A Finding Aid to the
Women of Reform Judaism (District 20) Records

Manuscript Collection No. 769
Collection Summary

Title
Women of Reform Judaism (District 20) Records

Dates
1922-2008

Collection Number
MS-769

Repository
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

Creator
Women of Reform Judaism (U.S.). District 20

Extent
9 linear feet (15 Hollinger boxes, 3 oversize boxes)

Language of the Material
English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch
The “Women of Reform Judaism” organization was first known as the "National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods" (NFTS). It was under this guise that District 20 was first formed in 1922, by women from Iowa, Nebraska, and Missouri. Its purpose, as stated by the organization’s first president, was to actively promote “attendance at Divine Services, and the necessity of overcoming apathy toward the ideals of Judaism.”

By 1951, the states of Colorado, Kansas and New Mexico had joined District 20. It is deserving of mention that Nelson Glueck was the keynote speaker at the 1951 Biennial Convention in St. Joseph, Missouri. Conventions were valuable in that they allowed members to share ideas, and provided the opportunity for them to worship together as Jews. In 1968, 26 Sisterhoods belonged to District 20.

Connie Kreshtool, of NFTS Headquarters, spoke at the District 20 convention in 1980. Her speech certainly began auspiciously, with the words, “These are the happiest times in our Sisterhood and in our community.” Volunteerism was discussed at this same meeting, with the realistic observation that volunteers had become harder to come by with more women joining the work force. Another speaker, Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, addressed the subject of women entering the political arena.

Staying aware and staying involved - Jewishly, politically, and socially - were constants of NFTS conventions. The Diamond Jubilee celebration in 1987 featured workshops, speakers, and services, with a focus on religious freedom. Based upon suggestions gathered at the previous Biennial, the 1996 convention offered more discussion about Sisterhood, and additional time for learning about the various Sisterhoods in the district. Declining membership was a serious issue, and by the 2006 Convention, it had become the top priority. Despite a number of good ideas for retaining and growing membership, it continued to decline, and by 2008, District 20 had disbanded, various member states merging with other districts.

Scope and Content
Consists of convention scrapbooks, scrapbooks of newspaper articles, convention-planning documents, bulletins, correspondence, publicity, photographs, notebooks containing meeting minutes, WRJ publications, videos and CDs.

Arrangement
The collection has been arranged into five (5) series: A. District History and Conventions; B. Publications; C. Awards; D. Miscellaneous; E. Audiovisual.

Terms of Access
The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

Preferred Citation
Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Women of Reform Judaism (District 20) Records and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:
[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-769. Women of Reform Judaism (District 20) Records. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance
Received from Dottie Resnick, Denver Colo., 1 October 2008.

Processing Information
Processed by Vicki Lipski, March 2009.

Index Terms

Subjects
Jewish women / Literature

Corporate Names
National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods / Women of Reform Judaism (U.S.). District 20
Series A. District History and Conventions, 1922-2008

Extent 6.6 linear feet (9 Hollinger boxes, 3 oversize boxes)

Scope and Content Note Scrapbooks and notebooks constitute a good portion of the series. The two unfolded notebooks in Box 1 tell of NFTS's beginnings, as does the Historian's Scrapbook in Box 2, and are an excellent source of historical information.

Arrangement The series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1.
Folder 1. Disposition of records, 1989-2008

Folder 2. National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, District 20. Convention minutes [includes constitution and minutes of first organization meeting], 1922-1941

Folder 3. National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, District 20. Executive Board meeting minutes and convention minutes [includes presidential addresses and correspondence], 1922-1945


Box 2.
Folder 1. Historian's scrapbook [includes information sheet regarding conventions 1-29, 1922-1972; by-laws, historian reports, convention documentation, narrative history of district, service to the blind, list of presidents], 1941-1974

Box 3.
Folder 1. Notebook. Meeting minutes, committee report, 1945-1949


Box 4.


Folder 3. Biennial conventions. Taken from notebook divided into sections, 1984-1988

Folder 4. Biennial conventions. Taken from notebook divided into sections, 1984-1988

Box 5.

Folder 2. Executive Board minutes, 1987-2003

Folder 3. Biennial convention, 1992

Folder 4. Biennial convention, 1994

Folder 5. Interim Board meeting (St. Joseph, Mo.) [includes photographs], 1995


Box 6.

