

WEF Recipient: Fire Erowid

RECEIVED the Women's Entheogen Fund (WEF) award in both 2004 and 2006. I am pleased to have received these awards, which supported my continuing work at Erowid as a psychedelic librarian—writing, collecting, sorting, archiving, and publishing information about psychoactive plants and chemicals as a contribution to the public record on these powerful materials.

I was raised with the deep expectation that I could accomplish anything and compete or contribute with the best in any field, whether male or female. My mother has a Ph.D. in statistics, an accomplishment that was quite rare for a woman in the mid-1960s. My B.A. in humanities and my undergraduate thesis were both related to women's studies (in a historical context) and I've continued to incorporate this part of my history into my work by asserting gender equality and balance in everything that I do.

This can be an interesting challenge in the world of psychoactive studies, which is no more immune to assumptions about gender than are other fields. Erowid often receives letters addressed simply to Dear Gentlemen, highlighting the common assumption that men must be in charge. Despite the fact that I have been the Director of the Erowid project since its inception, many people automatically assume that Earth (my partner) is the authority because he is male. For example, he is more often asked to speak at conferences or to the media than I. We have responded to this particular bias by always presenting together at conferences, revealing how we work as a team. We also politely draw attention to and correct other types of gender biases whenever they appear.

My work on Erowid is supported entirely by donations and grants such as the WEF award. In 2004, this work included the redesign of Erowid to implement a new style and format with better navigation and improved search functionality. Another large project undertaken that year involved significant expansion of the law vaults. Nearly 100 new law pages were added, making comprehensive legal information about a wide variety of psychoactive materials more available and consistent. The Erowid library and book list also saw significant expansion with the addition of information about more than 100 titles. My hope is that cataloging information about these books will help pull together some of the important, yet more difficult-to-find, pre-internet knowledge about psychoactives, both by creating a reference library for use in our work as well as advertising the existence of these printed source materials.

The WEF award also supported work on a broad array of articles and information published on Erowid. This includes the tracking and addition of information about new substances such as 3C-P, 5-MeO-DALT, TMA-2, 4-HO-DIPT, 2C-T-21, Arundo donax and many more. Though they are too numerous to name here, new articles include a "U.S. Drug Control Timeline" and "The Spirits of Maguey," both published in *Erowid Extracts*.

As has been the goal of the Erowid project from the beginning, we will continue to balance the information we present, between technical and artistic, scientific and spiritual, objective and subjective, in an attempt to provide equal voice to a wide variety of viewpoints, values, beliefs, and thoughts. •