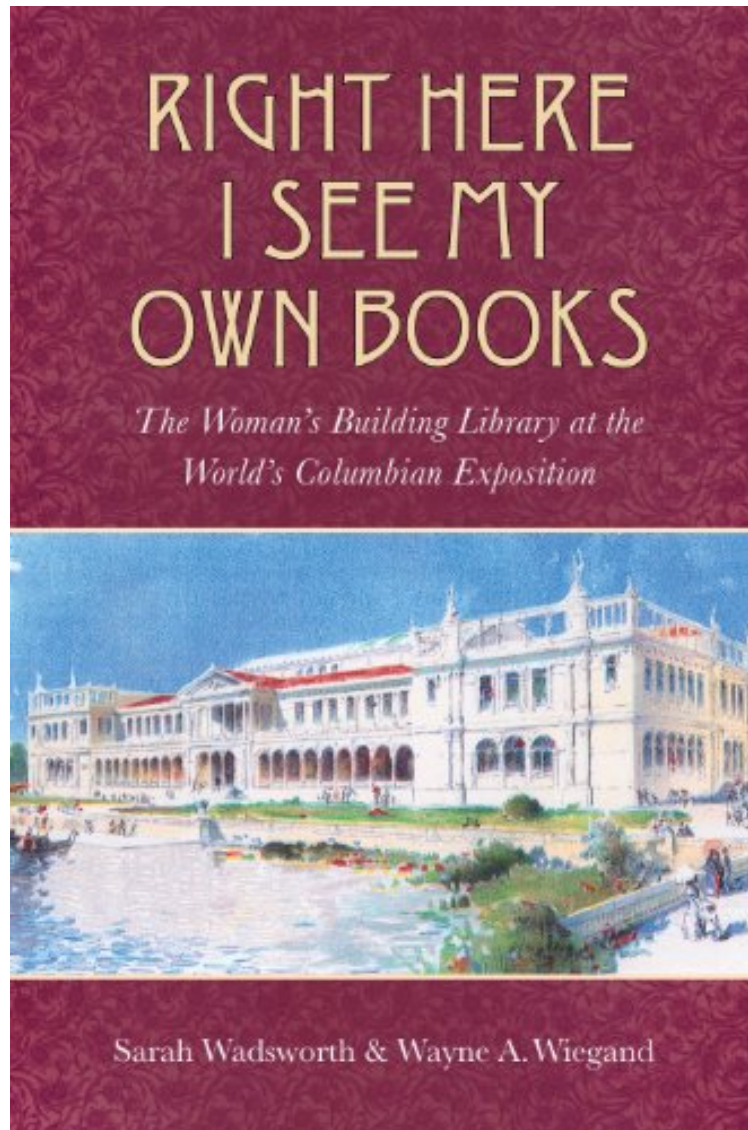


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Right Here I See My Own Books: The Woman's Building Library at the World's Columbian Exposition (Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book)

Sarah Wadsworth, Wayne A. Wiegand
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Sarah Wadsworth, Wayne A. Wiegand : Right Here I See My Own Books: The Woman's Building Library at the World's Columbian Exposition (Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Right Here I See My Own Books: The

Woman's Building Library at the World's Columbian Exposition (Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. "Then I'll Do It Myself" By run with the wind "Right Here I See My Own Books" Very readably and informatively describes what transpired when a petition to grant women a role in the Board of Managers of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition which was to be the largest such Expo ever, was denied. After refused that seat, women, headed by Bertha Honore Palmer, operated "Henny Penny-like with "Then I'll Do It Myself" aspiration, motivation, organization, derring-do and expedience, (also financially soundly)! proceeded to create the magnificent Woman's Building with the Women's Building Library as its showpiece. Their successful execution of the impossible: from architecture, to interior decoration, to overseeing construction of the Woman's Building, then organizing the Library, acquiring a total of 8,259 books from 41 states and 23 countries, exhibiting the books, managing the operation of the Building and the Library is beyond astounding. The knowledge garnered is historical, however its profound relevance to today engenders admiration, frustration, outrage, astonishment, inspiration, motivation and sheer reading enjoyment of the history recorded and especially the take-away information for today's supposedly easier, more connected and complex world. It's hard to imagine dealing with 41 states and 23 countries at early 1890s speed of communication and transportation. I highly recommend "Right Here I See My Own Books" to those interested in well written and researched history, politics, women's history, world expositions, cultural history, the last decade of the 19th century, libraries, books and much, much, more.

