

**Women's Caucus History
2015**

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Introduction Alison Conway

“A line of hope is the hope of a line. You extend the line that passes between bodies, even when you do not know what’s what, even if you do not know what you are passing.....”¹

This is a third instalment in a series of brief histories put together to celebrate the twenty-fifth, then thirtieth, and now fortieth anniversary of the ASECS Women’s Caucus. The ever-lengthening lists of sessions, publications, and prizes attest to the generative conversations we have sustained, now, for decades, as a community dedicated to the promotion of women and gender studies.

This year we pause to thank the senior women of the caucus, so influential in shaping the field of eighteenth-century studies over the years and so crucial in helping many of those who followed them navigate careers in the academy. Some of the challenges they faced were different than those experienced by a younger generation of women academics, but many have remained, stubbornly, the same. It is my great hope that they will continue to serve as mentors and role models for many years ahead, but in the event they decide to step back from the academic life to pursue other interests in retirement, I wanted to make sure we had an opportunity to say, properly, “thank you.” Thank you.

I had no clue what kind of relationship was starting the first time I had a conversation with Ruth Perry, at the ASECS in Tucson, Arizona, in 1995. She said something and I asked a question; we shared a phone call about feminism in the academy; she sent me a copy of her Astell biography, inscribed to me and my young daughter. Looking back, I can now see how Ruth’s willingness to make time for the conversations we had over the early years of my career proved crucial in establishing my sense of how feminist community could feel: supportive, challenging, inquiring. A few years ago, an email response from Paula Backscheider to a query expanded into a series of exchanges about women, promotion, and salary. Paula and Ruth and the other senior members of the caucus have experience that is a deep well—and their insights on women in the academy share the intellectual acumen that characterizes their critical work.

The challenges academics in the arts and humanities face today reach beyond the status of women in eighteenth-century studies. And perhaps some younger women do not feel a sense of identification with, or need for, the Caucus at this point in history. But to miss out on the Women’s Caucus is, to my mind, to miss out on the joy it affords, joy that cannot be pinned to scoring professional points. Rather, its joy resides in the surprise of support freely given, in the conversations that lead to friendships, in the experience of having a seat and a voice at the lunch tables where we gather every year. It is the joy, simply, of extending the line.

¹ Sara Ahmed, “Happy Futures, Perhaps.” *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, ed. E.L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (Buffalo, NY: SUNY P, 2008), p. 175.

From Membership to Leadership Paula Backscheider

Receiving the request to be on this panel to talk about what the Women's Caucus has meant to me turned into a kind of archaeological dig—why, I wondered, did I have so few specific, personal memories of the beginning of the Women's Caucus? The answer is that, rather than really being a part of it, I was primarily an advocate and even lobbyist for it.

Unlike other scholarly societies, and ours has the distinction of being one of the very prestigious American Philosophical Learned Societies, we have a unique history. Although our first officers were all men, there was a drive almost from the day ASECS was created in a hotel room to “recruit” women members. I was a graduate student at Purdue University, and the dissertation committee member closest to my age was an assistant professor from the University of Pennsylvania. That university, and especially the English Department, was an important supporter of the new society, and Alan McKenzie introduced me to, among others, Paul Korshin, who was the first Executive Secretary. Paul quickly formed a working group that wrote letters, talked with women faculty all over the US when we attended MLA or other meetings, and even got a grant to have someone read the entire Directory of American Scholars and list all the women who should be contacted to join. I don't have the figures, but at various times, as when ASECS applied for APS membership, we were cited as having the highest percentage of women members of any learned society. I imagine this is still true.

Other members in the informal working group were older and more senior to me—women I had admired throughout my graduate career including Shirley Kenny, and I feel lucky to have known them. Many finally became ASECS presidents, as Gloria Flaherty and Gita May did. Some, like Catherine Parke and Margaret Doody became life-long friends. Given the number of women members, ASECS seemed a friendly place for women from the beginning. While still a graduate student Patricia Meyer Spacks accepted me on a panel and later wrote for my tenure. Reading early ASECS correspondence testifies to the fact that women were given space for their sessions almost from the beginning.

