Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Professorship 2007-08
Final Report

Susan Stryker

Introduction
My tenure as Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Professor (RWWP) in the Women’s Studies Department at Simon Fraser University has been one of the highlights of my career thus far. As an independent scholar who has worked primarily in transgender studies, an emerging interdisciplinary field at the margins of the academy, holding the Woodward Professorship heightened the academic legitimacy not only to my own work, but also of the field that I have worked to promote. I believe that holding the RWWP was instrumental in my success in the academic job market this year, both in the offer of a visiting faculty position at Harvard University’s Committee on Degrees in Women, Gender and Sexuality, as well as in the offer of a permanent Associate Professorship in Gender Studies at Indiana University-Bloomington.

I therefore extend my hearty thanks to the department for inviting me to spend a year in its ranks, and particularly to Asst. Professor Helen Leung for encouraging me to apply for the position in the first place, which would not have occurred to me otherwise. My own thinking and writing have been strengthened and enriched by stimulating conversation with colleagues, co-workers, students, and new friends, and I found Vancouver to be a physically beautiful place to live and work. I will always appreciate the time I have spent here.

The RWWP is a unique resource for feminist research, teaching, and activism—not only for the person who holds it, but also for the department that hosts it. In my concluding remarks, I offer some thoughts on how this resource might be more effectively utilized at this present difficult moment in the institutional history of the Women’s Studies Department, after first detailing the work I undertook to satisfy my responsibilities for teaching, research, and public outreach during my year as RWWP.

Teaching and Student-Oriented Activities
I taught one class in the fall semester, and one class in the spring. Both were offered as upper division undergraduate classes with a concurrent graduate-level class, which drew on the same class-work and syllabi but required additional tutorials, more reading, and longer written assignments. I also conducted one directed-readings class over the summer session. In total, I worked with approximately 35 students. Student evaluations were generally quite positive. On the 4.0 evaluation scale, for example, I scored 4.0 and 3.85, respectively, for “instructor’s overall ability” in the graduate and undergraduate sections of my spring course; all scores were above 3.5 with the notable (and entirely accurate) exception of “feedback on written work” during the spring semester, when time constraints related to the public outreach component of my job responsibilities adversely affected my performance in this area. I felt an excellent rapport with most of the students, and was pleased to offer content-area specializations that obviously resonated with student interests and needs.
**Somatechnics**

In this class, we discussed—from feminist, queer, and transgender perspectives—a wide range of theoretical texts about the relationship between embodiment and technology. We read Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Pierre Bourdieu, Henri Bergson, and Bruno Latour, in addition to feminist philosophers Judith Butler, Sarah Ahmed, Rosalyn Diprose, Iris Young, and Elizabeth Grosz. We focused particularly on the notion of “techniques” as structured patterns of bodily movement, in order to problematize hard-and-fast distinctions between embodiment and technologization, and to enable a critique of the dominant Western epistemological paradigm that dwells on the subject/object division. We did some simple movement exercises in class as part of our exploration of the ways in which bodily movement underpins and informs knowledge production. Students were required to make class presentations and write original research papers on topics of their own choosing, related to the course theme. Topics included: medical management of intersex bodies; representation of transgender themes in science fiction literature; erotic interactions between humans and machines; feminist sex toys businesses; how Hindu religious beliefs about transspecies deities provide a point of critique for western moral discourses on biotechnically produced hybrid organisms; the ethics of extreme body modification practices such as unconventional subcutaneous implants, tattooing, branding, piercing, dental procedures, and limb amputation; how sex industry workers can practice “safer sex” and “harm reduction” while performing client-interactive labor on live web-cam porn sessions; the use of fetal imaging technology to promote anti-abortion rhetoric; the debate over HPV vaccines versus Pap smears; and feminist ethics of cosmetic surgery, among other topics.

