

## Archiving feminist grassroots media

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### Abstract

*As staff members of STICHWORT, Archives of Women's and Lesbians' Movements in Vienna, which manages an extensive collection of "independent" feminist media, we will provide an overview of feminist grassroots media in Austria and refer to the importance of feminist archives within the movement's processes of creating knowledge and history, focusing especially on the accessibility and preservation of feminist media.*

*Feminist media, especially magazines, are an important part of the collections of feminist archives and libraries. From the perspective of women's archives, feminist media are a substantial and dynamic source of current issues, political practices and theoretical discussions. They reflect the differentiation and developments of feminist movements, strategies and concepts as well as their different societal, political and cultural parameters. We will analyze structures and developments within feminist media production in Austria from the beginnings in the 1970s up to now and give an insight into thematic developments in the first two decades of the women's movement. We will also set a special focus on lesbian media. As in Austria only a few distinctly lesbian magazines have been published over the years, we will consider a wider range of lesbian media from German-language countries.*

### Feminist archives and the processes of creating knowledge and history

Feminist archives have an important task in passing on women's history, particularly in documenting and increasing visibility of the women's movement and lesbian history and politics. Feminist archives in the second-wave women's movement and lesbian movement emerged from the realization that documenting the movements' activities is necessary to prevent them from sinking into oblivion like the historical women's movements at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. The ignorance and dismissal with which both dominant institutions and leftist movements regarded the women's movement and its issues suggested that feminist activities and particularly lesbian separatist activism would only be conveyed to younger women and documented in an authentic and comprehensive manner if it took place within the feminist and lesbian feminist movements. Thus feminist archives were set up in the 1970s and developed in the 1980s.

In German speaking countries, which this article focuses on, typical characteristics are regional diversity with partial specialisation by content, as well as a structural connection between archives, libraries, and research and

educational facilities. Almost no facilities are solely archives or libraries in the traditional sense. A further characteristic is the objective of providing alternative, empowering education for women. From the very beginning feminist archives were designed to be both centers for up-to-date information within the women's movement as well as an infrastructure to support academic feminist research, which was gaining a foothold in the early 80s. These archives fundamentally differ from facilities set up exclusively as libraries which have been created in academic spaces of several gender research centers, in their more comprehensive approach to structure, holdings, politics, employee self-image, target groups, and services.

This article deals with the archives that emerged in the context of the independent women's movement, as these are the most relevant to grassroots media. There are currently about 40 active feminist archives and library facilities in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and northern Italy<sup>1</sup>. Their documentation and educational work counteracts the silencing and distortion of women's (movement) history and contributes to an empowering image of women through their positive identification with women's liberation.

In order to be able to authentically convey history that is otherwise not widely discussed in the public sphere, the contribution of each woman involved in these movements and every single document is considered important. All written and audio-visual material documenting activities of the women's and lesbian movements is collected in feminist archives. Among these are documents intended for the (movement's) public, such as leaflets, programs, press releases, posters, magazines and newsletters, brochures and videos, as well as internal documents, primarily minutes, plans, and correspondence. Documentation is organized according to groups and initiatives, events, such as activities, operations, and conferences, as well as on an individual level. The holdings were and continue to be compiled, firstly through continuous collection work, where the archives either receive submissions as copies from the groups that produced them or from individual addressees, and secondly as sets of collected documents in the form of extensive donations from individuals and groups.

The fact that feminist archives have to define their subject matter themselves, as opposed to administrative archives, for example, has shaped their working method. The second-wave women's movement in German speaking countries is primarily organized in a decentralized manner. What a "feminist" group, magazine, or publication is or who a feminist is – and consequently what should be documented – is continuously redefined and may be assessed differently in the future. The significant criteria appearing again and again are autonomy – as independence from political parties and male dominated institutions is a central theme for the emergence and identity of the second-wave women's movement

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<sup>1</sup> The umbrella organization of women's/lesbian archives, libraries, and documentation centers, i.d.a <[www.ida-dachverband.de](http://www.ida-dachverband.de)>, provides an overview of these feminist archives and libraries, their special collections, and services.

and one of its main points of conflict – as well as political intention, or, in the broadest sense, a call for societal change. Both criteria are often difficult to judge, requiring creative decisions; in case of doubt, inclusion is preferred. The interaction between facilities in German speaking countries, which has been going on continuously since 1983, is helpful in working out definitions.

In the course of the last decades, feminist archives have experienced changes in usage and therefore what is requested of them. In the 70s and 80s, holdings were mainly used as sources of information for ongoing activities in the women's movement. Since the 90s, younger women have been looking for information for a historical analysis of the second-wave women's movement, its politics, discussions, and theories mainly in the context of university courses.

Furthermore, in recent years there has been increased interest from journalists, exhibition curators, and scholars in mainly illustrative (visual) material on the second-wave women's movement. Thus, women with an awareness of women's politics who are in decision-making positions today can factor the second-wave women's movement into their work as a new social movement. In this manner, holdings from women's archives have been presented to a broader audience in renowned museums, diverse exhibitions, television documentaries, online portals, and in various specialist literature in recent years. The time of serious awareness and professional presentation of selected aspects of the second-wave women's movement strikingly intersects with what the media describes as the end of the political movement.

The changes and steps toward professionalizing working methods of women's archives can be illustrated using STICHWORT as an example. STICHWORT, Archives of the Women's and Lesbian Movement in Vienna, was started in 1983 and developed within the context of the feminist/lesbian movement in Austria and within the wide range of feminist/lesbian archives in German speaking countries. STICHWORT evolved in a women's student center (*Uni-Frauenzentrum*) and as part of the organization, *Frauenforschung und weiblicher Lebenszusammenhang*, which was one of the first networks of feminist scholars in Austria. Development and professionalization are revealed in the acquisition of documents, the technical means of recording, the presentation of the archive to the public, and the structure of the organization.

From the very beginning the concept was to collect documents on the Austrian and, as far as possible, the international women's movement. A particular focus on Vienna resulted from both the concentration of the Austrian women's movement's activities and easier access to material. With the founding of the feminist archives in Graz and Innsbruck (1993), two further centers of the Austrian independent women's movement are recorded through local documentation. Starting with the ad hoc collection of papers on current local movements' activities, the visibility and perception of the archive was strengthened so much through targeted publicity work that documents are sent directly from women's initiatives and individuals on an ongoing basis or as collected sets of documents. A key element of this is the involvement of individual archive staff members in the local movement in different contexts.