Careful attention to words in the above account, however, might suggest that I do not have anything like a conception of easy or equal acceptance of what the Women's Caucus symbolized and came to mean. It is one thing to encourage membership and attendance at conferences. Both generate money, and ASECS rose quickly to become one of the best funded of all learned societies. When Ruth Angress, the first corresponding secretary of the Women's Caucus, wrote to the president of ASECS requesting space and a meeting time for the newly formed group at the 1976 meeting, she included as one of the purposes: “To identify and represent the concerns of the society's women to its officers and executive committee.” This was a serious need. In the very first years, some of the officers, including Paul Korshin, solicited opinions from his circle of women collaborators, and he more often than the board acted on them. I had a fair amount of interaction with the board, and I must say that they varied in their orientation to me and other women. By the time Ruth wrote in 1975, Elizabeth Eisenstein, Jean Perkins, Shirley Bill, and Madeleine Therrien were on the board. It is hard for me to separate genuine good will and movement toward equality from things I know were happening, such as tokenism and the desire many men and institutions had in academia to appear au courant. I, after all, leap-frogged women with substantially more academic and administrative experience

to become Vice Provost at the University of Rochester because I was judged more “socially polished.” The response to Ruth’s request for space at the 1976 ASECS meeting was to tell her it would be “desirable” if women were represented “among the plenary sessions,” and she was encouraged to suggest “suitable” women. I wondered and still wonder if that meant that they could identify no “suitable” possibilities. The importance of networks and the old boy system with its place for distinguished women should not be forgotten. Ruth’s very deferential letter was written to her University of Virginia colleague in another department, then ASECS president, Ralph Cohen. He passed her letter on to the Executive Secretary to answer.

I remember a variety of conversations with male board members as women members moved toward the idea of an establishment of the Women’s Caucus. Some asked me “what women wanted.” Some mentioned explicitly how effective the system of the old boy network was to promoting the “best” young people. Some talked respectfully of the women whose dissertations they directed. And I got a good initiation into the Queen Bee syndrome and how it was created and why it survived. I heard about “pressure” to hire “a woman;” one per department seemed desirable and enough. In one case, a department was hiring four people; they selected sets of men to interview for three of the positions, and took the women applicants for the other position to the only woman faculty member (an untenured assistant professor, but a “promising” one) and asked her to “pick one for herself.” There were no women being interviewed for the other 3 positions.

Once I get past these few years of struggle, however, I see the Women’s Caucus as one of the most important and joyous parts of my career. Also in Ruth’s letter was the goal, “to encourage the exchange of ideas on [studies of eighteenth-century women].” This was desperately needed. If you look at the publications of the first significantly sized group of women working on eighteenth-century women, you will notice the pattern my own work took by necessity. I would scramble at the beginning of each year to produce a publishable article on a canonical male author—Swift, Pope, Defoe, Fielding. Once I was fairly sure of that publication, I could write and submit articles on women writers, characters, or issues. I had learned this from the women a little ahead of me—Pat Spacks, Margaret Doody, Shirley Kenny, Rose Zimbardo, etc.

The greatest difference to me is that the Caucus made publishing and talking about women in the eighteenth century and we scholars of eighteenth-century women not just respectable but exciting, vibrant, dynamic, revisionary. We changed the field; we are still changing the field, and the delight in seeing overflowing luncheons and sessions organized by the Caucus’s energetic officers is sometimes nearly overwhelming. As we have raised award money and other funds, our commitment continues to grow. In one of the histories of ASECS, I found a copy of a letter I had written in 1991 to over 500 women, each addressed personally, asking for donations to endow a prize for the best paper in Women’s Studies each year. In those to assistant professors, I asked them to “stretch toward giving \$50.00.” That prize became our Macauley Prize. From the time Felicity Nussbaum and I dumped out rolls and passed baskets around the luncheon tables to today’s targeted funding initiatives, almost every woman in ASECS has responded. Who can forget the costume ball? What other ASECS event has ever equaled it?

I deserve almost no credit for the organization and establishment of the Women’s Caucus, but I am proud of my part in encouraging many, many women to join ASECS in its

founding years and am profoundly grateful for the friends, encouragement, and intellectual stimulation I have found in the Caucus.

The Compass of Affection Misty G. Anderson

With so many remarkable scholars who have shaped the Women's Caucus and ASECS as a whole, it is difficult to choose where to start. I want to reflect briefly on the contributions of four women who have shaped the work and the lives of many of us, helping us navigate the rapidly changing field of eighteenth-century studies. Their scholarship opened the field of eighteenth-century studies to new perspectives, each with different ways of thinking, historicizing, and writing about the period. Their presence in this conference and their institutions also opened doors, rooms, panels, and clubby strongholds to a generation of women with projects, questions, and answers that were formerly unimaginable. Each has contributed in multiple ways to our shared experience of the profession, grounded in but not limited to their scholarly work, and each has opened doors that have expanded our sense of the intellectual and professional territory.

