

Women in the GPO Workforce

as seen in the GPO Photograph Collection

GPO History Talk

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Women in the GPO Workforce

When we recently posted a photo of the bindery in about 1930, a viewer wrote, **“Interesting that there are no women in this photo; secretaries only at the time I would guess.”** A wrong guess, in fact.

Women in the GPO Workforce

There were probably relatively few female secretaries and clerks at that time, but many women at GPO. But let's back up . . .

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Among the 350 employees who came from the Cornelius Wendell shop to become GPO, half were women.

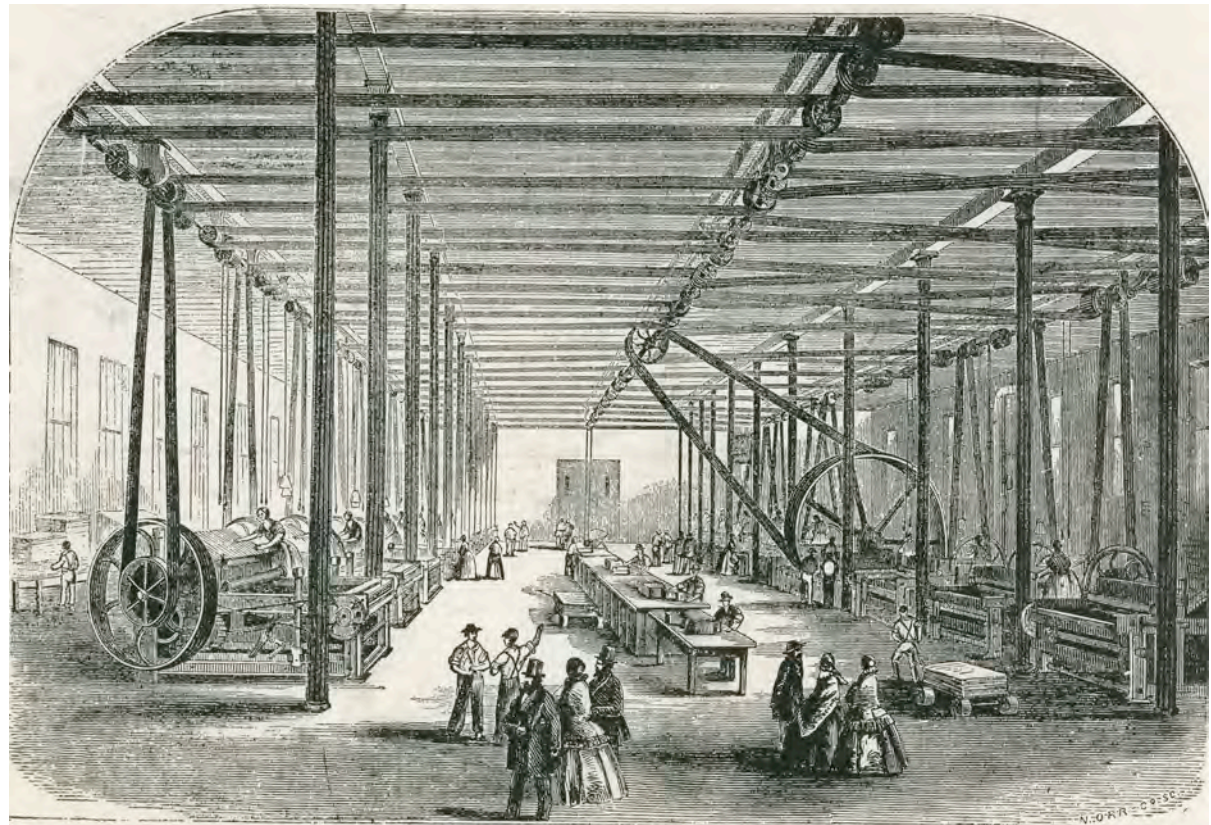
Most were probably in the bindery, but . . .



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. . . not all.

Women were employed as press feeders. Look closely at the engraving. This would have been considered a step below pressmen and compositors, but was nevertheless a job that required skill. Unfortunately it paid less.



Women in the GPO Workforce

This early photograph (probably around 1900) shows women in the job section as press feeders.



Women in the GPO Workforce

And well into the
20th century (at
GPO's branch at the
Library of Congress)



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The bindery also remained a significant employer of women



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And it was in the bindery that the landmark 1973 class action case originated, in which **Dorothy Thompson** and over 300 other women bindery workers argued that they were systematically paid less for doing equivalent work to men. It was the largest gender bias settlement to that time, and it opened the door to equality of pay at GPO and elsewhere



Women in the GPO Workforce

Dorothy Thompson
said:

“For years they told me the big industrial sewing machines I operate were woman’s work. But I knew all along I was doing the same work as men, and not getting paid the same.”