Their personal contacts and the declared openness to all forms of expression of independent feminist politics significantly contribute to the building of trust, which is essential for the acquisition of documents. Since the mid-90s, an Internet presence and a newsletter have improved communication with users and potential donors.

At the same time, the diversity of types of documents has increased. In the 90s audio-visual media (videos and audio cassettes, later CDs) were added as well as electronic media (CD-ROMs, DVD). Sustainable preservation of these media and the archiving of online media in electronic form present great challenges, which are difficult to resolve with the current financial situation and must be discussed and dealt with in a larger context.

STICHWORT has possessed a complete record and extensive index of contents in a card catalogue and inventory list since the beginning. The computerization of the archive and library data collection has been pushed since 1990. Today the database enables detailed content-based and interrelated research in all holdings groups, the majority of which is also online at <[www.stichwort.or.at](http://www.stichwort.or.at)>.

### **Feminist grassroots media in women's and lesbian archive collections**

Feminist media, magazines in particular, are an important part of the collections of feminist archives and libraries. From the perspective of women's archives, feminist media are a substantial and dynamic source of information on current issues, political practices, and theoretical discussions. They reflect the differentiation and developments of feminist movements, strategies and concepts as well as the different societal, political, and cultural contexts. Because of this, feminist media are important for providing up-to-date information through women's archives on one hand, and on the other hand, as valuable historical resources for research on the Women's Movement. Thus, their preservation and accessibility is a crucial task for feminist archives (Geiger and Hauser 2008)

With the international abundance of feminist magazines and newsletters since the beginning of the second-wave women's movements, feminist movements have been forming spaces and structures of (counter) public spheres. Places for communication and action offer space for the unfolding of feminist discourses and expressing collectivity. They build frameworks and a foundation for discussions between women, for processing experiences and developing theories, for collective learning processes and self-directed development of feminist strategies and perspectives for action, and thereby a new definition of female identity(ies)<sup>2</sup>. Feminist media serve as both a means to information,

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<sup>2</sup> See: Gruppe feministischer Öffentlichkeit 1992, Klaus 1994, Geiger 2002a.

communication, and discussion within the movement, as well as a means to self-determined expression to the "outside."<sup>3</sup>

The diversity, difference, and international circulation of feminist print media make it difficult to establish a clear definition of the genre "feminist magazine." The spectrum of feminist magazines reaches from the small group media of individual projects and initiatives for a limited target group to feminist "mass media" with a relatively high circulation and a stronger commercial orientation (such as *Emma* in Germany or *Ms.* in the USA), from basic informational pamphlets to sophisticated magazines and extensive scholarly periodicals, from short-lived attempts with only a few issues to well-established magazines with over twenty years of history. It includes both the local women's newspaper and the international newsletter, thematically broad and specialist magazines with a narrow focus, and a wide array of lesbian media. In addition to that, newsletters distributed via e-mail – published solely online or parallel to a print version – and online ezines have been included since the end of the nineties.

Their accessibility and preservation is essential to retrace feminist discourses and developments in the movements' history. At the same time, documenting feminist newspapers is highly demanding due to the magazines' diversity, decentralized organization, high fluctuation, and often independently organized production methods.

Only the larger feminist media – *AUF*, *An.schläge*, [*sic!*] – are archived at the national libraries, while smaller, regional pamphlets are often missing in spite of the principal of legal deposit. Foreign feminist magazines, including "large" ones like *Emma*, *Courage*, or *Ms.*, are only sporadically present<sup>4</sup>. In Germany the situation appears to be slightly different. Smaller local media from the autonomous women's movement are at least partially included in German university libraries. Feminist archives and libraries, however, map the entire spectrum of women's and lesbian movement magazine production in German speaking countries in their holdings and also maintain the most important titles from other countries.

STICHWORT maintains the most extensive collection of autonomous women's and lesbian magazines in Austria. The archive of the women's and lesbian movement currently manages and includes a total of 700 titles and over 60 current subscriptions. The goal of the collection is to maintain the most complete documentation possible of autonomous feminist magazine production in Austria from the beginning of the seventies to today. This also includes small informational pamphlets and periodicals of which only one issue was published. Presently the index holds 192 Austrian titles, 47 of which are current. The international collection (almost 500 titles from 44 countries, 200 of which are from German speaking countries) provides insight into the diversity of feminist and lesbian magazine production worldwide, in spite of its necessarily cursory

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<sup>3</sup>On the functions of feminist magazines see Geiger 2001, 2002b, Sussemichel et al. 2008.

<sup>4</sup> The situation of scholarly periodicals is different; here the university establishment of women's and gender research has also been reflected in the acquisition policy of academic libraries.

character. Gaps in the collection are constantly being filled through active exchange between feminist archives and private donations. One of the special characteristics of the STICHWORT collection, as well as autonomous feminist archives in general, lies in the value attributed to "small" media. In view of maintaining the most complete movement documentation possible, spontaneous publications and those produced with simple means are also documented. As many of them were published by short-lived women's groups active in a small field, they may have only come out once or twice. *Significance* is defined here through the focus on movement documentation according to criteria different from that of state facilities.

Other feminist publication collectors in Austria are the *AUF* magazine archives (with almost 50 titles, about half of which are in German, many older collections), the *ArchFem* archives in Innsbruck, and the *FEMAIL* archives in Feldkirch, all of which are limited to Austrian and German language titles. The *AEP* library in Innsbruck and *DOKU Graz* maintain smaller collections. *Frauensolidarität* has been collecting and documenting magazines and newsletters as a library and documentation center for women and the "third world" since 1993/94. It primarily focuses on countries in the south, with more publications being produced in Asia and Latin America than in Africa, but also material from the "north" that deals with issues relating to women from the south and international women's issues. They are recorded in the online database (<[www.eza.at/literatur](http://www.eza.at/literatur)>) and also partially in the complete catalogue of the Österreichische Bibliotheksverbund, a network of Austrian libraries.