My better acquaintance with the field began in **Jill Campbell's** seminar room, when, as a somewhat directionless undergraduate in the '80s, I wandered into her seminar and found a new, vital eighteenth-century studies being taught by a new, quiet, but intense assistant professor. *The New Eighteenth Century* was hot off the press, as was Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men*, and my files still contain the Kinko's packets with chapters from each. With them are Jill's photocopies from the Beinecke, showing us Pope, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Hervey locked in venomous, inky combat. At the time, I couldn't appreciate the riches she put before us; in a post-ECCO age, it's hard to realize or remember how precious an introduction to archival research this was. What I could appreciate was the steely wit of the writers we were reading and of my classmates, including Jody Greene, Blakey Vermeule, and Jesse Matz (who, alas, became a Modernist) and the conversations Jill guided and developed in my first encounters with the field.

I continued to wander in graduate school, though not for long, as **Margaret Doody's** magnetic north drew me forever into the period. Margaret taught me that the eighteenth century is not a period but rather a periodical that is still publishing. *The Daring Muse* is still the best book out there on poetry in the long eighteenth century and has forever changed the way we think about the boundary-breaking, parodic, irreverent, energetic, subversive Augustan poetic world. *The True Story of the Novel* would contribute an equally ground-breaking vision of the novel that challenged the prevailing historical account of the form with her own astonishingly learned story of the novel as ancient, global, and gendered in ways that modern criticism sanitizes and Westernizes with the story of the novel's Anglo-Saxon rise. Her cosmopolitan perspective is hard won through extraordinary language skills and research. I still remember when Margaret was detained in Syria in the '90s for, it seems, being an unaccompanied female traveler. After being held in a room with the proverbial naked lightbulb swinging overhead and a hostile interviewer, she was told that there was a Lufthansa flight departing in 30 minutes and she needed to be on it. She was trying to get a look at ancient Babylonian statuary as she was researching *True Story*. To have such a fearless, adventurous woman as my mentor was a remarkable gift from the universe, and I am thankful that the Syrian government returned her before my defense. What I will remember most fondly, however, and with the greatest personal appreciation, was Margaret's encouragement to stage

Restoration and eighteenth-century plays in her living room. Our little readers theatre, which I thought of as just hijinks and Friday night fun at the time, was the beginning of my love affair with the drama of the period, especially the comedies. Margaret opened her home and put her beautiful furniture, pianoforte, and other objets d'art at risk to allow 10-15 graduate students the chance to perform *The Author's Farce*, *The Enchanted Island* (without orchestra but with sound cues), *Love for Love*, *The Busy Body*, *The Beaux' Stratagem*, *The Witlings*, and others, with the rest of the Vanderbilt English department packed in tighter than the pit at Drury Lane. Margaret is, in addition to being a world-renowned novelist, scholar, and travel writer, a most excellent and generous hostess; I am not alone in being able to say that I had some of the most legendarily good times of my life in her home.

Susan Staves has written backbone books for feminist inquiry and theatre history, paradigm-shifting and carefully researched studies that turn up in everyone's footnotes. The navigational assistance she provided didn't begin with a personal relationship, but rather with my now-tattered copy of *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833*, a book I kept at my elbow for roughly 3 years as I labored to turn a capacious dissertation on women and comedy into a focused contribution to scholarship about female dramatists, marriage, and the formative conversation between their stage comedies and the law. My sticky notes began to merge with the pages over the years in a gluey chemical reaction that would make a book collector blanch but that, for me, became the palimpsests of hope. "Here!" I would say to myself, "here is the point I need to anchor my own filament of meaning," as I scrambled like Whitman's noiseless, patient spider, exploring the vacant, vast surrounding. My gratitude to her is now engraved in these shadowy rectangles. I then wandered back in to the Staves's archive to *Players' Scepters*, another formative discovery that would not fully detonate for me until my own second book. Before Charles Taylor's anatomy of the secular, Staves's elegant case for the role of secularization in the shifting "fictions of authority" in post-Restoration England. Her book was a map for how we might consider the "trauma of the Civil War" in terms at once political, aesthetic, and religious.

