

WOMEN

Continued from B1

In a do-or-die fund-raiser Sunday, the store's supporters congratulated themselves on how far they've come since Sisterhood's 1972 opening—and reminded themselves how far they have yet to go to keep women's issues on the bookshelves and in the public's mind.

The hundred-plus friends and patrons of Sisterhood who gathered at the downtown Los Angeles storefront studio of neon artist Lili Lakich bought \$50 or \$100 tickets to keep the bookstore going, and to honor some marquee-name writers whose works have stocked Sisterhood's shelves, among them Lily Tomlin, Carolyn See and Wanda Coleman.

More than anything else, supporters said, what makes Sisterhood so important is the sense of community it fosters.

So, true to form, before the readings and speeches began, the group—mostly women—found themselves doing what the bookstore's patrons have done for years: hooking up with long-lost friends, discovering new writings and ideas about women, and, now, sharing how-tos for finding women's sites on the Internet.

There were hugs from Councilwoman Jackie Goldberg—who arranged for the honorees to receive a certificate from the Los Angeles City Council—and the accompaniment of the Ladies Choice String



LAWRENCE K. HO / Los Angeles Times

Writer Sharon Stricker welcomes guests to the fund-raiser for Sisterhood Bookstore on Sunday.

Quartet.

"Sisterhood—there's not many places like it," said Karen Goldberg, a 38-year-old supporter from Redondo Beach. "It's like stepping back in time."

Back in time—a half-dozen years ago—the bookstore was doing well. But its profits began to sink along with the economy in the first part of this decade. And when Borders, a 43,000-square-foot bookstore, moved in across the street in Westwood more than a year ago, the former sisters-in-law who are also founders and owners of Sisterhood braced for the worst.

Their profits, they said, have been declining steadily since.

Fans reject suggestions that Sis-

terhood—like other independent bookstores—was a victim of its own success, that its readers can now find the same feminist literature in the chain stores.

"I have nothing against the large bookstores," said Councilwoman Goldberg. "It's just not in [the chain stores'] economic interest to carry obscure, new authors or obscure presses, and we need that. It nourishes the soul."

As a sample, a variety of books by the fund-raiser's featured writers were fanned out on a table in the studio, around the corner from a neon wall sculpture of a woman's torso beneath a flashing "vacancy-no vacancy" sign.

By most accounts, the fund-

raiser was a double success, a much-needed morale-booster and an economic boon. Even before the party began, Wallace said, organizers had already met their initial goal of \$10,000. Still to be tallied were proceeds from book sales and an auction of T-shirts, baskets of women's books and other items, including journals and a framed k.d. lang collage.

Upon entering, each attendee was given a stack of fliers—the real literature of any activist event. One bright-pink paper beat the drum for still more support.

"For twenty-two years, Sisterhood Bookstore has been taking a stand," one flier declared. "Now we are asking you to stand with us."



Photos by LAWRENCE K. HO / Los Angeles Times

Actress and writer Lily Tomlin was one of the featured guests at Sunday's fund-raiser for Sisterhood Bookstore.

Shelf-Help

■ **Feminism:** Fund-raiser for Sisterhood Bookstore tries to keep alive a tradition of making literature about women's issues accessible to the public.

By ABIGAIL GOLDMAN
TIMES STAFF WRITER

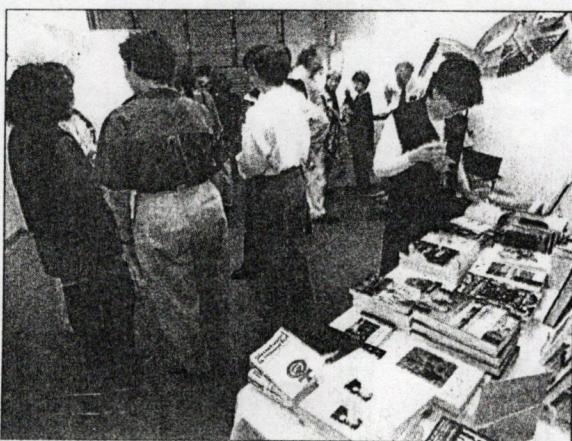
The women who frequent the Sisterhood Bookstore consider it a sad commentary on the times that the latest mention in the news of the city's oldest women's bookstore came last year, when anti-feminist disc jockey Howard Stern showed up at a book megastore across the street, and thousands of his raucous, mostly male fans mobbed the place.

Twenty years ago, the store made news in its own right, as part of a swelling social transformation that would come to be known as the Women's Movement. The store, its owners, its customers and its writers provided a forum for themselves and the women who were making changes in their lives and across the nation.

"With the times, our battles change," said bookstore co-owner Adele Wallace—whose last appearance in the print media was when a Stern fan marched behind her with a sign urging women to bare their breasts.

"One year it's affirmative action, the next year it's women's choice—but whatever it is, we have to continue to be there to take a stand."

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Says Adele Wallace, above, the co-owner of Sisterhood Bookstore: "We have to continue to be there to take a stand." The fund-raiser, held at the studio of a neon artist, had books on display for guests to examine.