The larger Austrian feminist magazines, such as *AUF*, *an.schläge*, [sic!], *Frauensolidarität* or *fiber* are also found in feminist archives outside the country.

The largest collections of feminist publications in Germany<sup>5</sup> are at the *Women's Research, Education, and Information Center – FFBIZ* in Berlin (with 866 titles), in the *Archiv der deutschen Frauenbewegung* in Kassel (1,037), in the *FrauenMediaTurm* in Cologne (927), in the feminist archive *ausZeiten* in Bochum (816), and in the *Spinnboden* in Berlin (over 1,600), which is focused on lesbian publications. In Switzerland the *schema f* library in Zurich holds the most significant collection. *Cid-femmes* in Luxembourg possesses all of the country specific and regional titles.

In order to make magazine collections of the lesbian/women's archives and libraries in German speaking countries visible and also to document them in traditional catalogues, the data are being gradually entered into the ZDB, the world's largest magazine database located at the Berlin State Library, through a collaborative project from i.d.a. *Dachverband*<sup>6</sup>. Many titles are being introduced

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<sup>5</sup> Links to the aforementioned facilities can be found at: <[www.ida-dachverband.de](http://www.ida-dachverband.de)> or directly: <[www.ffbiz.de](http://www.ffbiz.de)>, <[www.addf-kassel.de](http://www.addf-kassel.de)>, <[www.FrauenMediaTurm.de](http://www.FrauenMediaTurm.de)>, <[www.auszeiten-frauenarchiv.de/](http://www.auszeiten-frauenarchiv.de/)>, <[www.spinnboden.de](http://www.spinnboden.de)> as well as <[www.schema-f.fembit.ch](http://www.schema-f.fembit.ch)> and <[www.cid-femmes.lu](http://www.cid-femmes.lu)>.

<sup>6</sup> <[www.zdb-opac.de](http://www.zdb-opac.de)>. The holdings can be searched by individual archive in the ZDB under interlibrary loan region "ida".

to a broader public for the first time through this. At the same time, attention is being drawn to feminist archives and libraries as collection centers. In October 2009 2,000 different feminist titles from the first-wave and the second-wave women's movement were recorded in the ZDB, including both grassroots and scholarly publications. About 1,000 of these titles were mentioned there for the first time. Currently over half of the magazine collections from the 20 facilities participating in the project are documented in the ZDB. The plan for the future is that all magazine titles in the i.d.a. facilities shall be presented together on the organization's website.

### **Feminist grassroots media in Austria: structures and developments**

STICHWORT'S extensive publication database allows a detailed look at structures and developments in Austria's feminist magazine landscape. The database includes 186 Austrian magazine titles that were founded after 1970, the beginning of the second-wave women's movements in Austria, and are thereby the foundation of the following analysis<sup>7</sup>. Originally a collection of print media, today the database also comprises electronic newsletters. In addition to collection data, founding and in some cases discontinuation data, publishers, former names, publishing location, frequency of publication, thematic focus, and type of magazine are also included. However, not all details are available for all titles, for example, the exact duration of publication is only known for 82 titles. This should be considered below.

The first autonomous feminist magazines begin in the 1970s as organs of the first working groups on women's liberation and autonomous women's organizations in Austria. The two oldest feminist magazines in German speaking countries that still exist, both founded in 1974, should be highlighted here: *AUF – Eine Frauenzeitschrift* in Vienna and *AEP Informationen* in Innsbruck, Tyrol. All together these beginnings of feminist media production in Austria are still very modest with an average of 5 titles published parallel per year and 1-2 new publications annually, most of which only existed for one to two years.

It is only in the 1980s, as the women's movement spread and the first women's projects were founded, that the continuous development of a feminist (print-) media landscape in Austria began, lasting until the turn of the century. The number of new projects grew annually from 5 in the 1980s to more than 8 in the

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<sup>7</sup> Six older titles not included here are magazines with a long history published by political or church related women's organizations like *neue frau*, formerly *Die Frau* from the Socialist Party's national women's committee (1924-1987), *Stimme der Frau* from the Association of Democratic Women (1945-1993), *Welt der Frau* from the Catholic Women's Movement (1964-) and *frau aktuell* from the Austrian Women's Movement (associated with Austrian People's Party – ÖVP) (1959-) as well as magazines from the Ravensbrück Association of Concentration Camp Survivors and the Austrian Association of Women Academics.

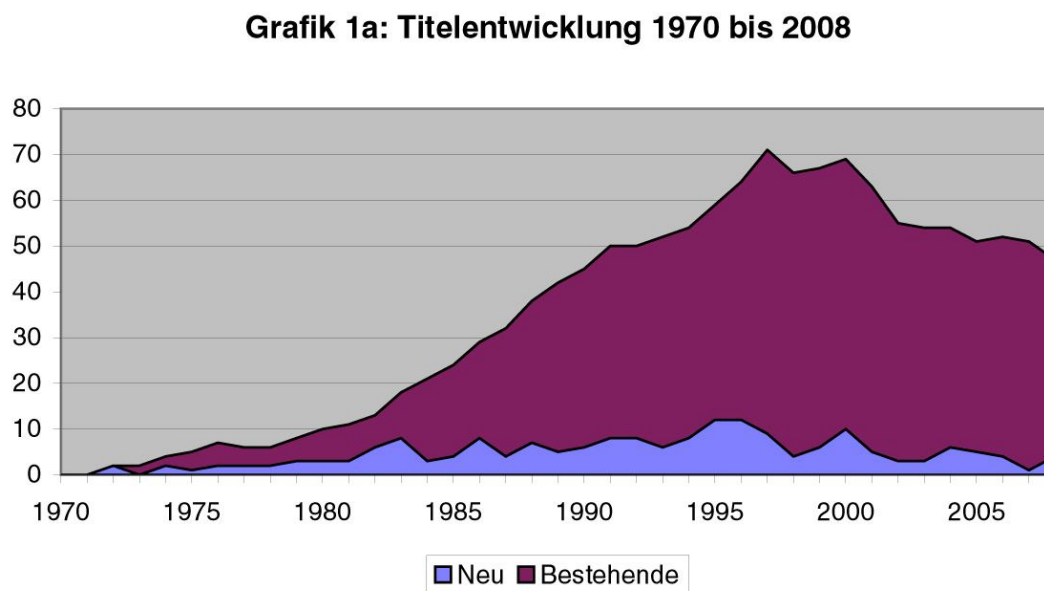
1990s; the number of existing titles increased from an average of 17 in the first half of the 1980s to an average of 67 in the second half of the 1990s. The high-point was reached in 1997 with 71 documented magazine titles (figure 1a and 1b). As of 2000 the total number and the annual number of new projects receded again, leveling out at around 50 titles and 3 to 4 new projects per year. At the end of 2008 the STICHWORT magazine collection documents 47 current titles. Whether this slight recent decline indicates further reductions in the feminist media landscape or just illustrates delays in the completion process of the holdings will become clear in due course. In any case, an exact determination of the current number is difficult due to the rapid changes and occasionally unclear classifications<sup>8</sup>. It is worrying that in recent years the balance between new projects and discontinuations was mostly negative, while in the 80s and 90s an average of two new titles emerged for each existing titles that was discontinued.