**Sex Change City**

This class examined the relationship between, on the one hand, historical changes in systems of sexuality, gender, and embodiment, and, on the other hand, the built environment of Vancouver since the early 20th century. For comparative purposes and theoretical insights, I lectured on my own research into the history of San Francisco, and assigned a variety of secondary works on historical methodology, spatial studies, and transgender theory. The bulk of the class-work consisted of original archival research, conducted by students, who presented regularly on their findings to their peers. While students received individual credit for their work, the collective fruits of their research findings on local queer/trans/LGBT history were all compiled for use in a publicly available online wiki, which will be hosted by the Out on Campus office of SFU, in order to provide an on-going resource for interested communities and academic researchers. I selected two students from the class, one graduate and one undergraduate, to present on the Sex Change City online project at the international academic conference I organized as part of my outreach responsibilities, TransSomatechnics: Practices and Theories of Transgender Embodiment. Topics included: a history of drag king competitions; butch/femme bar culture; transwomen in male prostitution; West End gentrification and anti-prostitution regulation; transgender exclusion and inclusion in gay, lesbian, and feminist organizations; gay marriage and tourism; beats, hippies, and gender nonconformity; transgender employment discrimination; transgender HIV; anti-
transgender violence; transgender issues in K-12 schools; transgender-related social services in the Downtown East Side; public vice regulation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; autoethnographies of involvement in feminist politics in the 1970s and 1980s; history of provision of medical services to transsexuals in British Columbia; trans student services at SFU; oral histories on changing generational perspectives in female-to-male transgender communities; a history of the Cornbury Society cross-dressing club; and gender-variant practices in Southeast Asian communities.

Directed Readings
A student from my Fall 2007 class on somatechnics asked for the opportunity to write about some of the theoretical material in greater detail, and to apply the concepts of “technique” and “bodily practice” we discussed in class to a trauma she had experienced in her life. The result was a highly original paper that not only allowed her to read and think about influential theorists of embodiment, but also to cross boundaries between thinking and feeling, and to begin turning theory into practice, in a way that felt both creative and politically empowering to her.

Miscellaneous Student-Oriented Activities
In addition to my formal teaching responsibilities, I served on one MA oral exam committee for a student in Women’s Studies, and have agreed to write exam questions in Fall 2008 for Women’s Studies MA students who studied with me in 2007-08. I served as external reviewer for a transgender theory dissertation in English at UBC, and also agreed to serve on the dissertation committee for a Ph.D. candidate in Health Sciences at SFU, whose advisor is a faculty member in Women’s Studies. I guest lectured in SFU classes in the departments of French, English, and History. And finally, I participated in LGBT Pride Week activities at SFU—screening my film Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria, donating autographed copies of books I had written to be used as door prizes, and serving as a “celebrity judge” in a drag/burlesque student talent competition.

Research and Publications
I had a very active research and publications year. I was able to complete a book and publish several articles, as well as deliver numerous talks and lectures that will become either stand-alone articles or portions of book projects. My class, Sex Change City, gave me a chance to “workshop” ideas that will be incorporated into a forthcoming book of the same name. I have been involved in editing three journals, and made good progress on all of them.

Seal Press, a long-standing feminist press in the United States, recently launch “Seal Studies,” a new series of introductory texts on “cutting edge feminist topics” aimed at lower-division college classes. I was commissioned to produce a volume on post-World War II transgender history in the United States, which I wrote between September and November 2007. The book was published in May 2008.
With Paisley Currah and Lisa-Jean Moore, I am contributing co-editor of Trans-, a special double issue of Women’s Studies Quarterly, 37: 1+2, 2008, which is at press and forthcoming in December 2008. I am lead author of the introduction.

With Joseph Pugliese, I am contributing co-editor of Somatechnics of Race and Whiteness, a special issue of Social Semiotics (forthcoming in first quarter of 2009). In addition to contributing to the introduction, I wrote the article “Christine Jorgensen and the Racial Imaginary of Mid-Twentieth-Century Transsexuality.” The issue is in final revision stage, and is slated for publication in the first quarter of 2009.

With Elizabeth Stephens, I am contributing co-editor of Bodies of Knowledge, a special issue of Australian Feminist Studies 25:1 (forthcoming in first quarter of 2010). The issue is in the preliminary stages of preparation.

