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## On Expressing Opinions

A lot of people seem to have the idea that Friends of Lulu was started just to stop the Bad Girl trend and to stop the companies that hire scantily clad female models at their booths. Nope. Friends of Lulu was started to give women a greater voice in the comics industry, to create greater diversity for female readers, and to work toward more opportunities for female creators. I used the word "female" in the previous sentence, but I honestly believe that our goals benefit everyone. We are founded on the idea of promoting what is positive instead of attacking what is negative. FoL is a member-driven organization, and as such it takes no stand on Bad Girl books. In fact, quite a few Bad Girl books ranked high in our survey of female comics readers, and some of our members work on these books.

I'm not writing this to argue the merits of comics featuring scantily clad women or men. In the long run, Bad Girl books are a trend, and as such they're going to play out, just like every other trend. It's my own personal decision whether or not to buy any book.

What I want to address here is personal choice. When I'm not Heidi MacDonald, FoL board member, I'm Heidi MacDonald, private citizen. I'm on the record as opposing censorship on every level, but that doesn't mean that I can't be offended. It's hard not to be alarmed when I open a distributor's catalog and see page after page of women in demeaning, badly drawn poses (and men in demeaning poses, too!). I don't know whether to laugh or cry when someone comes up to me at a convention and tells me that they are doing a book with a "strong female char-

acter," and then shows me a book where this strong character loses her clothes at every opportunity and every other panel shows her on all fours with her butt in the air. It's offensive mostly because it's bad comics.

Nevertheless, when something offends me, it offends ME, Heidi MacDonald, comic book reader. It's not an "official" FoL policy. With over 300 opinionated—sometimes very opinionated!—members, FoL hits every hue of the political spectrum, and these members aren't always going to agree with each other. Similarly, just because someone is a member of FoL, it doesn't mean that she or he "speaks" for FoL.

I know from private conversations that many FoL members are disturbed by the sheer amount of titillating material out



there. But it's not FoL policy to go on a crusade against these books. I think it is FoL policy, however, to encourage our members to vocalize their opinions, whatever they may be.

The bottom line is that as long as we've got free speech, we need to use it. If

you've joined Friends of Lulu, it shows that you care enough to spend \$25 to work toward our goals. I know most Luluites also care enough to spend 32 cents to mail a letter expressing their feelings. If you see something that offends or upsets you, express your opinion. If you see something that you love under attack, defend it. Write to *Lulu's Clubhouse*. Write to *CBG* or *TCJ*. Send money to the CBLDF. Or just speak up. The great thing about free speech is that it really is free, in every sense of the word.

—Heidi MacDonald

P.S.: If the news in this issue seems briefer than usual, it's because we're now on a quarterly schedule. Yay! Editors Jackie Estrada and myself will be gathering material for the next issue on the summer convention circuit; that issue will be a big summer con wrap-up, so be sure to give us your news and ideas.

## Retailer Survey Results

by Cheryl Harris

Last year, we conducted a survey among retailers at the May Capital City Trade Show and the July San Diego Comic Book Expo, and in the December issue of *Comics Retailer*. One hundred twenty-three retailers responded from all over the U.S., Canada, and Europe. Twenty-eight stores were small in size, fifty-eight medium, and twenty-three large (fourteen did not give their size).

On average, female customers made up 13.41% of the retailers' total clientele (the actual percentages listed ranged from 1% to 75%). The average percentage did not vary much by size

(continued on page 5)