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<sup>8</sup> Thus *Koryphäe* is still documented among the current magazines, because it only discontinued its publication (temporarily) in 2009, whereas *LesbenFrauenNachrichten* and *[sic!] Forum für feministische Gangarten* are not covered. Neither of these has announced that it is officially discontinuing publication, but their most recent issues appeared in 2007; in the meanwhile there has been published one more issue of *[sic!]*. For technical archiving reasons, electronic newsletters (11 current titles) are included in the database, but online news portals like *ceiberweiber.at* (since 1999) or *die.Standard.at* (since 2000) are not. For comparison, using a very narrow definition of autonomous feminist magazines, Horak (2003) arrives at 18 current titles; Well (2007) lists 44 media in her work, applying a broad definition including online media and titles associated with institutions and political parties.

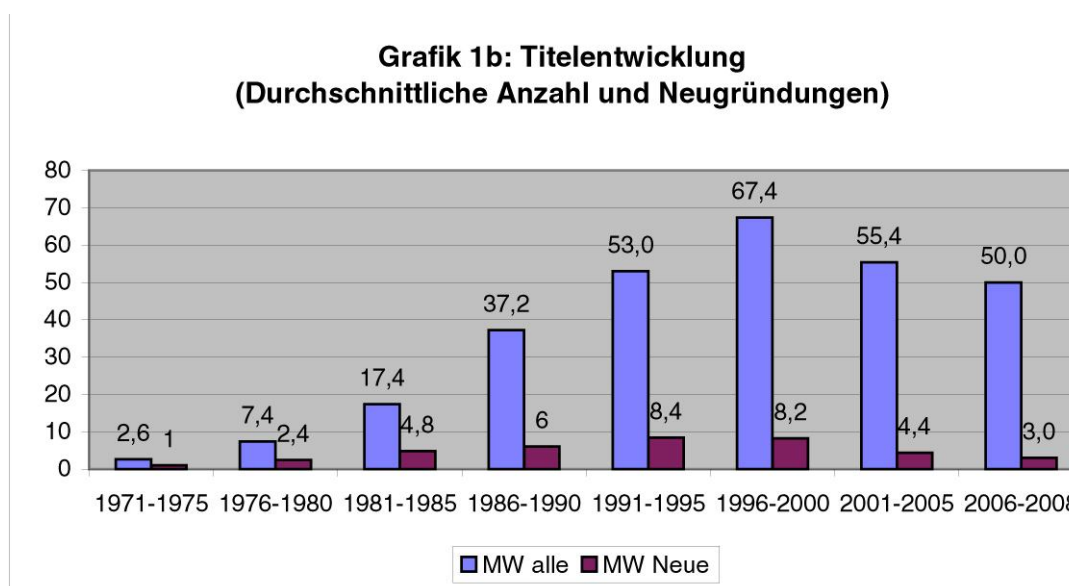


**Figure 1a: Numbers of titles, 1970 - 2009**



[New titles in light blue, existing titles in purple]

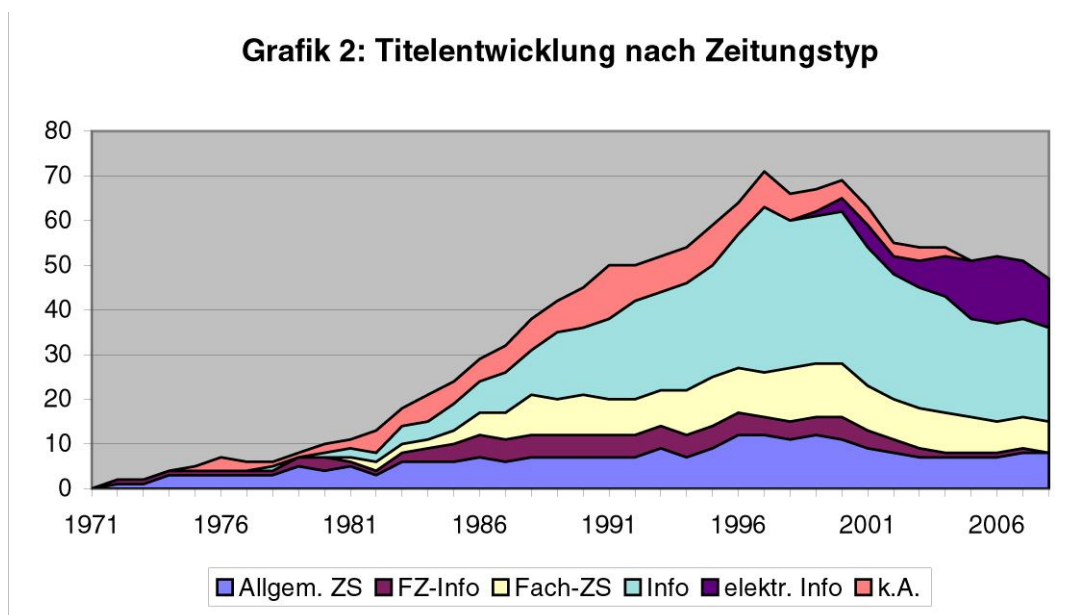
**Figure 1b: Numbers of titles (average numbers and new publications)**