Peer Reviewed Articles: At Press


Peer Reviewed Articles: Published During RWWP Tenure


Mainstream Media
“Why the T in LGBT is Here to Stay” (Salon.com, October 11, 2007). During the recent controversy in the United States over whether the proposed federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) should cover gender identity and expression as well as sexual orientation, I was asked to write an opinion piece for the online magazine Salon.com. The essay was nominated for a GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) Media Award for Best Online Journalism in 2007.
Community-Based or Community-Oriented Publications

“It’s Your History—Use It! Talking Points for ENDA Activists.” During the recent controversy in the United States over whether the proposed federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) should cover gender identity and expression as well as sexual orientation, I prepared a list of talking points drawn from my expertise in transgender history, refuting common stereotypes and misconceptions about the transgender political movement and its relationship to gay and lesbian communities, for use by activists lobbying for the inclusion of gender identity and gender expression protections. The talking points were widely disseminated via the Internet, and informed the national-level debate over ENDA. An edited version was published in *Fabulas: The Journal of the GLBT Historical Society* 1:1 (Summer 2008), pp. 7-12, a new publication for community-based queer history.


Public Lectures, Panel Discussions, and other Presentations


“Screaming Queens and Lavender Panthers: Transgender History in Chicago and Beyond,” Out@CHM Public Lecture Series, Chicago History Museum, May 8, 2008; drawn from my new book, *Transgender History*.


“My Gender is Tender: Commentary on Adrienne Harris,” Flexible Bodies, Transgendered Selves, San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis, March 9, 2008.

“Christine in the Cutting Room: Transsexual Celebrity Christine Jorgensen’s Cinematic Embodiment;” drawn from my recent article for *Social Semiotics*, as well as work in progress from my next film, *Christine in the Cutting Room*. I have presented this twice, first at Harvard University on March 6, 2008, and again in Vancouver at the Out on Screen queer film festival, August 21, 2008.


“Queerly Disabling ENDA: A Few Cutting Remarks on Transgender Ex/Inclusion,” Disability Studies Performance and Lecture Series, George Washington University, January 28, 2008; drawing on both my involvement in the ENDA debates, as well as critical disability studies.

“TransSomatechnics,” Regulating Bodies, Simon Fraser University, January 18, 2008.


Film Screenings and Broadcasts—Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria

KQED (San Francisco), public television broadcast, June 15, 2008.


California College of the Arts, April 7, 2008.

University of British Columbia, March 26, 2008.

Simon Fraser University, Queer Awareness Week, March 11, 2008.

Bryn Mawr College, October 11, 2007

Columbia University, October 9, 2007

University of Vermont, Burlington, October 8, 2007

Simon Fraser University, Harbour Centre Campus, October 4, 2007

Research Support
Frameline Completion Fund Film Grant: $10,000. Competitive grant to support completion of Forever’s Gonna Start Tonight: The Vicki Marlane Story, a documentary film currently in post-production, that I am producing with co-producer/director Michelle Lawler, Executive Producer Kim Klausner, and Editor Monica Nolan. The film chronicles the life and accomplishments of the oldest working drag entertainer in North America, 73-year-old Vicki Marlane.
Public Outreach: TransSomatechnics Conference
The major component of the public outreach portion of my RWWP tenure was organizing an international academic transgender studies conference, “TransSomatechnics: Theories and Practices of Transgender Embodiment,” which was held May 1-3 at SFU’s Harbour Centre Campus. The conference drew 194 registered conference attendees from North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia, in addition to dozens more local residents for a free public reception, and more than a hundred additional attendees at the performance night and closing party. We reached a total audience of approximately 300-350 people. The conference received coverage in local print and broadcast media; it included members of local transgender communities and organizations both as audience members and as presenters; and it provided significant educational and networking experiences to Canadian students (who were admitted free of charge), undergraduate as well as graduate, who not only presented work but also actively participated in organizing and administering the conference. At the professional level, more than 100 transgender studies scholars from around the world engaged in 3 days of stimulating intellectual exchange that will undoubtedly advance and inform the burgeoning scholarship in this field.

Call for Papers
“TransSomatechnics” brings together scholars working in the field of transgender studies with a wider community of researchers interested in body/technology relationships more generally—an emerging area of interdisciplinary inquiry we seek to capture with the newly coined term “somatechnics.” The term is meant to suggest the mutual inextricability of the body (soma) and the practices and techniques (technics) by means of which the body is formed and transformed—physically, symbolically, and socially.