Finally, without **Paula Backscheider**, my little map would be woefully incomplete. Though I was never her student, Paula took me under her wing when I was new to the profession; she came to my sessions, asked questions, and supported my first book venture generously. Because we have shared students as well as many logged conference hours together over the years, I know what a tireless advocate she is for women in the profession generally and for her students particularly. That kind of advocacy doesn't come cheap; the number of hours she has spent over the years writing letters and reading manuscripts has probably cost her another *Spectacular Politics*, a book which paved the way for subsequent work in cultural performance studies. But she has also been willing to put herself on the line for women in the profession. She told me a story about her time as Vice Provost at Rochester and lobbying for maternity leave policy in 1982 as Susan Gubar was trying to do the same at Indiana. When her President pressed back, she counted up all of her female colleagues anywhere near childbearing age to keep the heat off of those women the administration suspected of trying to "get something for free," won a maternity policy with a full semester and some choice about when to take it, and kept the leave from being tied to disability. So many of us owe a debt of gratitude to determined, stubborn, and creative women like Paula who

shaped institutional policy, and heaven knows we still need them in these troubled times for higher education.

My compass includes other women from the Caucus, but these four helped me begin my career and find my way as best I could across the sometimes rocky terrain of the profession. A compass's points do not point in the same direction, but they should hold true. I am forever grateful for these true guides, who expanded our collective sense of just how far we could go.

To Protect and Serve: Why You Should Join the Women's Caucus **Manushag Powell**

Preface: have benefitted from mentorship with wonderful women: Felicity Nussbaum, Helen Deutsch, Laura Stevens (publishing experience), Alison Conway ...

A confession: I didn't join the Women's Caucus my first few times at ASECS. While I'm very far from being one of those, "I just don't get along with other women" women (hate those people), joining an actual women's *caucus* struck me as a not-very-me thing to do. In the first place, I'd heard about it from friends, but I had some vague notion that it would be an intimidating arena of women doing Important Senior Professional Things and possibly exchanging cabalistic secrets and making backdoor-type deals. (I suspect I had confused it with the kind of caucus one finds in the U.S. Senate?) I was obviously (I assume) too junior for that.

In the second place, though, looking around as (and this must be my only excuse) a very young and unusually clueless scholar, it wasn't obvious to me what I would get out of a women's caucus. This is a selfish and silly position, of course: I have benefitted enormously from the mentorship and sometimes more simply the frank generosity of many remarkable women in our field. But I was confused in my salad days because women are, at least at the moment, very well represented in eighteenth-century studies. Indeed, ASECS is bursting with interesting women; we are not, by the numbers, a downtrodden minority—or in any case, not at the more junior levels. Obviously it was not always so, but look at the numbers now: doing a quick count from the program, of 899 registered participants here this year, women outnumber men 543 : 356. I'm probably off by a handful here and there, and clearly if we split the numbers by seniority or rank, things would look a little different. Still, just in terms of raw numbers, women are the winners. There's a pretty clear 60%/40% split, that, I think, has been consistent across the last several years. So shouldn't all of ASECS be a women's caucus? Let the men slink off and eat dry chicken by themselves, for the women's caucus is everywhere.

Obviously that's flawed thinking; it's no longer my sense of things at all. I went to my first luncheon, in 2006, I believe, and everyone was very pleasant. We picked goals for professional panels in very animated fashion, but no ritual blood oaths were required or even hinted at very directly. Moreover, I have come to believe we need the women's caucus, and more than that, that the women's caucus is a positive force, a good institution to sustain. It has helped sustain me, in turn. Young women join the caucus for the networking, and for guidance; I think they stay because the Women's Caucus is a bastion of generous spirit. It is a salutary experience while being mentored to learn one can also be of use and serve others; it spruces up one's sense of self worth very nicely.

"Networking," like negotiating job offers, is one of those things women are continually being berated for not doing well enough in the professional world. But as with negotiating, I think it's also one of those fun areas where women can get in disproportionate amounts of trouble just for trying. I've seen this at my own institution, where a very casual monthly women's happy hour provoked a small but vocal number of male colleagues to start their own no-girls-allowed events. (We really were just eating nachos and talking about our families and not in any way plotting an uprising, but how do you explain that to men driven insane by the burdens of patriarchy? At this point, I'm feeling fairly pro-uprising anyway.) The dry chicken

gives us cover for being supportive at the senior, mid-career, and junior and emergent levels in as many ways as we can, through professional panels, through setting scholarly goals, and through acts of friendship all at once. Graduate students need to be able to sidle up to tenured Olds, and, while passing the butter, figure out how to get a reference. Mid-career workers drowning under committee obligations need to see that the current morass is survivable. And then there's the obvious necessity of the occasional masquerade, which I don't think the hypothetical men's caucus, although I'm sure a very nice and worthy group, would have tried to pull off.