[Total in light blue, new titles in purple]

The expansion was accompanied by an internal differentiation of the magazine landscape, as demonstrated by figure 2, in which title development is broken down according to the type of publication. The development of titles is relatively stable for general feminist magazines directed toward "all" feminist/lesbian readers with broad subject matter; these play an important role in cross-group multidisciplinary feminist discussion. After the modest start in the 1970s, their number fluctuates between 6 and 10 titles. The general growth in titles is mainly due to the increasing number of newsletters, which have accompanied the expansion of a broad infrastructure of specialized women's projects as well as facilities and mergers of women's and gender research since the 1980s. Since 2000 these have been increasingly in electronic form. The number of newsletters escalates from an average of 7 in the 1980s to over 28 in the 90s and an average of 34 in the 2000s. The latter rise is mainly due to electronic newsletters, whereas the number of printed newsletters sinks slightly, most recently to just over 20 titles.

Figure 2: Numbers of titles by type



[General periodicals in blue, women's newspapers /information sheets in indigo, professional periodicals in yellow, information bulletins in light blue, electronic info sheets in purple, no information in pink]

The emergence of the first specialist journals in the 1980s was connected to the thematic specialization and differentiation of activities in the women's movement. This type of magazine has been represented by an average of 9 titles since the 1990s, for example the art magazine *Eva & Co* (Graz, 1981-1992), the development policy magazine, *Frauensolidarität*, (Vienna, 1982-) which still exists today and is also widely received in German speaking countries abroad, the newsletter of the Austrian Women's Forum for Feminist Theology, *Der Apfel* (Vienna, 1986-), *Koryphäe. Medium für feministische Naturwissenschaften und Technik* (Vienna, 1986-2008), the literary science magazine for the Alps-Adriatic region, *Script*, (Klagenfurt, 1992-2001), or the most well established academic magazine, *Zeitschrift für feministische Geschichtswissenschaft, L'Homme*, (Vienna, 1990-).

The "Frauzentrums-Infos" were of great importance to the feminist information exchange, particularly during the 1980s and 90s. Published by the women's culture and communication centers and ranging from informational pamphlets to general feminist magazines, publications like *Zyklotron* in Innsbruck (1983-2003), *Infam* in Linz (1984-2000), *Zahra lustra* in Salzburg (1985-2001) and *Belladonna* in Klagenfurt (1986-1996) contributed to the decentralization of the media landscape. All in all the feminist magazine production is heavily concentrated in Vienna. About two thirds of the total titles and the currently published titles are based in Vienna. State capitals are other

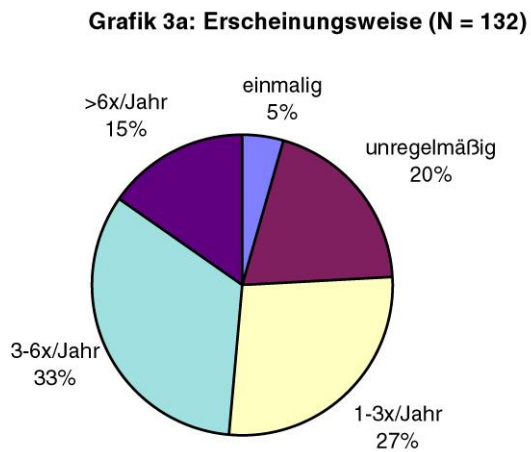
"centers," especially Graz and Innsbruck with more than 10 titles. Less than 5% of all documented titles are published outside of these urban centers. Upper Austria exhibits a relatively decentralized and growing publication landscape with numerous newsletters from local women's counseling centers and meeting places.

When looking at feminist magazine production in terms of length of existence and frequency of publication, a high level of fluctuation can be seen. Almost a quarter of the titles exist for only 1-2 years, a further 15% last between 3 and 5 years, and almost 30% of the titles are published irregularly or only once. On one hand, this structure is surely a result of the difficult production circumstances of autonomous feminist media due to limited resources.

However, the large rate of fluctuation also expresses how dynamic and lively a grassroots, self-organized media production is. Despite difficult conditions (only a few of the feminist magazine editorial departments are adequately financed or even have paid positions, see Geiger 1996, Horak 2003, Well 2007) many of the media projects nevertheless manage impressive continuity. Over a fifth of the current magazines have been in existence for more than 20 years, 37% between 10 and 20 years. In other words, 60% of the current magazines and 43% of the total documented titles have been published for at least 10 years.

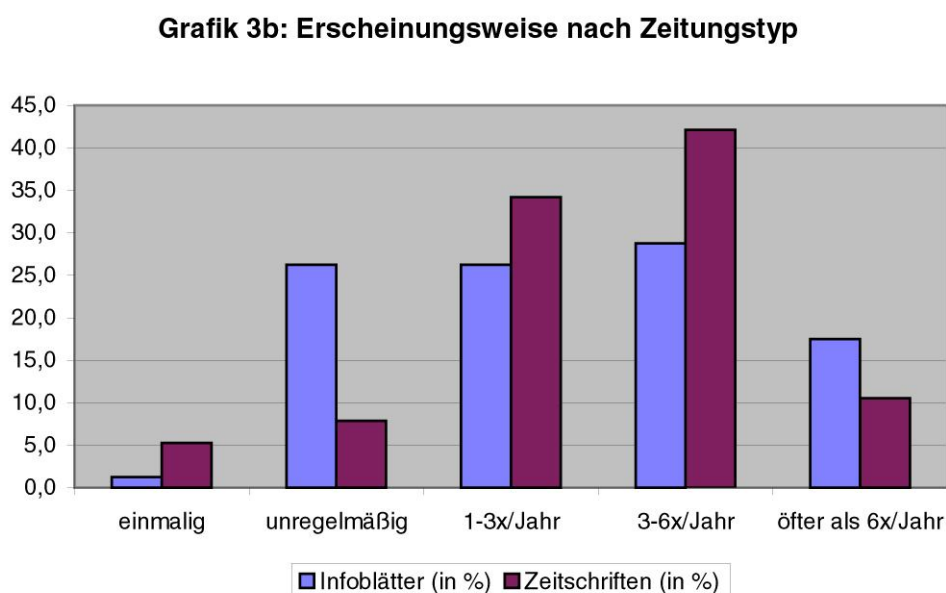
However, limitations appear in the issue frequency and therefore the up-to-dateness of information. Only 15% of the titles are published more than 6 times a year. Currently these publications are *Laufschritte* (Graz, 1986-) and *Insel Zeitung* (Scharnstein 1992-) as well as the electronic publications *Fiftitu%-Newsletter*, *AEP-Newsletter* and *Lebenszeichen. an.schläge* (Vienna, 1983-) is the only magazine that has been published monthly since 1994 (with two double issues). Before that it appeared quarterly, like the bulk of feminist media. In total, one third of the documented feminist titles and half of the general feminist magazines are published 3-6 times per year. The preferred publication schedule for specialist journals is 1-3 times per year, whereas newsletters often appear irregularly (figure 3a and 3b).