Over the past decade, transgender phenomena (broadly defined as anything that troubles normative relationships between the sex of the body, the subjective sense of being a man or a woman, and socially defined gender roles) have become increasingly visible in media, culture, and society, and of central importance to a wide range of humanities, social science, and artistic disciplines. The interdisciplinary field of transgender studies has consequently experienced rapid recent growth, yet there has been no interdisciplinary international conference in the field since 2004.

By studying transgender phenomena it becomes possible to address critically a wide range of important contemporary topics. To name but a few: the transformation of human bodies through medical practices and biotechnology, transnational human rights and social justice activism, legal constructions of personhood, the historically and culturally contingent nature of gender, bureaucratic or administrative procedures that regulate and produce bodily norms, and state surveillance and border control practices which can render suspect anyone whose bodily presentation deviates from societal expectations. In its attention to how bodily difference is turned into social hierarchy, transgender studies intersect in timely and productive ways with critical studies of race, disability, feminism, and queerness.
A central focus of the conference will be on the challenges to conventional humanities and social science scholarship posed by the political, social, intellectual, epistemological, and aesthetic dimensions of increasingly visible transgender phenomena over the past several years, and on the ways in which contemporary social developments lead us to reinterpret the past and re-imagine the future. We also seek to direct emerging transgender scholarship in expansive new directions by calling attention to “trans-” as a more general conceptual operation. We invite work that examines the interrelatedness of “transgender” and various other kinds of “trans-” phenomena, such as those characterized as transnational, transgenic, transracial, or transspecies. We seek to include in the conference a wide range of innovative scholarship, public policy discussion and artistic production that builds on recent work to develop new generational perspectives. Potential topics might include:

• Original, grounded, empirical analyses of historical or contemporary social formations of trans-embodiments.

• Work that rearticulates trans-identities in ways that circumvent the impasses of identity politics.

• Literary, cultural, film and media work on and about trans-representation and performance.

• Challenges to biological and social sexual dimorphism via new reproductive technologies and body modification practices.

• The increasingly blurred distinctions of human/non-human boundaries, particularly as they relate to emerging biomedical and communicational technologies.

• Work that examines how the legal, administrative, and bureaucratic processes of sovereign power make trans-bodies live, or let them die.

• Analyses of geopolitical and temporal locations and boundary-crossings, including work on individual embodiment as a geopolitical temporality.

• Theoretical and substantive analyses of migration, diaspora, borders, and surveillance as they relate to gendered bodily normativity.

• Studies of affect and sense that address the “movement” of feelings related to transgender phenomena.

We will consider work on any pertinent topic, from any discipline, approach, or area of specialization, but we are especially interested in work that specifically calls attention to the interconnections between embodiment, technology, and bodily practice—the emerging area of transdisciplinary research designated by the term “somatechnics.”
Preference will be given to work that reflects contemporary critical understandings of the body as the incarnation of historically and culturally specific discourses and practices, and that conceives of activities addressing the body—in medicine, science, law, information technologies, the arts, language, migration, racialization, surveillance, and state bureaucracy—as fundamentally constitutive of bodily being. Highest preference is given to work that understands transgender bodies in particular, through the multiple forms of boundary crossing and ruptures of the normative that they enact and render visible through their implicit technologisation, to offer a peculiarly rich arena for exploring, analyzing and elaborating upon historically and culturally specific interconnections between embodiment, technology, and bodily practice.

Keynote Speakers
Nikki Sullivan: Associate Professor of Critical and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University, Sydney, and Director of the Somatechnics Research Centre. She is the author of *Tattooed Bodies: Subjectivity, Textuality, Ethics and Pleasure* (Praeger 2001) and *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (Edinburgh/NYU 2003). She has published widely on a range of body modification practices, and is currently working on a long-term project on genital modifications. She spoke on philosophy of the body.

