An introduction to the New Woman's Survival Catalog, a rather overlooked feminist publication of the early 1970s, and an unexpected offshoot of the counterculture and DIY publishing movement that sprung from the release of the Whole Earth Catalog in 1968. Of particular interest here is how the New Woman's Survival Catalog reflects on its own making and documents it in its pages—suggesting the reader to take matters into her own hands—which Loraine Furter highlights with a selection of reproductions from the book.

Furter's discussion of the New Woman's Survival Catalog is part of her ongoing research project, Speaking Volumes, that deals with feminist publishing in the arts, and more broadly as a form of activism. During the sessions of the Summer University, Furter insisted that the history of artists' books should be particularly attentive to initiatives by women, minorities, underrepresented and unrecognized artists, and shouldn't replicate the same bias, and the same hierarchies, as art history, since, as she puts it: "The common narrative includes the notion that artists’ books provide an alternative. The question to add, at this point: an alternative for whom?"
As science fiction author Joanna Russ writes in her non-fiction book *How to Suppress Women’s Writing*, women have always been, in many ways, excluded from the position of writers and authors:

_She didn’t write it. But it’s clear she did the deed… She wrote it, but she shouldn’t have. (It’s political, sexual, masculine, feminist.) She wrote it, but look what she wrote about…*

The same can be said for the positions of book makers, designers and typographers—these crafts excluded women’s hands, deemed too fragile, tied to the domestic space and its activities. Rare exceptions concerned the activity of binding, and that of sorting and cleaning lead characters.

In the 1970’s—at the same moment as the artists’ books were invested as alternative spaces to galleries—groups of women got together to open spaces and reclaim the tools for printed production, that were for so long kept away from their hands. Making books was then not only a question of status, but it implied real questions of space: printing presses required much bigger means in terms of space, training, and money then. In the feminist print workshops of the 1970’s, women owned the space, ran the presses, and everybody knew how to operate each machine, with a principle of turnover, to avoid both the alienation coming with repetitive tasks and the exclusivity of specific knowledge that can install power imbalances in the distribution of tasks. At the time, the appropriation of the means of production was both documented and performed by a collective of women who published the *New Woman’s Survival Catalog*.

The *New Woman’s Survival Catalog*, a large red offset-printed publication, was produced in 1973, at a moment when the second wave of feminism in the United States was accompanied by the development of new structures: women-run spaces and publishing initiatives which spread, flourished, and grew throughout the 1970’s.

The *New Woman’s Survival Catalog*, the subtitle of which is, “a woman-made book,” documents and lists many women-initiated spaces and projects, all over the United States. The different projects, groups, tools and methods documented are spread throughout the nine chapters of the book: “communications, art, self-health, children, learning, self-defense, work and money, getting justice and building the movement.”

The beginning and the end of the book address more specifically the act of publishing.

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2 “Women, where employed at all, were relegated to certain low-paying jobs considered best suited for the weaker sex, such as dressing (polishing imperfections) from metal type, folding printed sheets, and sewing bindings.” Rebecca Warren Davidson, *Unseen Hands, Women Printers, Binders & Book Designers*, Princeton: Princeton University Library, 2003. Accessible online at http://libweb2.princeton.edu/rbsc2/ga/unseenhands/printers/walltxt.html.


The publication starts with a whole chapter on feminist printing presses, book making schools and workshops, and publishing houses: this chapter includes hybrid forms of making things public, like public speaking (“speakers bureau”) and radios. A chapter on the arts immediately follows, which places creation as a prominent feminist tool. At the end of the book, the section “Making the Book” documents the process of making the New Woman’s Survival Catalog, in an almost open source, sharing, and DIY spirit.

This documentation is done through a series of annotated pictures of its makers in action, which gives an embodied perspective to the act of publishing, from research to paste-up. Even if we can see here that the team of the catalog is a group of six white women, throughout the catalog there is a strong highlight of different voices and intersectional representations—questions of race, sexual orientation, class, are present in the catalog, both in the projects mentioned and in the visuals.

The form of the book is inspired by another counter-culture publication of the time, the Whole Earth Catalog (1968–1972), itself inspired by mail-order commercial catalogs like the Sears Roebuck Catalog (1888–1993). The first mail-order catalogs—a tradition that dates from the mid-nineteenth century—showed a selection of merchandise for sale, with ordering instructions, for businesses and households. Known as “the Consumers’ Bible,” the Sears, Roebuck and Company catalog of 1918 for instance advertised, “The Kind of Beautiful Tableware that Every Woman Appreciates.” The Whole Earth Catalog appropriated its big format, Windsor typeface and signature layout, bringing together on one page many different items, this time to present alternative tools, initiatives and products to build your own living structures, organize in community, grow your food... But the Whole Earth Catalog certainly did not cover the whole Earth, not even the whole United States alternative world: initiatives from the women’s movement, or more generally representations of women, are notably lacking. In that sense, the New Woman’s Survival Catalog both refers to the “counter-culture Bible” and appropriates codes that were present in the commercial mail-order catalogs, dedicated to the domestic space that women were so closely tied to. The two titles indeed refer to different experiences of life: one where the whole world is open and accessible and the other where you first have to fight for your own survival.

