In this paper I will present an overview of the history and development of the Mapping the World database of Women’s Information Services around the World, one of the databases of the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women’s Movement (IIAV) in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. (www.iiav.nl). In the practical presentation of the database, I will show you how you can search the database.

Short history

In 1998 the International Information Centre and archives for the Women’s movement in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, organized the Know How Conference, for women’s information centers around the world. The aim of the conference was to strengthen the accessibility and visibility of women’s information. The organizing committee discussed the best ways to achieve this. One of the members of the committee said: ‘Since we are inviting all women’s information services to come to Amsterdam to participate in the conference, why don’t we bring them all together in an inventory as well?’ And so the Mapping project was born. The intent of the project was stated as follows:

- to provide ongoing, long-term access to women’s information centers in all countries and all significant communities, including indigenous communities and migrant communities.
- The database will contain information on a wide range of women’s information services, including details on the collections they hold.

The IIAV decided to create a Web-based database, as well as a book, that would contain information on women’s information services worldwide and their collections. We aimed to include at least one information center in every country in the world and to present the database at the Know-How Conference in August 1998 in Amsterdam. Not only did we have to collect all the information from the women’s information centers around the world; criteria for inclusion had to be developed, a database had to be built and a questionnaire had to be made up. Funds had to be raised. And last-but-not-least, the data had to be processed. Nevertheless, in less than a year, the database was operational.

When we launched the database at the Conference, it contained information on 160 centres in 78 countries. Over the years it expanded. Now, you will find 370 women's information centres from over 139 countries in it. We work closely with partner organizations in other parts of the world to trace centres for contacting and for sending a questionnaire. The IIAV is still putting in every effort to expand the database to at least one centre per country.
Criteria for Inclusion

Women have collected and disseminated information for many years, but it is only in the twentieth century that centres have been set up for the specific purpose of collecting and documenting what has come to be known as women’s information, which covers a wide spectrum of material, including cultural, political, and educational data. We defined “women’s information services” to include
- international, national, and local services,
- women’s documentation and research centres connected to universities,
- gender-specific information sections connected to NGOs, and
- organizations and resource centres in which women’s information is collected in addition to information on other subjects.
- For countries in which the development of such information is in its early stages, where democracy is newly established, or where war has destabilized development, focal points for the distribution of women’s information are included.
- Nowadays we also include digital women’s libraries

What do you find in the Mapping database?

The addresses, goals and subjects of all centres can be found. The database can be searched by name, country, subject, type of organisation and key words. It also includes web site links. Mapping is the fastest way to locate libraries, archives and documentation centres with women's information anywhere in the world. Not only for information specialists, but also for, researchers, students, professors, policy makers, women's organisations and media. Many of the centres listed in the Mapping the World database have resources such as books, periodicals, and photos, that you can view or use onsite at the centre’s facility, or online information that you can search directly.

If a resource centre has a web site, the Mapping the World database will show the URL. Follow the URL link to search the centre’s online information.

And moreover: For all the international projects at the IIAV Mapping is our basic tool for finding information, partners for projects etc.

Mapping into the Future

The database is by no means complete, though, as the number of women’s information services in the world probably approaches 1000. The IIAV is still putting in every effort to expand the database to include at least one centre per country, and we will continue to do so until all countries are represented.

Some parts of the world were well represented from the beginning—for instance, Western Europe and the United States. But in 1998, many countries in Africa, Asia, and South America were still missing. In December 1998, UNESCO acknowledged once again the vital role of free access to (women’s) information in peace processes in Africa. It provided funds to expand the number of African women’s information centres in the database, as a contribution to African women in their struggle for peace and non-violence. The IIAV asked her African partners to participate in the effort. With the help of the electronic networks of GAIN (Gender in Africa Information Network) and ENDA-SYNFEV (Synergy Gender and Development, Environment and Development of the Third World), women’s information services in Africa were persuaded to register for Mapping the World, and within four months, twenty-five new African centres were added.
In 1999, we focused on Central and Eastern Europe, and next in line was Latin America. This time the Latin American Information Agency collected information on twenty-five Latin American women’s information centres and sent the completed forms to the IIAV for processing. One of our original criteria for inclusion in the database was that centres have a physical collection that is available to the public. As women’s information services are changing their policies concerning collecting and disseminating information, virtual libraries are coming into being, offering electronic collections and links to other Internet-based women’s information services. We decided to include virtual libraries and information centres provided that they have as a priority to increase access to women’s information.