Afsaneh Najmabadi: Professor of History and Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Harvard University. Her book, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (California 2005), received the 2005 Joan Kelly Memorial Prize from the American Historical Association. She is an associate editor of the six-volume *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* (Brill 2004-2008), and is currently working on a two-volume project, *Sex in Change: Configurations of Sexuality and Gender in Contemporary Iran*. She spoke on transsexuality in Iran.

Viviane Namaste: Acting Principal and Associate Professor at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Concordia University, Montréal. She is the author of *C’était du spectacle! L’histoire des artistes transsexuelles à Montréal, 1955-1985* (McGill-Queen’s 2005), *Sex Change, Social Change: Reflections on Identity, Institutions, and Imperialism* (Women’s Press 2005) and *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago 2000). In the 1990s, she was instrumental in establishing community-based health services for transsexuals in Canada’s largest cities. She currently is involved in policy work related to prostitution and refugee issues. She spoke on transgender HIV policy.

Two scheduled keynote presenters could not attend at the last minute, one due to being denied a visa to enter Canada, and the other due to illness:

Mauro Cabral: a trans and intersex writer from Argentina who teaches on corporeality and biotechnology at the National University of Cordoba, and who co-coordinates the university’s Queer Studies Centre (NUKI). Through Mulabi (Latin American Space for Sexualities and Rights), he coordinates the regional Institutional Violence Against Trans People Watch and the international Intersexuality and Human Rights Watch. In 2006 he co-authored the *Yogyakarta Principles on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and
Human Rights. He has written or translated numerous articles on trans, intersex and BDSM issues, and is currently editing a book on intersex issues in Latin America.

Bobby Noble: is Assistant Professor in the School of Women’s Studies at York University (Toronto, Canada), where he teaches cultural studies of sexuality, transgender/transsexuality, anti-racist whiteness, and popular culture. He has published numerous articles and is the author of Masculinities Without Men? (British Columbia 2004); co-editor of The Drag King Anthology, which was a 2004 Lambda Literary Award Finalist (Haworth 2003); and Sons of the Movement: FTMs Risking Incoherence in a Post-Queer Cultural Landscape (Women’s Press 2006).

Cabral’s keynote slot was replaced by a screening and discussion of local Vancouver filmmaker Gwen Haworth’s award-winning documentary She’s A Boy I Knew, and Noble’s keynote slot was replaced with a panel discussion of the relationships between gender atypicality, border control, and state surveillance practices, featuring legal studies scholars Joseph Pugliese, Dean Spade, and Vek Lewis.

Plenary Presentations
Plenary sessions included a special musical performance by Antony Hegarty of the acclaimed avant-garde band Antony and the Johnsons, a panel of indigenous speakers who discussed two-spirit traditions, and a panel of students from my “Sex Change City” class who presented on local history and helped contextualize remarks from three local transgender community activists.

Papers Presented
There were approximately 110 papers presented in breakout sessions. See appended program.

Publicity
We received local press coverage in Xtra West and on UBC radio. We received Internet radio coverage on the Sirius network. Antony Hegarty’s performance was covered by a reporter from Rolling Stone and a subsequent interview was conducted for AOL’s music channel.

Staffing/Volunteers
SFU Women’s Studies departmental assistant Roberta Rogers offered stellar all-around administrative support for the conference—our success would not have been possible without her involvement. RWWP Assistant Esther Harrison, once she came on board late in the conference process, also contributed vital support, particularly in maintaining the conference database and in coordinating onsite registration. Graduate student assistant Mary Shearman went above and beyond the call of duty in organizing the program with the assistance of fellow SFU Women’s Studies Ph.D. candidate Trish Garner and recent UBC Ph.D. M. Sean Saunders, as well as by coordinating volunteers and providing general logistical support during the conference. Trish Gardner coordinated keynote hospitality and outreach for the public reception. Sarah Sparks did a truly outstanding job recruiting local drag and burlesque performers (in addition to several conference
attendees) for the performance night/after-party, the “Gender Bender Blender Cabaret;” this closing event was a tremendous, standing-room-only success thanks to her efforts. On the whole, even though there was considerable pre-conference chaos due to unanticipated staffing changes in the midst of planning, and some panic-inducing last-minute catastrophes with keynote speakers, the event itself went off beautifully.