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There were other pioneers.

In 1895 the first Superintendent of Documents, Francis Asbury Crandall, hired a young librarian from Los Angeles to be the first librarian in the newly created Public Documents Division.



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Adelaide Hasse was the living definition of the turn of the century “new woman” – educated, ambitious, and passionate about her career in a growing new profession. Her time at GPO was brief, but she was the vanguard of a host of female professionals in non-printing occupations, and librarians specifically, of which there have been hundreds.



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Her particular legacy includes the magnificent Public Documents Library, which until it was disbanded in the 1970s, held nearly 2 million documents. She also created the basis of the Superintendent of Documents classification, which remains in wide use today.



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Meanwhile women's inroads elsewhere were more sporadic.

Apprenticeship was expanded in the 1920s and 30s under Public Printers George Carter and Augustus Giegengack. Women weren't specifically excluded, but it wasn't until 1931 that two began the program, Blanche Boisvert and Beulah Fairell.

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Four women entered in the class of 1940, including Mary King

and Elinore Nugent



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World War II suspended apprentice training, and when it began again women were not recruited until 1970.



Connie Young, GPO's first female apprentice since 1940, operates a monotype keyboard as her mother, Mrs. Mary Young, a 26-year DSO employee, watches her.

GPO's Apprentice Classes Add "Feminine Touch"

Until recently, many women were hesitant to compete equally for positions in Government with their male counterparts. Although GPO's apprentice program has always been open to all qualified people, no woman has completed the program since 1940. This 30-year tradition is about to change.

Constance Young came to the Office in 1967 as an apprentice. Connie's mother, Mrs. Mary Young, started working at GPO 28 years ago during World War II. An Offset Press Operator at the Departmental Service Office, Mrs. Young speaks proudly of having her daughter work at GPO. "Connie is almost a perfectionist. She's always been a hard worker. You don't often hear of daughters following in their mother's footsteps, but I'm glad Connie is."

Connie didn't always want to work at GPO. After graduating from Eastern High School in Washington, she entered D.C. Teachers College with plans of becoming a math teacher. Unhappy with the subjects she was required to take, Connie decided to leave.

Like most young people she wasn't sure where to head next, and her mother encouraged her to take the apprentice test.

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Janice Eason Heads Office Women's Program

Mrs. Janice Eason, Placement Technician at the Departmental Service Office, has been appointed coordinator for the Federal Women's Program at GPO by the Public Printer.

An employee of the Office for 28 years, Mrs. Eason has worked directly with employee opportunity since 1945. Recently, she became one of GPO's seven Equal Employment Opportunity Considerers.

This year the Labor Department celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Government's Women's Program. Opening its doors to comment from women's coordi-

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Will You Receive An Incentive Award?

By November 1, all supervisors will have submitted their nominees for this year's Special Achievement and Outstanding Performance awards.

Shortly before the Christmas holiday, those employees who are selected for these awards will be presented their certificates and checks. Last year 604 GPO employees received these awards.

The majority of awards given are Special Achievement Awards. Supervisors are continually evaluating their employees throughout the year, from October 1 through September 30. If an employee does a superior performance in the most important aspects of his job for at least 6 accumulative months during the year, he may be nominated for this award. His supervisor will note specific results due to his performance and whether he turns out more work than good employees doing similar jobs.

The Special Achievement award is based on an employee's salary. If you are paid on the basis of the General Schedule Grade, this scale is used:

Grades	Range of Award
1-4	\$100-150
5-8	150-200
9-11	200-250
12-13	250-300
14-18	300-350

If you have an hourly rate position, your base salary is multiplied by 2080 to get your yearly salary. Your award is based on the grade where the first step is closest to this annual salary. And, if you have a single-rate annual position, your award is determined by comparing your salary with the first step of each General Schedule grade.

The Outstanding Performance awards are just that, a cash award given to only the most outstanding employee. Last year, only six people received these awards which are based on 4 percent of the employee's base pay. A supervisor nominates an employee who has performed all aspects of his job in an exceptional manner for an entire year.

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Women made other forays into formerly all-male areas in the 1970s & 80s:

Carpenter Shop

Police

Messengers



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The first female top-level manager was Lois Schutte who became Director of Personnel in the 1980s

The first female Superintendent of Documents was Judy Russell in 2001

The first female Acting Public Printer is Davita Vance Cooks

