

Women in the Director's Chair Records 1982-2005

Preliminary Finding Aid

Creator: Women in the Director's Chair

Extent: 1 linear foot (2 boxes)

Language: English

Repository: Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago. Please contact WLArchives@luc.edu regarding use.

Administration Information

Access Restrictions: None

Usage Restrictions: Consult archivist.

Preferred Citation: Identification of item, date, box #, folder #, Women in the Director's Chair Records, Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago.

Provenance: Ramona Curry donated materials to the Women and Leadership Archives on December 18, 2019, and March 25, 2021 (WLA2021.05). Gaylon Emerzian also donated additional materials on March 25, 2021 (WLA2021.05).

Processing Information: Preliminary finding aid and inventory created by Kate Douglas, February 2026.

Separations: None

Administrative History

Founded in 1980 and active until 2005, Women in the Director's Chair (WIDC) was a Chicago-based, international media arts/activist nonprofit organization which exhibited, promoted, and educated about media made by women, girls, and transgender people that express a diversity of cultures, experiences, and issues. The organization was founded by Gaylon Emerzian and Deborah Shames, both award winning directors and filmmakers. These two women along with seven other women volunteers organized a five-day festival, which marked the official formation of the organization.

WIDC sponsored an annual five-day International Film and Video Festival. In March of 1981, the festival premiered as a pioneering venue that celebrated and showcased women's voices, images, and subjectivities. Additionally, from 1990 until 2005, WIDC took selections from the annual festival on the road to cities and towns across the country. The Annual Festival Tour was an important contribution to building awareness of women's independent media since it reached audiences with few opportunities to experience alternative media made by women. Films and videos on the tour traveled to schools, libraries, museums, and cultural centers, often accompanied by a media educator from WIDC. In WIDC's first 20 years, it evolved into a feminist media

center committed to year-round programming and cultural work that organized for progressive social change and critical consciousness through race, class, sexuality, and gender analysis.

WIDC was supported by annual membership dues and donations from outside organizations. Membership of WIDC encompassed a range of professional experience, filmmaking styles, and ethnic backgrounds. The organization distributed a newsletter to members, offered networking opportunities, and held regularly scheduled meetings.

WIDC served as a forum for the discussion and exhibition of works by women media artists and issues which affect them, such as the lack of theatrical and television distribution and exhibition outlets. In addition to the annual festival, the organization offered regular programs throughout the year focusing on artists and their works. In 1982, the incumbent mayor of Chicago, Jane Byrne, issued a proclamation in recognition of WIDC's "Women Directors: A-Z" day-long program, which featured the largest collection of films and videotapes directed by women ever compiled for one showing. Following this event on December 12, the program guide for this screening became a catalog of women's films for use as source material for women's groups, distributors, and schools. Mayor Byrne declared December 12, 1982, to be Women in the Director's Chair Day in Chicago in her proclamation.

In 2005, WIDC issued a statement that the organization was in the process of shutting down due to insurmountable financial challenges. Their website remains online as a digital archive of the organization.

Scope and Content

The Women in the Director's Chair (WIDC) materials span one linear foot and cover the timeframe 1982-2005. The records include a run of *Angles: Women Working in Film & Video*, volumes 1-4, from 1992.

Administrative materials such as correspondence, meeting minutes, and annual reports. In addition, the collection includes promotional materials such as mailout brochures, Women Directors A-Z programs, and posters. This collection also includes the WIDC's International Film and Video Festival materials such as programs and organizing documents. There are also some oversize posters, both rolled and flat. The folders of this collection contain loose materials and are organized and labeled to identify who donated items specifically.

Subjects:

Chicago, IL

Filmmakers

Video

Box	Folder	Title	Dates
1	1	[correspondence and planning material] [items from Ramona Curry]	
1	2	[newspaper articles and reviews about WIDC] [items from Ramona Curry]	
1	3	[9 th -17 th Annual International Film and Video Festivals, WIDC] [items from Ramona Curry]	
1	4	[Annual International Film and Video Festival and Women Directors A-Z booklets] [items from Ramona Curry]	
1	5	[11 th -23 rd Annual International Film and Video Festival programs] [items from Gretchen Elsner-Sommer]	
1	6	[small WIDC programs] [items from Gretchen Elsner-Sommer]	

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1	7	[<i>Angles: Women Working in Film and Video</i> issues] [items from Gretchen Elsner-Sommer]	
1	8	[WIDC event programs and miscellaneous administrative material] [items from Gretchen Elsner-Sommer]	
2	1	Posters [6 total: 3 are rolled, 3 flat]	