**Figure 3a: Frequency (N=132)**



[3-6 times yearly in turquoise (33%), more than 6 times yearly in purple (15%), one-off in light blue (5%), irregular in indigo (20%), 1-3 times yearly in yellow (27%)]

Figure 3b: Frequency by type of publication



[Info sheets in % light blue, periodicals in % purple]

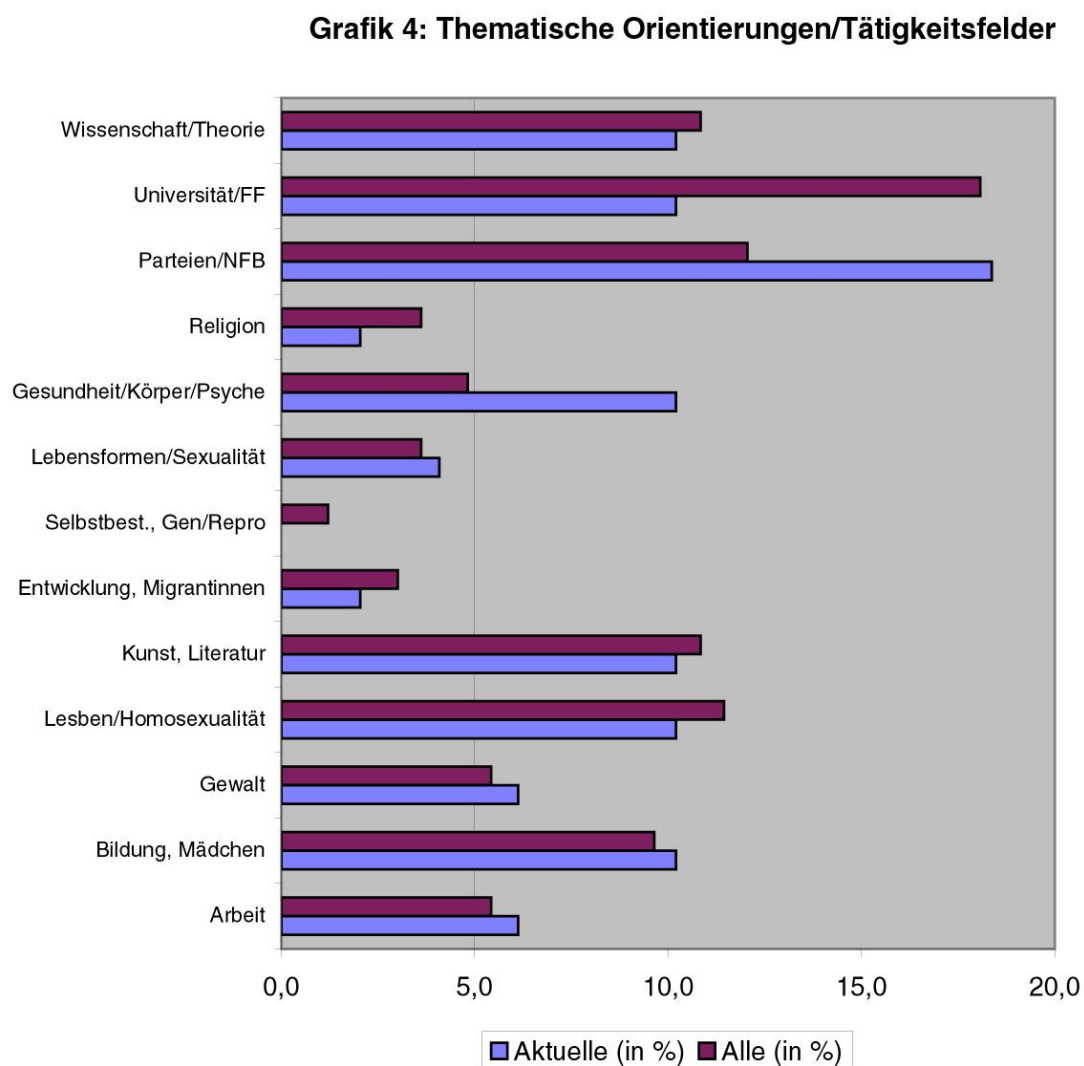
Figure 4 provides an overview of the thematic orientation of the publications. In such a largely sophisticated and thematically specialized infrastructure as the women's movement, three quarters of the recorded titles (over 80% of current publications) fall into one or two subject areas or fields of activity. One focus is clearly academic and scientific, which make up almost one fifth of the current publications. Included under university/women's research are mainly student media and information from coordination centers and project centers for women's and gender research at Austrian universities<sup>9</sup>. In addition to general gender theory titles, the fields of history, natural science/technology, philosophy, and law are represented<sup>10</sup>. The groups represented heavily among political parties/movements are activities of institutionalized gender equality policy and several titles associated with political parties (such as *Brot & Rosen* from Vienna's Green Party). Women's counseling centers and counseling centers specializing in health, education, work, or violence are very active in media, especially with printed or electronic newsletters and occasionally professional journals. It is striking that migrant (counseling) projects are hardly present. The topic of development policy is almost exclusively covered by the

<sup>9</sup> The noticeable decline in current publications may be due to the fact that material from women/gender specific courses in the Austrian states included here is only sporadically accounted for.