The Whole Earth Catalog gained more visibility recently, notably after the exhibition Access to Tools: Publications from the Whole Earth Catalog.

5 The chapter lists more than 100 feminist publishing structures, radios, bookstores, libraries and newsletters.

6 It is something that we find in other feminist publications, like the amazing Words in Our Pockets — The Feminist Writers Guild Handbook on How To Gain Power, Get Published and Get Paid, edited by Celeste West (Paradise: Dustbooks, 1985), that reveals the whole economy of the book, as well as cooking recipes, and which woman did the typesetting of. In one of the pictures of the making-of, we can see a “women working” sign by the Chicago Graphics Collective.

(1968–1974) at MoMA in 2011, (an exhibition that doesn’t mention the New Woman’s Survival Catalog), and it was already brought up in the smaller-scale yet influential publication DotDotDot (issue 8 in 2004 and issue 9 in 2005). By contrast, though the New Woman’s Survival Catalog sold over 100,000 copies and made it into the New York Times best-sellers list, today it is very hard to find documentation about it. Even the book itself is hard to find, except in second-hand bookstores in the United States.

On the Internet I found two press reviews of 1974 and 1975, and only a few blogs that mention it.

A precious source of information is an interview with the editors of the book, filmed by Jerri Allyn in 2010. In this interview we learn that Kirsten Grimstad, a Columbia University and former Barnard College student, was asked by the Barnard College to make a bibliography of women studies for their new Women’s Center. Rather than doing a traditional scholarly bibliography, the director of the Women’s Center Catherine Stimpson suggested that the project should be “infused with women’s activism.”

Kirsten Grimstad thus built up this bibliography, adding references of women’s groups all over the country, like health centers, anti-rape groups, and other activist groups. Susan Rennie, another former Barnard student who was in the executive committee of the Women’s Center, got interested in the project and proposed to make it a book, inspired by the Whole Earth Catalog, to give visibility to all the local women-run projects in the country, which didn’t have a wider-scale visibility at the time.

Susan Rennie was also a student at Columbia University, and “a big deal,” as she was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. It was a “token woman” role, as she was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. It was a “token woman” role, as she was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. It was a “token woman” role, as she was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. It was a “token woman” role, as she was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. It was a “token woman” role, as she was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. It was a “token woman” role, as she was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. It was a “token woman” role, as she was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. It was a “token woman” role, as she was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. It was a “token woman” role, as she was the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. 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At a time when the Internet did not exist, and access to information implied different procedures
and tools than today, it is hard to imagine the impact
of these 100,000 catalogs. They must have allowed
countless women to connect to a thriving subculture.

The following pages are re-sized facsimiles of
pages from the *New Woman's Survival Catalog.*
The first one is the cover of the catalog, with its
recognizable title, typeset in Windsor. The following
full-page image of a printshop can be found
at the very beginning of the catalog, on page 8,
just after the introduction, opening the first section,
“Communications.” We then jump to pages 216–217,
in the section “Making the Book,” that documents
the editorial process of the publication and the
tools that Ruth Bayard Smith, Kirsten Grimstad,
Leslie Korda Krims, Peggy Lyons, Fanette Pollack
and Susan Rennie used to conceive, research,
write, photograph, design, typeset and paste-up
the *Catalog.*

I will now let the documents speak for
themselves.
Making the Book

The book was conceived, researched, written, photo-foiled, designed, typeset, and printed by six women in a loft over five months.

April—Karen and Susan do preliminary research.

May 13—Karen and Susan begin a 12,000 mile trip around the country to report on projects and groups that have been started by women. This trip, which is funded by the Mary Kay Foundation, will end in New York City.

June 1—Susan and Karen return, and typing of the manuscript begins.
The book was, therefore, made under terrific pressure. We had three reasons for moving so fast. To begin with, much of the material, in its own nature, ages rapidly. We wanted this information out, into the hands of those who could use it and distribute it. We also wanted to give the book an audience as large as we could. If we could get it into the hands of all the readers in time for the Christmas season, it would have the best chance to be read before the holiday season. Finally, it could be used to attract attention to the book. A book with a large enough audience could be used to raise interest in the book, which could then be used to attract more readers.

To be a Christmas book, the Calendar had to be finished by the beginning of December—soon, in fact, the calendar was nearly finished. We wanted to have it ready by Thanksgiving. The background was to encourage a multi-group planning to put out a similar type of book—all-inclusive.