis* alone with my computer, communicating with my sister editors, managing editor and contributors through e-mail.

It was this sense of the scale and importance of feminist vision implicit in editing a feminist journal and of the inadequacy and isolation of our actual working conditions that led me to an informal session on feminist journals at the 7th International, Interdisciplinary Congress on Women held in Tromsø, Norway in June 1999. There I found a small group of editors of feminist journals from Scandinavia, Australia and Europe who shared the same passion for the production of feminist knowledge and awareness of the common difficulties we faced. It was clear that we could not solve all our problems in a two hour session and it was also clear that we needed to go on talking together after the conference. And so the Feminist Knowledge Network (then called the International Network of Women's Studies Journals) began - as

an informal network of about six editors who wanted to stay in touch in order to strengthen the global presence of feminist knowledge.

We began by developing an e-mail discussion list and using it to talk about our problems and possibilities as individual editors, but it soon became clear that both the need for and the potential of such a network were much broader. So we began recruiting - carefully and slowly. We not only had very little to offer editors who joined us, but were also concerned that our tiny network should not be swamped by the need we felt was "out there." In particular, we wanted to ensure that we held to our original principles of including the widest spectrum of feminist knowledge (including traditional academic journals, grassroots or community based activist publications, publications that included feminist creativity as knowledge and policy oriented journals) and the widest geographical range of journals (being especially careful to keep the balance between economic north and south as equal as possible). Within those guidelines, recruitment to the network in the first year (1999-2000) was serendipitous and personal, but it was clear, from the enormous enthusiasm we generated, that the need did exist for a global network of feminist journals. All the original editors can tell stories of how they casually mentioned the network to an editor only to be bombarded with requests to join it. For myself, I happened to visit the Women's Studies Centre at the University of the Philippines and was there introduced to Albina Fernandez, editor of the *Review of Women's Studies*, who immediately dropped all her other commitments to come to the first workshop in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

By this time our network had grown to 27 journals based in 21 different countries, of which 12 were located in the economic south. Some, such as *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *Feminist Studies* (US) or the *Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* are traditionally "academic" or "scholarly"



journals with an explicit focus on Women's Studies and (sometimes) an explicit commitment to feminism, and all with a broad range of articles from many different disciplines, though focussed on the social science and arts. However, even the most conventionally scholarly of Women's Studies journals publish articles rooted in a wide variety of disciplines and often pioneer innovative kinds of writing. Some, such as *Women's World* (Uganda) and *Amanitare* (Sudan) use a format closer to that of a newsletter and are primarily aimed at publicising the results of training, research or community based activities. Their content and audience is deliberately grass roots, though several make use of academics both to do the research and to write the reports and information pieces. These kinds of publications are usually one activity of a non-government organization (NGO) primarily focussed on some aspect of women's equality. The network does not have a journal devoted entirely to policy making issues, but several of the journals have this as a major focus, for example, *Gender, Development and Technology* (Thailand and India) and the *Ahfad Journal* (Sudan). Then there are others, usually located in the South, which are "hybrid" journals. These contain conventionally scholarly articles but also a much greater range of material that is explicitly directed at community based groups, providing information about campaigns or for lobbying purposes. These would include *Manushi* (India) and the *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies*. There are some journals which have developed other ways of both collecting and distributing material other than articles in the printed form. *Jurnal Perempuan*, for example, also produces a twice weekly radio programme, broadcast over some 90 local radio stations throughout Indonesia. Each issue also focusses on one topic (apart from the regular features) - and for this topic - the situation of older women, violence against women, the impact of the mining industry in a particular part of Indonesia - they carry out focus groups, interviews and investigations of their own - thus constituting both research and intervention.

After a few months it was clear that we should make plans to push the network to the next

stage. However useful electronic communication is and however well we used it, there was still a vital need for us to meet face to face to share our experiences and develop a practical programme to support our endeavors and to strengthen the whole project of feminist journal publishing. We were fortunate that two Canadian funders agreed to support a workshop to be held in Halifax in September 2001. This meeting marked the "real" beginning of the network. We established an informal and flexible organisational structure (with a coordinator to try to hold it together) and began to lay down some common principles and understandings of our vision of feminist practice and knowledge. For such a diverse group the consensus was extraordinary, although we had to remember that we were a largely self-selected group. The lack of permanent programme funding together with our need to establish our policies and priorities led us to "hold" our membership steady - a decision we re-confirmed at our second workshop in Kampala in July 2002.

The Halifax workshop also saw the initiation of an ambitious programme of projects designed to support our work as individual journals as well as developing our strength as a network. These included an anthology series (to be published in conjunction with Zed Books) that would bring together the work of the member journals; the continuation of the electronic list and the design and establishment of a web page ([www.mun.ca/fkn](http://www.mun.ca/fkn)). These are the beginning efforts to move in the direction of electronic publishing, which will help journals (especially of the south) to reach wider audiences; a study of our own member journals' policies, practices and experiences of publishing to understand the problems that journals face and fostering exchanges and collaboration between member journals. Some journals have exchanged members of editorial boards or called on each other to review articles; many have published articles that have previously appeared in other journals; some have written articles for sister journals in the network. All these are ways in which we can both share in the feminist knowledge that we do have and build a global understanding of feminist issues.



This special issue of *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal* is another example of this cooperation - being a collection of articles from journals around the world focussed on a particular topic. It makes a fitting contribution to the efforts of the Feminist Knowledge Network to build feminist knowledge in the world.

*Marilyn Porter*

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## After the Flower Show

Like a foxhound let loose on the hunt,  
all afternoon she bounded from exhibit  
to exhibit, bending, sniffing, gathering  
names for a garden. *Sweet Woodruff,*  
*Chocolate Ruffles. Globe Blue Spruce.*  
Now, back home, chopping carrots  
and coriander in her kitchen, she hears  
a radio voice threaten shock and awe.  
*Trembling Aspen. Alocasia.* A barrage  
of Tomahawk missiles and bunker busters --  
thundering down. *Mountain Fire.*  
The hollow premise *Halcyon Hosta:*  
it'll all be over *Dark Star Coleus*  
in a roar, a flash.

But in the aftermath of the aftershock,  
after sands shroud the gouges tanks  
chewed in roads, after victors, drunk  
on imperium, lounge in the defeated leader's  
gilded palaces, after smoke ceases to plume  
from the ruins of Basra, Karbala, Kirkuk:  
for the truck-borne women and children  
shot dead at a checkpoint, for the shrapnel  
-scarred, the toddler amputees, what  
sweet thereafter on the banks of the Tigris?

*Ruth Roach Pierson*