Practical demonstration of the database

Searching the database
The database is a resource for anyone looking for print, online, photographic, audio-visual, or other resources about women. You can find sources of women's information in over 50 languages, covering hundreds of relevant subjects, from more than 139 countries. Here are some ways you can use the Mapping the World database.

For example, if you are:

• a student, you can use the database to find out which centres have information on your subject.
• a journalist looking for a photo for an article, you can use the database to find centres that have photo collections.
• a researcher active in the field of women’s studies, can check which centres have collections on this subject and/or are affiliated with women’s studies departments of universities.
• a policy maker looking for information on women in agriculture in Africa, you can use the database to find local women’s information centres that have information on your subject and/or which centres you can contact for assistance.

Mapping Database Search Page

You start your search on the Mapping Database Search page. You can directly access the main page of the Mapping the World project at www.iiav.nl/mapping-the-world.

The database provides several ways to search for women's information services. You can display the following lists with the Mapping the World database:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List</th>
<th>Displays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of organization</td>
<td>an alphabetical list of all 370 centres in the database.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>a list of countries that have women's information centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From the country list, you can display a list with the names and locations of all centres in the database located in the country you selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continent</td>
<td>a list of continents and sub-continents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From the continent list, you can display a list with the names and locations of all centres in the database located on the continent or sub-continent you selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>a list of languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From the language list, you can display a list with the names and locations of all centres in the database that collect information in the language you selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of organization</td>
<td>a list of types of women's information centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From this list, you can display a list with names and locations of centres of the type you have selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection subject</td>
<td>a list of subject areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From this list, you can display a list of centres that have indicated that they collect information on the subject you have selected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Displaying a list of Women’s Information Centres**
From the Mapping Database Search page, you can display a list of centers based on the criteria you choose: country, continent, language, type of organization, collection subject, or all organizations in the database.

To display a list:
Select Name of organization, Country, Continent, Language, Type of Organization, or Collection Subject.

**Free text search**
You can use the free text feature to search in all fields of the database for a term or combination of terms. This feature is available on the Mapping Database Search page.

**Database Fields**

The fields in the *Mapping the World* database are:

- Name organization
- Contact person
- Address
- Telephone number
- Fax number
- E-mail
- Website
- Business hours
- Year in which the service began
- Description of the organization
- Services provided
- Collection
- Languages
- Subject Top Ten
- System of indexing
- Levels of automation
- Catalogue on Internet
- Publications
- Activities
- Keywords

**Performing a Complex Search**

You can also combine two words or phrases in your search.
If you use "**and**" to search for two words or phrases, the database searches for centres that have both terms in their database record.
For example, suppose you want to find all centres in Africa with a focus on health. If you search on "Africa" **and** "health", the database displays all centers that have both of these terms. Centres that have "health" but do not have "Africa" in their record will not display, nor will centres that have "Africa" but do not have "health" in their record. The list of centres will include centres in Africa, as well as centres outside Africa that collect information about Africa.
If you use "**or**" to search for two words or phrases, the database searches for centers that have either term in their record.
If you search on "Chinese" or "Arabic", the database displays all centres with "Chinese" in their record, as well as all centres with "Arabic" in their record. The list will include centres with collections in the Chinese and Arabic languages, as well as centres that have the words "Chinese" or "Arabic" in any field.

To search for two words or phrases:

- Enter a word or phrase in the first box
- Select "and" or "or"
- Enter a word or phrase in the second box and click on Search.

Adding your Centre to the Mapping the World Database

- The IIAV adds new centres to the database on a regular basis. The goal is still to have at least one women's information centre for every country in the world. You can add your centre using the online form on the Mapping the World website. Click on Participate in the left bar to display the online entry form. When you fill out the form, resources in your information centre become available to a much larger group of people. And you become linked to the world of women's information services.

Conclusion

Initially conceived as a tool for networking and cooperation between women’s information specialists worldwide, Mapping the World now demonstrates the power and richness of women’s collections round the world. It is the fastest way to locate women’s libraries, archives and documentation centres anywhere in the world and to find out how to use the resources of those centres. Mapping the World has indeed helped to make women’s information more accessible and visible. Each day, not only women’s information specialists but also policymakers, researchers, women’s organizations, and the media discover the enormous potential of this database and use it in their policymaking, planning, programs, and publications.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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