

Lettre de la Présidente

Spring 2010

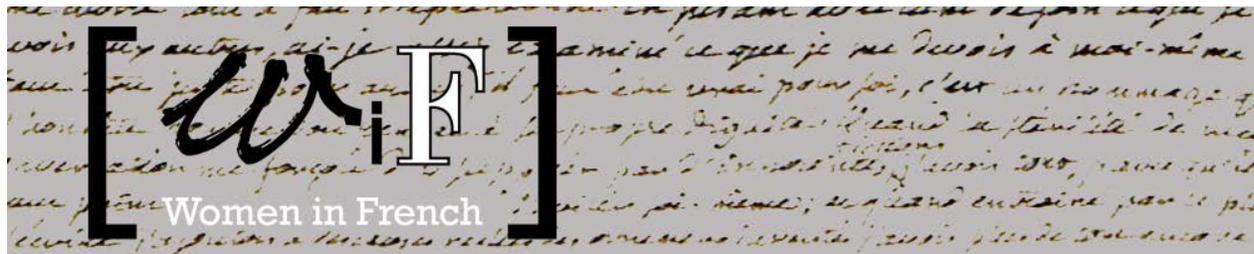
Dear Colleagues,

As I begin writing this newsletter, my thoughts are for the victims and survivors of the devastating earthquake that hit Haïti on January 12, 2010. The destruction and the death toll are both stunning and humbling. I found great hope in listening to the account given by our fellow WIF member, Joëlle Vitiello, of her own personal experience of the earthquake, as she had just arrived for a literature conference in Haïti on January 12. As you can hear from her podcast, there was a great movement of cooperation and helping one another in the streets during those first days – between neighbors and tourists, between Haitians and foreigners. If you have the time, I recommend you listen to her brief message on the Macalester College website: <http://www.macalester.edu/whats happening/audio/archive/2010/20100128joelle.mp3>.

Women in French has a history of supporting and promoting Haïtian culture. Joëlle Vitiello wrote an extensive bibliography of Haïtian Women Writers that appeared in our Spring 2000 Newsletter. Some of you will also recall that the theme of the 2004 Women in French Conference coincided with the 200th anniversary of Haïti's independence, with a keynote speech by Marie-Denise Shelton on Haitian women writers and a performance by Occidental College's Haïtian dance group. I hope you will agree with me that we need to continue in that spirit of promoting and supporting Haïtian culture, and to do what we can to help the country to rebuild. After consulting with the Women in French Executive Committee, I have decided to send a \$1000 donation in the name of all the members of Women in French to the organization Médecins sans frontières. We also encourage you to make individual donations if you can afford to do so.

In other news, the Annual Business Meeting for Women in French took place in Philadelphia on December 28, 2009 and we had a wonderful mix of familiar faces and new acquaintances. Our discussion focused primarily on the impact of the new MLA convention rules (more below) and about new directions for our organization as well, including the possibility of a new method for voting online, and the possible unveiling of our new website this year. As with all transitional periods, we had a couple “bumps in the road” in 2009, both with the new electronic version of the Fall 2009 newsletter and with the transition to a new editorial team for our scholarly journal *Women in French Studies*. But our volunteers are working hard on those projects and I thank you all for your patience while the transition is still in progress. Finally, I was also very happy to make the announcements of the newly elected officers at the Business Meeting.

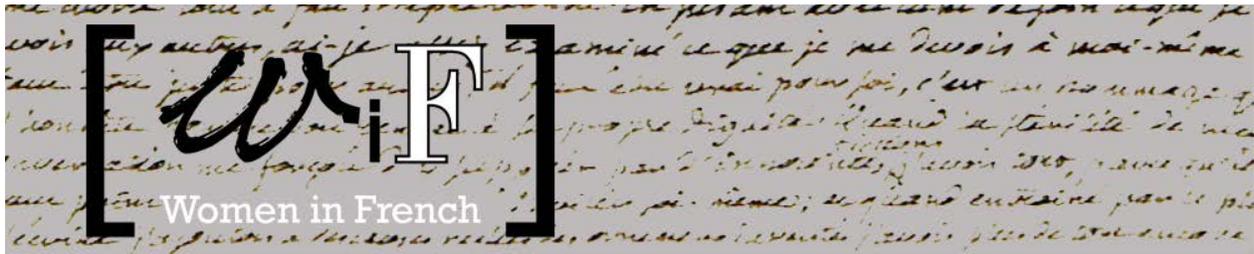
I am grateful for all those members who ran for offices in the elections last fall. My sincerest thanks go to our departing Vice President, Cathy Yandell of Carleton College, who recruited a number of excellent bibliographies for the Newsletter in the past two years and for the



