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INTRODUCTION

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This issue of the *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* is devoted to the celebration of the twenty years of the Mary H. Dana Women Artist Series at the Mabel Smith Douglass Library, an undergraduate library at Rutgers. The history of the series and how it developed is described in the article by Beryl K. Smith.

But why have a women artists series in an undergraduate library? The mission of an undergraduate library is to enhance the educational experience of students. Such libraries traditionally have had nonresearch services such as paperback book and current fiction collections. Exhibits are also considered important because they expand students awareness of culture and diversity. David Carr states in his article "Artworks in a Library" that "in a world of classification systems and apparently straight lines, knowing may be more than linear." Art exhibits in the library are an informal and enjoyable way of widening students horizons. In an article "Art Exhibits in Academic Libraries: A Necessary (?) Luxury (?)" Suzanna Simor tells of the reasoning behind having a library art gallery in her institution. The art librarians felt "that all of an academic institution should have easy access to art, and that access to art is a cultural prerogative" and that for many students an academic library exhibit is "their first conscious exposure to art".¹

This series in the Douglass Library is equally important because of its collection development role within the Rutgers library system. Two years ago the Douglass Library was designated the women's studies and fine arts

library for the entire system. Therefore the exhibits are the perfect complement to the collections.

What has this series provided to the university community? Ferris Olin in her article explores what the series has meant to her through her years as undergraduate, graduate student, and professional at Rutgers.

Is there still a need for a womens artist's series? Joan Marter presents an overview of what has happened in women's art in the last twenty years using examples from the women artists series, and she draws some conclusions. Joan Snyder (who conceived the series) in her essay "It Wasn't Neo to Us" explores the same theme from a personal viewpoint.

Concurrently with publication of this journal a retrospective invitational show of women who have showed in the last twenty years is being held. Karen McGruder has prepared a catalog of the show which is included in this issue. To peruse its pages is to see that some of the most significant women artists in the United States have shown in this series. It is an achievement to be proud of and was so recognized by the Women's Caucus for Art when they gave the series an award for the promotion of women's art.

I want to acknowledge the work done by three former curators: Lynn F. Miller, Evelyn Apgar, and Beryl K. Smith. They did a magnificent job with minimal budgets. Daisy E. Shenholm, director of the library at the start of the series, deserves special recognition for her enthusiasm and willingness to begin an enterprise which I am sure she did not imagine would continue for twenty years.

This series has managed to survive because of the constant support of certain groups. I want to acknowledge the support of the Rutgers University Libraries, the Alumna of Douglass College, and Nell Smithers who endowed the series in honor of her friend Mary H. Dana. I particularly want to recognize the support of Mary S. Hartman, Dean of Douglass College, who has consistently and generously supported the series.

This celebration of the twenty years of the Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series consisting of this journal, the exhibit and a lecture has only been possible by the co-sponsorship by the following people and organizations at Rutgers:

Art History Department
Dean of Cook College
Dean of Douglass College
Dean of Mason Gross School of the Arts
Douglass Fellows
Friends of the Rutgers University Libraries

Douglass College Government Association
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Department of Library and Information Studies
Rutgers University Libraries
Vice President for University Libraries
Department of Visual Arts
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I thank each of them for their support.

The Mabel Smith Douglass Library staff is proud and happy to have been able to provide this series as a contribution to the cultural life of the Rutgers community. We look forward to the future, as we celebrate the past. We await with anticipation of what might yet adorn our walls in the next twenty years.

¹ Sinor, Suzanna. "Art Exhibits in Academic Libraries: A Necessary (?) Luxury(?)." *Art Documentation*. Vol. 10. #3. Fall 1991, 137-139.