Box 7.

Extent 1.6 linear feet (4 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note The majority of the items in this series were published by Women of Reform Judaism.

Arrangement This series is divided into two (2) subseries: 1. By Subject; 2. By Publication.

Subseries 1. By Subject, 1985-2006

Scope and Content Note Contains material having to do with women’s and children’s issues. A way in which to address these issues is summed up in the contents of folder 5, concerning the creation of a Critical Issues Task Force.

Arrangement The subseries is arranged by subject matter.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 10. Folder 1. Beginning the Journey: A Women's Commentary on Torah, 1985

Box 10. Folder 1. The Torah: A Women's Commentary, 2006

Box 10. Folder 1. Finding Our Way: The Study and Resource Guide for Beginning The Journey Toward a Women's Commentary on Torah, undated

Box 10. Folder 2. Spousal Abuse in Rabbinic and Contemporary Judaism by Rabbi Julie Ringold Spitzer, 1985

Box 10. Folder 2. When Love is Not Enough: Spousal Abuse in Rabbinic and Contemporary Judaism by Rabbi Julie Ringold Spitzer, 1995


Subseries 2. By Publication, 1981-2005

Extent 1.2 linear feet (3 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note The publications treat issues individually, and include the subject of religious study and worship.

Arrangement The subseries is arranged chronologically by publication date.

Box and Folder Listing


Box 11. Folder 2. From Tzedek to Tzedakah: Economic and Social Issues of Concern for Women and Children by Rabbi Marla J. Feldman, 1985


Box 11. Folder 8. Stop the Violence!, undated


Box 11. Folder 10. Women of Reform Judaism at the United Nations: Tikkun Olam - Healing the World UN Task Force at Work, undated

Box 11. Folder 11. Fundraising Fundamentals, undated

Box 12. Folder 1. In the Beginning: The Jewish Baby Book by Naomi Patz and Jane Perman, 1983

Box 12. Folder 2. D'var Torah Study Packets, 1988, 1990

Box 12. Folder 8. WRJ souvenirs.
Box 13. Folder 6. Outreach Families in the Sacred Common: Congregational Responses to Interfaith Issues. Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, undated
Box 13. Folder 8. Staying in Touch by Glynis Conyer, undated

Series C. Awards, 1983-2005

Extent  0.6 linear feet (1.5 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note  Two of the important awards given at conventions were the Book of Numbers Award (increase in membership) and the Or Ami Award (programming); sustaining and growing membership was always a matter of high interest for this region, since it is not densely populated with Jewish people.

Arrangement  The series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 15. Folder 1. Book of Numbers Awards entries, 1996
Box 15. Folder 2. Application for "Caring is Catching" award, 1998
Box 15. Folder 3. Application for Or Ami Award, 1999
Box 15. Folder 4. Awards. "Caring is Catching."
Extent 0.2 linear feet (0.5 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Within this series, subjects include the District History Program, musical scripts, and holiday services.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 15. Folder 5. District history program, 1987
Box 15. Folder 7. District website, 2003
Box 15. Folder 9. Member biographies, 1996
Box 15. Folder 12. Holiday services/seders, undated

Series E. Audiovisual, 1988-2006

Scope and Content Note The CDs are all recordings of later WRJ conventions, whereas the content of the videotapes varies widely.

Arrangement This series is divided into two (2) subseries: 1. Compact Discs; 2. Videotapes.


Arrangement The subseries is arranged by call number.

Box and Folder Listing

Item CD-532. Women of Reform Judaism, District 20, 2003
Item CD-533. Women of Reform Judaism, District 20 final convention, 2006
Item CD-534. Women of Reform Judaism, District 20 biennial convention, 2005


Arrangement The subseries is arranged by call number.

Box and Folder Listing

Item VT-844. Siyum ceremony, 2001
Item VT-845. Caring for Children, Caring for Creation, 2001
Item VT-847. President's message, 1988
Item VT-848. Touching Lives. Say YES, 1999
Item VT-849. Panel discussion on medical marijuana.
Item VT-850. Archives of interviews, part 1.
Item VT-852. L'Dor V'Dor, The Sisterhood of Congregation Emanuel.