MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF SMFS:  
OUR YEAR IN REVIEW
[October 10, 2006] As I come towards the end of my first year in office, I write to report some of the milestones the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship has achieved this past year.

Kalamazoo: This past spring, we celebrated at Kalamazoo the Society's twentieth anniversary with five panels reflecting on how feminist medievalist scholarship has developed in this period. Several of the talks given by our Founding Mothers—Beth Robertson (University of Colorado), E. Jane Burns (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Roberta Krueger (Hamilton College), and Thelma Fenster (Fordham University)—appear in this issue of Medieval Feminist Forum. At our Advisory Board meeting, we covered several orders of business, including voting on a revised set of By-Laws for the Society. (These can be found posted at our website, <http://www.minotstateu.edu/mff/index.shtml>.) The size of the Ad Board had grown rather unwieldy, so we voted to trim it down to a healthy and manageable limit of nine regular members, plus various Officers for a total of eighteen. Three of those nine regular members will be graduate students, who will serve staggered terms of three years each. (We’ve had grad representatives on the Board for several years, but have now simply confirmed their active role in our organization of keeping it nimble and connected with the needs of our colleagues entering the profession.)

Mentoring Exchange: Our mentoring committee—consisting of Anne Clark Bartlett (who has served in this position for more years than we can count!) and one of our graduate representatives, Jennifer Borland—reported another successful year of mentoring match-ups. We’ve been doing these match-ups of senior and junior scholars for several years now at Kalamazoo. Anne and Jennifer conducted a survey to assess how successfully the program had been functioning and found that, overall, people were very happy with the program. They updated the “match-making” by asking participants in advance to prioritize their main expectations of the exchange. In all, we had...
sixteen matches this year. In addition, one of our Board members, Nancy Bradley Warren <nwarren@english.fsu.edu> volunteered to mentor first time authors as they work through the ins and outs of book publishing; because publishers are now investing so little in editing their own books, we wanted to offer this additional support to our members. Please contact her directly if you have interest in participating.

Medieval Foremothers Society: The Society, a spin-off of SMFS, sponsored two sessions this past spring devoted to the career of Mary Martin McLaughlin, a historian most famous for her work on Heloise and the Paraclete. Sadly, Mary was unable to join us for the sessions. She took ill soon afterwards, but was able to listen to the papers being read to her in the hospital. She was able to move back to her beloved home in upstate New York and there, under hospice care, passed away on June 8, 2006. In this issue, we are publishing several of the papers presented at Kalamazoo in tribute to Mary’s memory.

Book Prize: Now in our second cycle, the SMFS Book Prize “for significant contribution to feminist scholarship on the Middle Ages” was awarded this year (2006) to Mechthild of Magdeburg and Her Book: Gender and the Making of Textual Authority (U of Pennsylvania P, 2004) by Sara S. Poor of Princeton University. Sally was present to accept her prize check (the plaque having been left in Phoenix by a certain absent-minded President; it was forwarded to her later). We were especially glad to welcome Sally’s editor, Jerry Singerman of the University of Pennsylvania Press, which has been a leader in publishing medieval feminist scholarship of the highest order. The second round of the Best Article prize (given for work published between 2003 and 2006) will be awarded this coming May.

SMFS Banquet: As we do every year, our meetings were brought to a close at our annual SMFS banquet. We changed venues this year, moving over to the Indian restaurant Saffron. Despite the noise level (a perennial problem at Kalamazoo restaurants that apparently are only full to capacity on Medieval Congress/prom weekends), an excellent time was had by all—and the food was great, too!

SMFS at Leeds: Other news is that two UK members of our editorial board—Liz Herbert McAvoy (Gender in English Studies/Medieval Studies, Swansea University) and Kim LoPrete (History, National University of Ireland, Galway)—have taken on the charge of establishing SMFS’s presence
at the annual International Medieval Congress held every July at Leeds University. The Leeds conference has a main theme every year: 2007’s will be “Medieval Cities” and SMFS will sponsor two sessions related to that theme, plus a third on the subject of “Academic Feminisms and the (Post)Graduate Student.” We are looking forward to many happy years of an SMFS presence there.

Finally, I wanted to report something on a personal note. I had the happy occasion this spring to review Jane Chance, ed., *Women Medievalists and the Academy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005) for the online *TMR: The Medieval Review* (TMR ID: 06.06.01). On the very day the review appeared, I received two e-mails, both from senior male scholars, writing with lists of women who had not been included in the book and anecdotes about their careers. As we all know, reputations and historical legacies are built not by scholars themselves, but by those around them willing to attest to their gifts and impact. So as we watch our field move into its “mature years,” let us give some thought to how we acknowledge, laud, and commemorate those from whom we have learned so much. Nominate someone for a prize! Send “in honor of” donations to the Medieval Academy. Every small act of creating our own traditions of memorializing ensures that later generations will readily know, “We were here!”