Excerpts of Feedback from Conference Participants.
Communications from conference attendees regarding their experience at TransSomatechnics were uniformly positive:

*Best conference I've ever been to, hands down... Such a desire for talking with others and being politicised! Thanks you so much for all the hard work you put in. Hope you're recovering and feeling great about this amazing event.*
--Aren Aizura (Ph. D. candidate, University of Melbourne)

*THANK YOU, THANK YOU AND THANK YOU!!!! TransSomatechnics was an inspiration ;-)*
--Raigan D’Angelo (transgender community member, Vancouver)

*Thank you so much for introducing folks to each other, and for working to create a space in which people could really meet. We made some great new friends, and in one case, rediscovered an old friend. Lovely. I can't wait until the papers are available online so I can see what I missed. GREAT JOB. GREAT CONFERENCE.*
--Susan Forest (political activist, Los Angeles)

*What a great time. What a great crowd! What good panels! How many more exclamation points should I use to make my point?!*
--Tania Hammidi (Ph.D. candidate, University of California-Irvine)

*Every panel I attended - and everyone I met - was innovative, grounded and inspiring. ---*
--Jillian Deri (Ph.D. candidate, Simon Fraser University)

*Been meaning to write to say thank you, thank you, thank you - it really was truly fantastic. The only problem is I'm now wandering around feeling very transsomatechnicsless. Can't we somehow keep the buzz happening?*
--Nikki Sullivan (Faculty, Macquarie University)

*As a Swedish PhD student it was amazing to have the opportunity to be around, present my own paper and listen to the many great papers of the international transgender studies field. In Sweden this theme and field is still barely at the margins and I hope to further continue my participation in this international conversation. I am sure I am not the only one thinking of this event as fantastic and I really hope that there will be a second TransSomatechnics conference in the future!*
--Signe Bremer (Ph.D. candidate, University of Goteburg)

*I wanted to congratulate you on the powerful and exciting conference you managed, with*
so much sweat and tears, to stage. The conference was, for me, inspiring on a number of levels, and it is a testament to your intellectual rigour and generosity that it was such a resounding success. I felt privileged to be able to contribute.

--Joseph Pugliese (Faculty, Macquarie University)

. . . it was one of the best organised events I’ve attended.

--Valentina Bold (Faculty, University of Glasgow)

Without a doubt, it was one of the best conferences I’ve ever been to. One of the things I appreciated most was that it prompted discussions that were not only theoretically rich, but were clearly motivated by concrete and urgent political problems. I felt a high amount of energy in discussions (both inside and outside formal sessions), and participants were able to discuss a number of key political dilemmas without falling into simplistic polemics or non-nuanced analysis. The conference also attracted many incredible people with a vigourous and passionate level of engagement - I met and connected with so many fabulous people. I am now part of the "transsoamapolitics" e-discussion group, which arose directly from one of the conference sessions, and has been an exciting continuation of the themes, debates and sharing of ideas that occurred at the conference. I was also impressed by the general politics of the conference, in terms of the overall themes, who was invited to participate in the plenaries, how discussions were facilitated and efforts to reduce barriers to participation. The timing and the structure of the conference also worked extremely well. Even when two of the plenary speakers couldn't make it, you responded without skipping a beat and organized a fantastic plenary discussion and film session that added significantly to the conference. It was such an exciting, affirming and politically invigorating conference. You have certainly modeled what a good conference should be - and the impact will continue to be felt well beyond the conference itself.

--Sarah Lamble (Ph.D candidate, University of Kent)

**Funding**

The conference attracted significant funding for an event of this type. We received the following grant and fiscal sponsorship support, for a total of $46,675:

- $27,000 SSHRC Conference Support Grant
- $10,000 Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowment
- $4,500 Macquarie University
- $1,500 SFU Department of English
- $1,000 SFU VP Academic
- $500 California College of the Arts
- $500 University of British Columbia
- $500 National Sexuality Resource Center (NSRC)
- $400 Women's Health Research Network
- $300 Accidental Community Project
- $200 SFU Department of Sociology and Anthropology
- $150 Indiana University, Gender Studies
- $125 Individual Donor
We also had earned income of $14,550 from conference registration, beverage sales, and admission charges for the performance night.

