

NOTE: As some alumni may be aware, during the winter of 2020-2021, a controversy arose regarding the publication of a second version of the book of reflections without authors' names. The following update explains the context in which the second version was created and the resolution to the concerns that were raised.

***First Women in Yale College:
Reflections on Coeducation for the 50th Anniversary Celebration***

**50th Anniversary Written History Project
An Update from the Alumni Volunteer Leaders**

Although recent issues related to the Written History Project have been challenging, we believe a good plan is now in place to guide the project going forward. We want to start by thanking the petition organizers for stating their concerns. We also want to say clearly that there was never any ill intent. Decisions were made in accordance with the evolving nature of the project and in an attempt to meet divergent needs. However, even good intentions can go awry, and we understand that many feel that this happened in this case. With the benefit of hindsight, it's plain the decision-making and communication processes could have been better.

This project was intended as a gift to all the women who matriculated in 1969. It is unfortunate that the decision to print a second version, without names, became such a divisive issue. However, in concert with the petition organizers and in light of a very productive meeting with them on March 12, 2021, we believe we have identified a path to satisfactorily resolve all outstanding issues. We are now working to implement the agreement from that meeting.

Despite this controversy, and as originally planned, all members of the cohort of women who matriculated in 1969 were sent a copy of the book with full attribution, which we understand has been very well received.

Some context may help illuminate how the project evolved and explain how a version of the book, without authors' names, came to be.

1. The project was approved to record and preserve the histories and share these with a limited audience.

a. The project was brought to both the 50th Anniversary Committee and the 50WomenAtYale150 Committee for discussion. Both committees endorsed the project. Subsequently, the written histories were approved by the university with two primary goals:

- to share the histories with an audience focused on the alumnae who matriculated in 1969, and
- to build an archival resource in Sterling Library's Manuscripts & Archives for students, faculty, and other library users interested in research on coeducation.

b. The original plan did not include wide public dissemination of the essays.

c. There was a limited budget for the project, which was organized and implemented entirely by volunteers. The project team expected that any future, more public distribution would be a separate initiative, completed by others, that would draw on the original manuscripts housed in the library's Manuscripts & Archives collection.

2. The original project goals of the Written History Project have been achieved.

a. As initially proposed, the original, unedited, and fully attributed essays will be available in Sterling Library's Manuscripts & Archives collection.

b. Printed books with full author attribution have been sent to the cohort of alumnae and are being sent to a number of individuals in the Yale family, particularly those who have been involved in the 50th or 50WomenAtYale150 celebrations in a meaningful way.

c. Additional copies of the printed books with authors' names will also be available in Yale's libraries.

3. A desire for a more public version and concerns about privacy led to the creation of a second edition without authors' names.

a. From the outset, the privacy concerns of contributors were recognized and factored into project planning. During the course of the project, individual alumnae expressed concerns about having their names and stories shared with a wide audience. They did not wish to be anonymous to their classmates – and had not requested blanket anonymity – but relied on their understanding that the project did not involve broad distribution of the essays.

b. Privacy concerns included the risks posed by the internet when names are included, since documents are easily searchable and universally accessible. This consideration applied not only to digital products but also to print products, since the latter could easily be turned into digital material and posted to the web by third parties.

c. As the project evolved, it increasingly became evident that a large number of individuals were interested in and could benefit from learning this history. Providing access to a somewhat wider audience was considered.

d. To allow more people to access this history while also addressing the legitimate privacy concerns some writers had raised, a compromise was devised: the production of a "without attribution" version in both digital and print formats that could be more widely shared.

e. In creating this second version, the intent was to address privacy concerns, not to hide authorship.

f. In hindsight, we understand that the plan to create this second version without author attribution did not meet the standard of those who felt their authorship should be readily apparent in all settings and who thought the authorship of all contributors should be disclosed.

4. Implementing a solution that better addresses the diverse concerns of authors.

a. Since the Written History Project began in 2018, alumni volunteers have devoted considerable time and effort to this project and continue to believe that recording, preserving, and now sharing the history of the first cohort of women in Yale College is an important undertaking. Although controversy has arisen over how best to honor the goals of the project, all those involved, including the petition organizers and the project's co-editors, have now agreed on a solution.

b. The agreement worked out with petition organizers during the meeting on March 12 includes the following actions:

- All copies of the “without attribution” version that were printed will be destroyed; no copies have been distributed. The digital file of the “without attribution” version also will be destroyed.
- In preparation for the planned new edition of the essays for wider distribution, the project team will conduct a survey of authors about whether they wish to have their essays included with names (and images if applicable), have their stories included without their names, or have their stories removed from the revised collection.
- A new, publicly accessible digital version of the book with authors' names (subject to requests communicated via the survey) will be published with a link on the YAA website. The YAA will work with the Manuscripts & Archives division of Sterling Memorial Library to arrange a permanent home for the link. Anyone who wishes will be able to access this link and the revised collection of essays.
- The YAA will provide funding to print a limited number of additional soft cover copies of the revised book for those interested in obtaining a copy.
- As initially planned, the original unedited manuscripts of all project essays will be archived in the Manuscript & Archives division of Sterling Memorial Library. Printed copies of the first edition of the project, which contains authors' names, will also be available in the library.

These next steps will see the project through to a successful conclusion.

We are grateful for the time and efforts of those who contributed to this project as authors and to the many volunteers who helped with the preparation of this collection of essays. We offer our heartfelt thanks to you all.