<sup>10</sup> For scholarly periodicals in German speaking countries, see Hauser and Geiger, 2008.

magazine *Frauensolidarität*. The subject areas of art and literature are significantly represented. In addition to the previously mentioned art magazine *Eva & Co* and the literary magazine *Entladungen* (Vienna, 1985-), the pop culture magazine projects from recent years such as *female sequences* (Vienna, 1999-2002), *nylon* (Vienna, 2000-2001), and *fiber* (Vienna, 2002-) particularly stand out. Lesbian or gay and lesbian publications make up a portion of 10%.

**Figure 4: Orientation by theme or activity**



[Topics from the top: scientific / theoretical; university / women's studies; political parties / women's movement; religion; health / body / spirit; lifestyle / sexuality; self-determination, genetics / reproduction; development / migrants; art / literature; lesbian / homosexuality; violence; education / girls; work.

Current titles in % light blue; all titles in % purple]

### Looking back: feminist discussions and development of issues in the 1970s and 1980s

As part of the research project *Die neue Frauenbewegung im Spiegel ihrer Medien* (1990, Geiger et al. 1992), the first two decades of feminist media



production (newspapers, flyers, and posters) in Austria were analyzed by means of the STICHWORT archive holdings. This allows a detailed look at developments in thematic structure of feminist publications and medial discussions of the second-wave women's movement in Austria from 1972 to 1990, because the individual articles were entered into a database and indexed according to the STICHWORT system<sup>11</sup>.

A comparison of the structure and development of issues of the autonomous women's and lesbian publications in Austria during that period with current thematic orientations of publications reveals both similarities and shifts. In the 1970s and 1980s the key issues were coverage of the women's movement, literature and language, art, work, and violence against women, followed by the subject areas of political parties/movements, lesbians/lesbian movement, reproduction and population policy/abortion. The issues of bodies, environment, religion, sexuality, and theory were at the lower end of the scale.

Communication within the movement, (coverage of the women's movement in a narrow sense) being decentralized, non-institutionally and non-hierarchically organized, is key to the women's and lesbian movement. Therefore, it is the task of movement media to guarantee a self-determined (self-) portrayal and a constant exchange of information and experience and to convey a cross-regional discussion on the movement's organization, structure, and strategy. Conversely, movement media are received in order to find out news about groups, activities, and discussions, as well as the latest gossip. (Geiger 1987, 380 ff., 351 ff.) Content covers events, conferences, operations, demonstrations, and other activities. Self-criticism and conflicts within the movement reached an initial peak at the end of the seventies and flared up again and again at the end of the eighties. Discussions on political strategies and programs took place at the end of the 80s. In general they are less frequent; utopian plans and visions are extremely rare. Image cultivation of individual groups and projects dominate coverage of the movement. Reporting on group activities and events is still important today and mainly occurs through the growing number of newsletters from individual women's organizations.

The thematic focus of the publications shifted noticeably from the seventies to the eighties. In the beginning, abortion issues and violence against women were in the forefront; by the end of the 80s cultural issues took the lead. As in other countries, the fight to legalize abortion played an important role in Austria at the beginning of the second-wave women's movement. After the introduction of the abortion time limit in 1975 the issue quickly lost importance. Repeated attacks by abortion opponents and the fight over practical enforcement of the abortion time limit led to frequent debates on the topic, but this is not reflected in the movement's publications. The issue of violence was dealt with differently. Triggered by an international tribunal on violence against women (1976 in Brussels) as well as the fight for the first women's shelters, concern over sexual

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<sup>11</sup> The data pool comprises 4,800 articles and is accessible online through the STICHWORT website. Unfortunately, a lack of resources has impeded the continuation of this bibliographical and systematic indexing.

assault and domestic violence moved into the spotlight in the middle of the seventies. The issue remains relevant but became less important subsequently. In the mid 90s the discussion partially moves to specialized media/newsletters from the facilities providing protection against violence (*Gewaltlos*, a leaflet from the Austrian women's shelters since 1995, or *Zeitung der Plattform gegen die Gewalt in der Familie*, since 1998)<sup>12</sup>.

It was only at the end of the 70s that the surprisingly minimal debate on sexuality in Austrian feminist media reaches a small peak. Gynecological self-help as a means to re-appropriation of one's own body was a key issue for groups and workgroups. Traditional women's issues like health or religion are also hardly raised in the period before 1990. Interestingly enough, the psychology boom and the turn toward spirituality in the 80s are only visible in a few select publications. However, the field of health/body/mind is of growing importance in the current media (about 10% of current publications are dedicated to the subject). The field of reproduction, i.e. heterosexual relationships and marriage, family and children, which are classic issues for conventional women's magazines, occupy little space in feminist magazines during the first two decades. Readers who were mothers, surveyed during the 80s, definitely considered this a deficit (Geiger 1987). In the second half of the 90s one initiative attempted to take the matter into their own hands with the publication *Mutter.mund* (Vienna, 1996-1999).

The focus of the debate on party politics regarding women's issues in the beginning of the 80s was the ambivalent relationship of the independent women's movement to the new State Secretariat for Women's Issues<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, the failing economy and rising unemployment led to a focus on the subject of work. Budget cuts and slashed social services beginning in the mid 80s pushed the debate on social and labor market policy and the growing poverty among women.

The development of women's research within and outside of universities and the differentiated women's culture and art scene in Vienna, in particular, pushed new issues into the forefront. In the mid 80s a significant growth in book reviews and the subjects of literature and language, art, education, history, feminist research, and critique of science becomes visible. This new focus is still seen today in numerous publications from the field.

In the mid 80s lesbian issues also become more present; one third of this presence is borne by *Lesbenrundbrief* (1983-1993). The subject appears to be non-existent for the western Austrian publications *Orgon* and *AEP-Informationen*; Viennese titles are in the middle of the scale. Above average numbers appear in some women's center publications, thanks to a strong local lesbian presence.

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<sup>12</sup> See: violence debate in the media, Geiger 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Established in 1979. State Secretary Johanna Dohnal was promoted to Minister of Women in 1990. Austria has had a Minister of Women since then, with interruptions; however, it does not have an actual Ministry of Women.

