

WMSN Newsletter 2007

Heather Nunn, Chair MeCCSA Women's Media Studies Network

The Women's Media Studies Network has been busy since last we contributed to the newsletter. There continues to be a steady expression of interest from colleagues keen to host a WMSN event. Academics, practitioners and students in Media and Cultural Studies and related areas have used the space that the Network provides to exchange ideas and importantly to network with colleagues. Events held over the last six months have tapped into a range of contemporary debates about theory, practice, pedagogy and participation as a female academic in contemporary university life.

Events

In May 2007, Joanne Garde-Hansen and colleagues at University of Gloucestershire explored experiences of an all-life approach to being a successful woman academic in media studies in their event aptly titled '**Desperate Researchers**'. Discussion for the day focused upon sustaining research and balancing this with other work, life and institutional responsibilities. Speakers included academics with wide experience of negotiating the (frequently conflicting) demands of the range of duties from research and teaching to managerial and administrative responsibilities in our contemporary pressured academic environment. Karen Ross, (Coventry) addressed the experience common to many female academics as she spoke on 'Coming to academia later in life'. This was followed by Jane Arthurs, who engaged with one of the on-going demands of 'Balancing Teaching and Research'. Finally, Jenny Owen, (London South Bank) continued the theme of career progression by exploring the challenge of 'Sustaining a Research Profile'. The event concluded with an open debate on 'Balancing Life, Work, Research and the Institution' and importantly, the day allowed ample space for informal networking with colleagues from a range of institutions.

'**Women and Pornography**', held at University of Sunderland in June 2007, was organised by Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith with colleagues from the Centre for Research in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Sunderland. It tapped into current wide-spread debates about pornography and explored women's production and consumption of porn in film and on the net. Attwood, who has published widely on sex and the media spoke about her current work on online pornography and women's use of online sex sites. She explored alternative porn that aims to be radical either in terms of counterculture, subculture, queer representation or sexual politics. This theme was developed by Katrien Jacobs, who is an Assistant Professor at City University of Hong Kong. She has published widely on Internet pornography, sexuality, art and censorship. Since 2005 she has organized the netporn conferences at the Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam. She focused on arousal studies and the concepts of gender morphing.

Clarissa Smith talked about her recent research based on interviews with women about their enjoyment of porn films and its significance in their lives. This was followed by Anna Span, Britain's first female porn director and a recent winner of a Feminist Porn Award in Toronto. Span has run her own production company since 1998, Easy on the Eye Productions, which also releases work of other female porn directors. As author of *Erotic Home Videos* (2004), a manual on how to shoot one's own home porn, she was able to speak with a wealth of experience about her work and the challenges of making female-point-of-view porn.

Networking

We have recently been in discussion with colleagues (and in some cases WMSN members) who are planning to co-organise an international conference next year to mark the 10th anniversary of the first episode of *Sex and the City*. Deborah Jermyn and Stacey Abbot (Roehampton), Kim Akass, and Janet McCabe (now both Manchester Metropolitan) and Mike Allen (Birkbeck) are holding the conference entitled 'Sex in the City: Landmark TV and its Legacy' at Birkbeck June 2008. The WMSN is really pleased to be involved in supporting what looks to be an exciting and timely event.

Currently, over the summer we are updating our webpages and the WMSN mailing list. To this end we will be sending out a global email via the MeCCSA list to ask colleagues to post brief profiles, confirm they still want to belong and to welcome new members to the list. In the meantime if colleagues wish to host a WMSN event, to contribute suggestions for future events or indeed to join the network please let us know. At present it's best to contact the WMSN Chair Heather Nunn on H.Nunn@roehampton.ac.uk.