next several issues as well. You may recognize the name of our new Vice President, Frédérique Chevillot of the University of Denver, since she has also served as editor of *Women in French Studies* and as our representative from the Central/Rocky Mountains region – her past experience in this organization is a welcome quality. I would also like to thank both of the outgoing regional representatives for the South (Nancy Lane, University of South Carolina) and the West (Karen McPherson, University of Oregon) for their great help with membership records, their recruiting efforts, and their sound advice and wisdom over the past three years. Congratulations to the newly elected members Mary Anne Garnett, University of Arkansas, for the South, and Catherine Montfort, Santa Clara University, for the West. And a warm welcome to our new graduate student representative, Graziella Postolache, who is working on her PhD on women writers from the Renaissance at Washington University of St. Louis – bienvenue! This year's elections will be for the representatives for the Central/Rocky Mountain, Great Lakes, and the Mid-Atlantic regions. Please think of nominating someone you know who would be a good addition to our team.

The MLA has been discussing possible changes to the convention since 2007, so I was surprised by the email I received at the end of December 2009 announcing that a final decision had actually been made: all allied organizations, including Women in French, would only be guaranteed one session at all future MLA conventions. With only two weeks to go before the deadline for submitting our calls for papers, their abrupt announcement made us scramble to make new decisions about next year's WIF sessions. Fortunately, we are also allowed to submit calls for papers for one or two non-guaranteed sessions, one of which can be a collaborative session with another MLA organization (allied organization, affiliate organization, or division). The MLA Program Committee will then choose some of the non-guaranteed sessions for inclusion in the program, similar to the process that exists already for special sessions.

The two session proposals for next year's MLA convention that received the most votes in the fall elections were: Martine Guyot-Bender's proposal "Women Filming the Real" (ou "Le cinéma du réel des femmes") and Katherine Kolb's proposal "Succès d'auteurs et de leurs héroïnes romanesques (fiction, biographie, autofiction)." For this year, Women in French has submitted one guaranteed session (Martine's) and one non-guaranteed collaborative session with the Francophone Division (Katherine's). The deadline for sending them a paper proposal is March 15. Please see the full description of each session and contact information listed below on page ???. Although this reduction in guaranteed sessions is not great news for us, I believe that the MLA's encouragement of collaboration between MLA groups will be very beneficial, and I look forward to working with the George Sand Association, the Simone de Beauvoir Society, the Women's Caucus, and other allied organizations and divisions in future MLA conventions. In addition, since the new MLA will no longer have any academic sessions in the evenings, we will have the benefit of being able to schedule our annual Business Meetings at one of the convention hotels in future years during one of those evening time slots. This will be a more convenient setting than the off-site restaurants or bars that we have used in the past.