Budget
Our projected conference budget was $62,475, and our actual revenue was $62,225. We had lower-than-expected registration income due to a higher than anticipated proportion of low-income and student registrations relative to full-fee registrations, but made more than expected on beverage and admission revenue. The unexpected cancellation of two keynote speakers reduced airfare expenses, which were offset by miscellaneous other expenses that were higher than budgeted. With one significant exception, noted immediately below, our budget projections and actual expenses reconciled to within a few dollars.

The major financial issue regarding the conference is the bill at Delta Suites Hotel. Amidst the administrative confusion in fall 2007, a contract with Delta was signed by staff without my knowledge, obligating Women’s Studies to a significant financial responsibility for a block of rooms. Although through negotiation we were able to reduce the initial obligation, due to cancellations and no-shows on the part of conference registrants, Delta Suites ultimately presented the department with an invoice for $7105. Since I was not party to incurring this obligation, I leave it to the department to offer guidance on how best to resolve this unfortunate situation.

A full budget is appended to this report.

Concluding Remarks and Observations
In closing, I have a few observations on the relationship between the RWWP and the SFU Department of Women’s Studies.

Staff Support
When accepting the RWWP, I was told that I would have an administrative assistant available to me roughly half time. I planned my outreach activities accordingly, and also expected to rely on this staff person to help ameliorate my unfamiliarity not only with the department and university, but—as an international visitor—Vancouver and Canada. The person initially hired to fill this position, though conscientious and well intentioned, did not have the skills or maturity of judgment to succeed in the job or to meet my expectations. As the fall semester progressed, it became increasingly clear that my assistant needed considerable on-the-job training, and had made some serious mistakes with regard to pre-conference administration—notably with regard to hotel arrangements, but also with regard to database construction, e-mail list management, and conducting routine correspondence with conference attendees—which took some time to discover. Clearing up these problems once my former assistant left employment with the department at the end of the Fall 2007 term was a major drain on my time, as well as on Departmental Assistant Roberta Rogers. While the position was being re-advertised, there was an unavoidable gap in administrative support for the conference during several crucial weeks, adding to the stress of producing a large and complex international event.
The chaotic staffing conditions for the RWWP during most of my tenure directly contributed to the unnecessary hotel expenses incurred by the department.

Although the person hired to replace my initial assistant worked out very well for the remainder of my stay, I nevertheless feel the department might re-evaluate how best to provide administrative support to the RWWP, and what level of support it can reliably sustain. In many respects, an advanced graduate student who understands the demands of academic work, and who could benefit from a mentor/mentee relationship with the RWWP, would be entirely sufficient, and certainly less costly to the department than a permanent staff member. One disadvantage of using a graduate student, however, would be the increased likelihood of greater unfamiliarity with office administrative procedures and software.

Integration of RWWP into Departmental Strategic Planning

As personally beneficial as my time as RWWP proved to be, and as much as I tried to make a point of offering service to the department and students, my feeling is that the RWWP is a strategic resource not effectively utilized by Women’s Studies. Given the dire economic circumstances facing the university, including the prospect of vertical cuts in which the Women’s Studies Department might be disbanded and its faculty reassigned, I would recommend that the RWWP be more advantageously integrated into the department’s plan to address the current crisis. This seems especially relevant given the simultaneous problems caused by pending retirements of senior faculty in the department, and the need to recruit a departmental chair. Rather than being a one-year non-continuing appointment, which does contribute to the year-to-year development of the department, the RWWP could serve (at least during this period of crisis) as a multi-year non-continuing position with greater administrative responsibilities, and thus function as one bridge between unsustainable circumstances in the present and a more viable future. The RWWP, for example, could serve as an interim chair, or cover core courses in such a manner that it freed regular faculty for more administrative roles. In a fiscal environment where staffing is stretched to the limit, having a highly flexible endowed position such as the RWWP is a tremendous asset. The department should not feel constrained by precedent, but, rather, should feel free to grasp the possibility of using the RWWP in a creative new fashion.

Thank you again for a wonderful year, and best wishes for the department’s future success.

Susan Stryker
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