## Lesbian publications

The term "lesbian publications" includes magazines that are clearly directed toward a lesbian readership and those that define their target group as "gay-lesbian" or feminist with a lesbian slant<sup>14</sup>. "Queer" titles also belong to this group. STICHWORT verifies 21 titles for Austria, five of which are current. Because this is a relatively low number and German and Swiss lesbian magazines were and continue to be of great importance to Austrian readers, we include them in this section.

It is not possible to determine the total number of lesbian magazines in German speaking countries – at least at this point. The holdings of the i.d.a. facilities, searchable through ZDB, can be consulted for an overview of the German speaking countries<sup>15</sup>. At present, data from archives with large holdings, for example the lesbian archive in Berlin, *Spinnboden*, are missing. Thus only a tendency can be established. Furthermore, there is magazine data in the ZDB that has only been submitted by institutional libraries so far, which often lacks the magazines' exact publishing duration due to incomplete records. The availability of data on the 151 lesbian magazine titles will surely improve through further additions from feminist archives and libraries in the future. An additional problem is that only an extremely limited amount of electronic media, most of which are irregular e-mail newsletters, appears in the ZDB, because they are hardly archived in any facility.

The following can be deduced from the available data: Most of the magazines were started between 1986 and 2000, when the direction shifted from "lesbian" to "gay and lesbian". Approximately three quarters of the lesbian magazines have a regional focus (62% for Austria); lesbian magazines and gay and lesbian magazines are equally represented among the cross-regional publications. Of the former, we include titles such as *Lesbenpresse*, *Lesbenfront/Frau ohne Herz/Die.Lesbenzeitschrift*, *Lesbenstich*, *Ihresinn*, *Unsere kleine Zeitung (UKZ)*, the Austrian *Lesbenrundbrief*, *Infoblatt des Deutschen Lesbenring e.V.* and others.

The first lesbian magazines after the beginning of the second-wave women's movement appeared in 1975 – *Lesbenfront* (Zurich), *Lesbenpresse*, *Partnerin* and *Unsere kleine Zeitung* (all in Berlin). By the end of the 70s, eight more

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<sup>14</sup> Beginning in the mid 80s, terms like "FrauenLesben" (WomenLesbians) were common in the course of the discussion on the perception of lesbians in feminist contexts. This was also expressed with a conjunction or slash and in many other provocative and humorous heavily debated forms, for example, "women and other lesbians". Around 1990 groups and periodicals went through some name changes in Austria. One example for Austria is the magazine *Frauen-Nachrichten des Frauenzentrums Wien*, which was called *Lesben/Frauen-Nachrichten* as of the issue 13/1993.

<sup>15</sup> Magazines that do not include lesbians in their titles were added from STICHWORT data as much as possible to provide a better overview.

distinctly lesbian magazines are started; these are joined by a gay and lesbian title, *Rosa Revue*, from Hamburg<sup>16</sup>. Most of the distinctly lesbian magazines emerged in the second half of the nineties (10); a total of 47 lesbian-focused titles were located. In Austria there are only four: the *Lesbenrundbrief*, which was published from 1983 to 1993 by different groups, the *Lila Schriften* (1995-1999), the magazine from the lesbian student organization at the University of Graz, *Sappho*, which has been documented from 1996 to 1998, and the e-mail newsletter *Lebenszeichen* (2001-).

In 1984 the term "Women/Lesbians" appeared, both in the magazine title and the name of the publishing group. Efforts toward the integration of lesbian perspectives and content in the feminist debate are reflected in this name choice. These politics are visible in available data on new publications until around the year 2000; after that, no new titles with such names are found. It is assumed that after that point lesbian-focused material was integrated into the editorial concepts, but no longer named as such. The Austrian magazines [*sic!*]. *Forum für feministische Gangarten* and *an.schläge* are examples of this.

In the first half of the 80s an increased number of magazines defining their target group as "gay and lesbian" are found. The number of newly founded publications jumped from 5 in the early 80s to 21 in the first half of the 90s. With a total of 71, the number of gay and lesbian titles is approximately as high as the categories lesbian and women/lesbians combined. In Austria these include *Lambda-Nachrichten* from HOSI Vienna, *Pride* from HOSI Linz, *RosaLila Buschtrommel* from Graz and the gay and lesbian scene publication, *Bussi*. The balance between the representation of gay and lesbian issues present in these magazines and the degree of divergence between the premise and lesbians feeling addressed could be the subject of further research.

The Zurich lesbian magazine serves as an example of change in the political orientation and aesthetic design, and thereby also as an illustration of three decades of lesbian feminism. Founded in 1975 as *Lesbenfront*, typeset and illustrated with drawings and some photos, it provided typical content for self-organized magazines, such as reports on events and political activities, copies of leaflets, open letters and other political texts, field reports, interviews with authors and activists, and reviews. From the 4/1977 issue it was also distributed in Germany by the Frauenbuchvertrieb in Berlin. In 1985 the name was changed to *Frau ohne Herz. Zeitschrift für Frauen und andere Lesben* (Women without a heart. Magazine for women and other lesbians). Over the course of its ten-year existence, it became increasingly "professional" in its design, for example, regarding typesetting and continuous use of photos as well as paper quality and, lastly, color covers. A complete relaunch took place in 1996 when its name was changed to *die. Lesbenzeitschrift*. The new version was introduced with the line, "The era of the woman without a heart is over."<sup>17</sup> The literary content became

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<sup>16</sup> Strictly speaking, the *Lambda-Nachrichten*, founded in 1979 by the *Homosexuellen Initiative* in Vienna cannot be included here, because the enlargement of the focus from gay to gay and lesbian only took place in 1981 when the lesbian group was founded.

<sup>17</sup> *die. lesbenzeitschrift* 1/1996, Editorial, p. 5

more important. In 2004 it was replaced by *Skipper*, which, as a *magazine for lesbian vitality*, served the queer generation with its association to recreation, sports, and games and a seriously questionable image of women – after all, "Skipper" is Barbie's little sister. This was clearly meant to reach the "young lesbians"; reports on gay and lesbian events, organizations, and other matters (e.g. partnerships) were in the forefront of the lifestyle and gossip sections. The individual articles did not extend beyond a double-page spread and were heavily illustrated. *Skipper* was discontinued after only three issues.

Translation: Emily Lemon

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