As for what the Caucus has meant to me personally and professionally, I hesitate to say this because the topic is such a cliché, but: last year's traditional inhumanely early Women's Caucus business meeting was the first professional venue in which I admitted to being pregnant, and I'm including my own department when I say that. It meant a great deal, although I'm still not quite able to articulate how, that everyone present seemed to think having a baby was a good idea, or at least put on a winning façade to that effect. At the time, while I certainly wanted the baby, I couldn't shake the feeling that there was something a little unprofessional about that, that I was quite possibly about to upend the only thing I'd ever been consistently good at doing. What the Women's Caucus meant to me was, weirdly, a safe space in which to figure out my personal life when I thought it was about to demolish my professional existence.

One of the pieces of advice women are always passing to other women in professionalization venues like the ones put forth annually by the Caucus is that we need to learn how to say no. Not that this is bad advice—it isn't—but I'd suggest that a surefire plan for how to say no, let alone to do so without repercussions, remains elusive. I'm particularly aware of this issue at the moment because I'm back at work after what looks like some fairly extensive leave: a semester of research sabbatical, and a semester of maternity leave (interrupted with summer teaching, but still: fairly extensive). I am not rested and revitalized. I am not working well. My teaching is a mess. My hair is turning grey. I keep losing my car in the parking lot. In fact, I'm now wondering whether true teaching leave, supposedly one of the fantastic benefits of our ivory-tower lifestyle, is actually possible in academia at all.

Obviously for scholars who are students, contingent faculty, or teaching in schools with heavy course loads, paid leave is tremendously difficult to manage without a lot of luck, lobbying, and external funding. I'm aware that in complaining about my leave time, I'm doing so from a position of tremendous privilege. And yet: after losing ten weeks or so to horrifying nausea, I spent the remainder of my sabbatical writing faster than I'd ever have believed possible, knowing that I was secretly pregnant and fearful of what a gap in publications would do to my promotion record. Nobody at my institution cares about one's fistfuls of teaching awards without that second book, but fear made me productive, and my supervisors smiled upon me.

Maternity leave was bumpier: for example, when my apologetic note that I was going to have to miss a subcommittee meeting due to being in active labor was met with a Doodle poll for the next week's meeting, or when a dean informed me that it would be fine for me to wear the baby, who was then two weeks old, to the faculty senate if I preferred not to miss any meetings. But those are impositions one can say no to. What I didn't decline doing: the letters of recommendation I wrote (I lost count after a dozen) for my and my colleagues' admission-

seeking and job-seeking students. The piles of dissertation chapters that I was required to review within four weeks of submission. Reader reports I'd agreed to perform before the baby came, or that I didn't want to turn down for various reasons of collegiality. Copy edits and page proofs, including for my new book (if you find any typos, dear reader, remember that I was breastfeeding on no sleep, and try to forgive). Demands that I schedule my classes, order my textbooks, attend campus visits, attend to and vote on tenure cases. Answers to a million billion trillion emails.

I'm not claiming to be a martyr, or unusual. I did these things because it's what most professional women I know have done and survived doing. I know a few people who really "do" leave "properly": they don't answer student queries, don't attend even the most urgent meetings, don't answer emails (most, but not all, of these people are men). Problem is, that work still needs to happen, and the rest of us have to take it on, step in when an editor disappears or an advisor goes AWOL and a leaves a student in crisis. And I think, more and more often, that those of us who pick it up, who protect each other and our students, are the Women's Caucus types, academics who are like everyone else tired and overextended, but still somehow balance that with a willingness to serve, even finding it sustaining. Academia seems to be a terrible system and ever-worsening system, but not one without its beauties.

Considering Women's Education, Women Writers, and the Women's Caucus Today
Emily C. Friedman

I had my remarks prepared, and then Sweet Briar College announced that it was closing, reopening the never-quite-finished debate about the value of women's colleges. Given that I am on this panel in part because I wish to link my experience of women's education to the work of the Women's Caucus, I found myself revising, fiendishly, at the eleventh hour — perhaps appropriate when one is trying to recall one's undergraduate self.

So I want to first say emphatically:

The work of women's colleges is not done.

The work of the Women's Caucus is not done.