_Monica Green_

**MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITORS:**

**AN INTRODUCTION TO ISSUE 42**

As co-editors, we are extremely pleased to have worked on this issue, which allows all of us to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the *Medieval Feminist Forum* (née *Medieval Feminist Newsletter*) and the life of a pioneer in medieval historiography, Mary Martin McLaughlin. As a collection of personal reflections, critical analyses, and laudatory tributes, this issue demonstrates one of the very strengths of the Society of Medieval Feminist Scholarship—the importance of considering what we have accomplished, how we have grown, where we are going, and to whom we owe much gratitude for allowing us to come this far. Part of this issue, therefore, is focused on McLaughlin’s scholarship. Essays by Monica H. Green, Catherine M. Mooney, and E. Ann Matter demonstrate the influence McLaughlin has had on the field, shaping the canon of readings in medieval
history, recounting the lives of pious laywomen, invigorating scholarship on Heloise, and assessing the scholarship of her peers. Where Bonnie Wheeler illustrates the many accomplishments McLaughlin enjoyed (as well as those she lamented she could not finish) in an eloquent curriculum vitae, Sharan Newman reminds us of the significance of a commitment to the production of excellent work. McLaughlin's dedication to her work situated McLaughlin as a bright star in our field, worthy of an obit in *The New York Times*. These essays collectively show that McLaughlin built a foundation on which many of us continue to work, and we are greatly in her debt for her exacting skills as a scholar. As Joan Cadden remarked in her 1991 tribute to McLaughlin, "who among us is not her student?"

The other section of this issue is focused on the "life" of MFF, demonstrating how it was generated, nourished, and sustained in the first years of its existence. Reflections by Elizabeth Robertson, Roberta Krueger, and E. Jane Burns remind us how radical it was to have a newsletter with "feminist" in its title, even as they recall how much collaborative work was required to bring each issue to publication and how rewarding such exchanges could be. Coordinated with this review is an homage to Thelma Fenster, one of the first mothers of MFF. Fenster recently retired from Fordham University, but as the tribute by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Lara Farina, and Clare Lees makes clear, not from active, collaborative scholarship that shows Fenster's commitment to feminist study and action. The history of the journal is a fascinating read, showing the emergence of feminist scholarship in medieval studies, the development of initiatives to support further work, the growth of the membership, and the mentoring of graduate students. In addition, each of these essays speaks to the rich dialogue that has been maintained, even as they collectively acknowledge the countering discourses that have emerged and continue to challenge us to rethink our position(s) as an organization. For those of us who were not there "at the beginning" this issue is an important cultural document, one that is designed to encourage us not only to celebrate our past but also to look forward and consider what else we need to do.

*Virginia Blanton*

*Anne Clark Bartlett*
MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Despite this issue appearing later than expected, we have had a productive year, with an expanded international subscriber list, and potential listing with two more databases besides MLA. Be sure to check out our new and improved website, as it contains the history of SMFS & MFF, calls for articles, lists of back issues, subscription forms, order blanks, announcements, and links to valuable research sites. Soon it will have a list of medieval feminist dissertations in progress and a “publication opportunities” link. I would love to hear from anyone with ideas and materials to add.

Finally, the Editorial Board is always looking for good articles to include in upcoming issues. We encourage submissions at all times, in fact, even when there is not a specific topic announced. We are also entertaining proposals for our Subsidia series, so be sure to send in your ideas soon.

Michelle M. Sauer

MESSAGE FROM MSU'S EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

As I reviewed past journals and prepared for Issue 42, I was struck by the apparent growth of the journal. This is not just the quality and subject of the articles, but also the number and following of the subscribers. This following has given a voice to a part of history that has been ignored and neglected for too long. Being a part of this voice has been the most rewarding aspect of the position. Watching the gradual piecing together of this issue has been interesting and exciting. Thank you for all the contributions to the journal. These submissions add to the development of our field of research, and I appreciate being given the chance to be involved. I also am proud to have contributed to the advancement of this journal, and have enjoyed the opportunity to communicate with subscribers. I hope you enjoy this issue and continue to support its staff and value the voices within its pages.

Amanda Lynn Moser