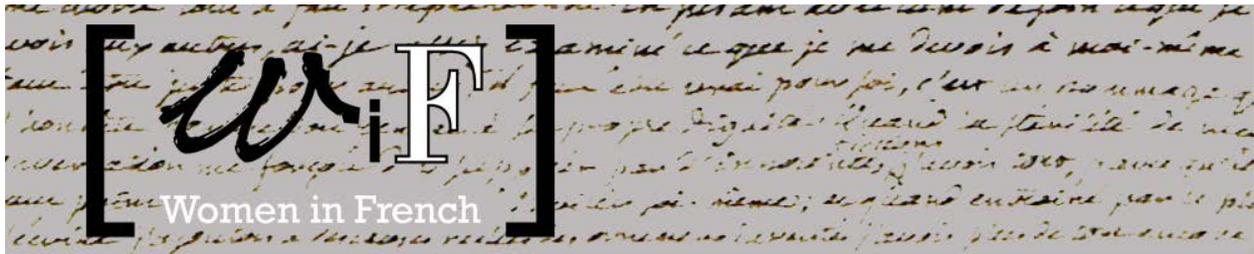


Other topics of discussion at the business meeting in December were the new changes that we hope to implement this year. Following the lead of organizations such as Le Conseil International des Etudes Francophones, Women in French is considering using a web-based system to conduct elections in the future to have anonymous elections. Rather than mailing or emailing your choices to the nominating committee, a web-based program gives each member an individual access code, and then ballots are counted by the online program. We are considering Campus-Vote, which is a well-known program, but would need some technical assistance to be able to use their free version. If you have expertise in this area, please contact me to let me know if you could help. Or if you know of another good and inexpensive on-line voting system, please send me that information.

As mentioned previously, our website manager, Nancy Virtue, has designed a new website and we are hoping to unveil it to the general public very soon. It will include the latest version of the Newsletter, so that members who cannot or prefer not to receive emails with large documents attached may instead read the Newsletter online or download it from the website. The new website will be more user friendly, with an easier-to-remember domain name and more up-to-date graphics. It will also contain all the information that is currently on the old site, including calls for papers, lists of officers with institutional affiliations, and other information about our organization.

2009 was a year of many new projects for Women in French. We went from a paper newsletter to an electronic newsletter, the editorial board of Women in French Studies changed hands, as did the position of Secretary, and we found a site for and started the planning of our next Women in French conference. In the long run, these will all be winning changes for our organization, yet in the initial stages we hit two snags that were unexpected or undesirable. First, I understand the frustration of those members who did not receive the Fall 2009 Newsletter by email because of the document's large size. We are working with the website manager Nancy Virtue to post that issue of the Newsletter on the website for everyone to read. Cheryl Morgan, our Newsletter editor who created the current issue that you are reading right now, has made sure that this document is smaller, similar to the Spring 2009 Newsletter that was sent out by email last spring and apparently did not cause problems with individuals' email accounts. Martine Guyot-Bender, our other Newsletter editor, is looking into software that will allow us to create an html version to email to our members; that format should be easier to send and to receive by email.

We also had some unavoidable last-minute delays of our scholarly journal, Women in French Studies, for 2009. The regular volume of WIF Studies ran into some slowdowns in the final stages of production, so was not available for shipping at the end of November as originally announced. However it should be ready for mailing by the end of February this year, along with the special volume for 2009 edited by Julia Simms Holderness and Laurence Porter. The special volume focuses on the dynamics of women's interactions in French literature, including rivalry,



cooperation, competition, and collaboration. I am looking forward to reading both volumes in the near future and want to congratulate Dawn Cornelio and Marianne Golding for their first year of volunteer work as Executive Editor and Production Editor for our scholarly journal. I know that the learning curve is very steep for those positions and am truly grateful that they were willing to take on both the regular and the special volume during their first few months in their new roles – bravo Dawn and Marianne!

In other good news, Eileen McEwan's Treasurer's Report for 2009 showed that our finances are sound and that we will be able to continue to produce two volumes of WIF Studies again this year. Other expenses, related to the Annual Business Meeting, the Newsletter, the 2010 conference and perhaps a new domain name for our website (see below), will also be manageable.

Marijn Kaplan, who took over the role of secretary for Women in French in Spring 2009, has changed the way you find out if you need to renew your membership. From now on, she will contact you if your membership has expired. If you hear from her, that means that you need to renew your membership for 2010. If you do not hear from her, you are all set for the year. Of course, if your address or other contact information changes during the year, you need to send her that yourself. Once again, due to our sound financial situation, we are not going to raise dues: it still remains \$40/ year (\$110 for 3 years) for Associate and Full Professors and \$25/ year (\$60 for 3 years) for all others.

The 5th Women in French Conference is shaping up very nicely, with Judith Miller as keynote speaker on Friday evening, a banquet on Saturday evening, and concurrent sessions throughout the weekend on women's literature, culture, film, and history from many francophone countries and France. The preliminary program will be published in early March, and you will find on page 11 of this newsletter the details for registering and reserving a room at the college.

I want to close with a sincere thank you to all those members who have given donations in support of our organization over the past year. And a special thank you goes to all of the members who have given their time to further the activities of Women in French – merci!

Sincerely,

*Juliette Rogers*