I count myself as one of several eighteenth-centuryists who come from women's colleges. My own undergraduate alma mater can claim at least a half-dozen active women in eighteenth-century studies, working on everything from smell to actresses to the history of sexuality to representations of monarchy, and more. Some of the most active participants currently in the Women's Caucus, including Nora Nachumi and Kirsten Saxton, currently work at women's colleges.

I wish I could say that my work in the history of women writers and my embrace of the Women's Caucus grows organically from my eight years of women's education, and in some ways it does. But I certainly didn't know it at the time.

I am often asked by new ASECS attendees how to navigate the wide range of choices available to them. Not a few of them wonder if the Women's Caucus is worth attending or participating in. These questions and critiques remind me of the perennial stereotypes that apply to women's colleges: being antiquated, niche, removed. With respect to my women's college experience, I remember telling freshman that my alma mater may well not be the "real world," but this was an advantage, not a limitation. To spend four years where women were in charge of everything meant one could remember a world without many of the limitations of the larger world outside.

I sometimes think of Arabella, Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote*, who strides through so much of her novel undaunted, wearing the armor of her reading, blissfully unaware that the world of her ideals is not the world she lives in.

Because women were everywhere, thinking about everything, I felt free to read and study what I liked. Thus, while at my extremely liberal women's college, with no lack of opportunities and thus no excuse, I emerged having read no more than a handful of women writers in seventeen literature courses. And the truth is, after eight years of single-sex education, my first introduction to the Women's Caucus was compulsory. I am here speaking about the Caucus in my life at all because of Devoney Looser, who told me that I should make sure to attend the luncheon in Atlanta during my first ASECS.

By the time I entered my first Caucus luncheon seven years ago, it was an institution and a spectacle: a room full of women, looped around round tables. I was then, and am still, reminded of Dorothy Sayers's vivid depiction of Somersville College in *Gaudy Night*, and the "rush and weight of a shouting waterfall" brought upon by dozens of women speaking simultaneously, only slightly reigned in by the valiant efforts of the leadership.

And of course, the tables were strewn with sheets of paper — for donations, for

upcoming publications or events, and most importantly, for brainstorming the scholarly and professional panels for the next year. Old Boys' Club back-room glad-handing this ain't. At its best, good ideas rise, are heard, and make an impact.

I didn't necessarily see it that way in the beginning. In those early luncheons, I was still in the safe shelter of, if not a women's college, then overlapping communities who had fought for decades to create what I took for granted: spaces where women's work, past and present, mattered. The Aphra Behn Society, the Frances Burney Society, JASNA, British Women Writers Association, Chawton House Library, and my cohort of fellow graduate students, continued to be a hothouse where I could grow.

But I am also a member of the Samuel Johnson Society of the Central Region, and so I know that one cannot remain within the Happy Valley forever, and that not every enclave, even within our own subfield, is equally women-friendly. This is even more true when we look to the larger literary marketplace, for both our work and those outside the academy. According to the 2013 VIDA count, the *London Review of Books* and the *Times Literary Supplement* published twice as many reviews of books written by male authors as female, and those reviewers were twice as likely to be male themselves. When crafting potential roles as public intellectuals, women are less likely to pitch, and less likely to repitch after rejection, than men. For those of us who study the struggles eighteenth-century women faced when bringing their literary work into the marketplace, it can be frustrating to see the stereotypes and marketing distinctions that twenty-first century female authors still face.

I now work at an institution that was indeed once a single-sex institution – East Alabama Male College. Women began attending what is now Auburn University in 1892, but the truly significant event of that year is seen to be the introduction of football as a school sport. There is a Women's Resource Center, A Women's Leadership Institute, a Women's Philanthropy Board, a Women's Studies minor, a Women in Science and Engineering Institute, and still no University-wide parental leave policy. I am likely to be called "Miss" or "Mrs." while my male colleagues are called "Professor" or "Dr." My female students are likely to be married before they graduate, or not long after, and many strive to put their ambitions in harmony with those of their partners.

In this context I am an emissary from another world. I am far more aware now of the safe spaces I have at my disposal, the labor required to create and maintain them, and the responsibility I have to ensure that these spaces endure for as long as they are needed. The Caucus is one of those spaces.

But we are also, I hope, working to make the concerns of the few the concerns of the entire body of ASECS. Thus, I am also aware of the ways in which we must not merely maintain what has been built. I'd like to end on a question for which I do not have a ready answer: where will the Caucus go from here? How can we, a large and vocal caucus, become ever better allies to those whose numbers are fewer?

Selected Works by Members of the Women's Caucus, 2005-14

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