On May 1, 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago opened its gates to an expectant public eager to experience firsthand its architectural beauty, technological marvels, and vast array of cultural treasures gathered from all over the world. Among the most popular of the fair's attractions was the Woman's Building, a monumental exhibit hall filled with the products of women's labor including more than 8,000 volumes of writing by women. *Right Here I See My Own Books* examines the progress, content, and significance of this historic first effort to assemble a comprehensive library of women's texts. By weaving together the behind-the-scenes story of the library's formation and the stories between the covers of books on display, Wadsworth and Wiegand firmly situate the Woman's Building Library within the historical context of the 1890s. Interdisciplinary in approach, their book demonstrates how this landmark collection helped consolidate and institutionalize women's writing in conjunction with the burgeoning women's movement and the professionalization of librarianship in late nineteenth-century America. Americans in this period debated a wide range of topics, including women's rights, gender identity, racial politics, nationalism, regionalism, imperialism, and modernity. These debates permeated the cultural climate of the Columbian Exposition. Wadsworth and Wiegand's book illuminates the range and complexity of American women's responses to these issues within a public sphere to which the Woman's Building provided unprecedented access.

"A compelling case study of how women's literature and culture were defined and institutionalized in the progressive era." Susan Belasco, University of Nebraska, Lincoln "The brief but glorious history of the Woman's Building Library is a fascinating story in itself, yet Wadsworth and Wiegand perceive a larger significance within the very pages of the library's books. . . . By analyzing representative books, [they] uncover the "gendered discourses of duty, vocation, and progress" reflected in the library's holdings." *American Libraries Magazine* "Women's issues and general book history holdings will find this a lively and important read." *Midwest Book* "[A] thoughtful examination of a turning point in American society." *Wisconsin Bookwatch* "A lively and important read." *California Bookwatch* "Readers interested in understanding the phenomena of world's fairs through the lens of gender . . . will find this volume indispensable. . . . Ultimately, by illuminating how power and privilege shaped the rather unconventional collection of woman-authored texts at the Woman's Building Library and by providing a detailed overview of the Library's holdings, the authors broaden our understanding of how nineteenth-century women perceived their world, and how they shaped it through their own cultural contributions." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* "Perhaps the most compelling discussions within this study are the ways in which the Exposition in general and the Woman's Building Library in particular attempted to convey 'the image of openness and inclusiveness,' but did so in ways that were 'relentlessly exclusive.' . . . Drawing on works of Toni Morrison, Hazel Carby, and others, this study makes significant contributions to discussion of race and gender within nineteenth-century America. . . . *Right Here I See My Own Books* is a deeply engaging study that makes significant contributions to our understanding of the history of American women's writing, American literary history, and the ways in which libraries both reflect and shape the work in which we live." *Libraries Information History* "The book is a major contribution for its documentation of a heretofore largely unexamined, yet telling aspect of the 1893 Woman's Building and of the Columbian Exposition." *The Journal of American History* About the Author Sarah Wadsworth is associate professor of English at Marquette University and author of *In the Company of Books: Literature and Its "Classes" in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2006). Wayne A. Wiegand is F. William Summers Professor of Library and Information Studies Emeritus at Florida State University and author, most recently, of *Main Street Public Library: Community Places and*

Reading Spaces in the Rural Heartland, 1876-1956.