

AT: Welcome to the Infinite Women podcast. I'm your host, Allison Tyra, and today I'm joined by Thera Webb, Women at MIT Project Archivist with the MIT Libraries Department of Distinctive Collections, to talk about Women at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Now, unlike most American universities of the 1800s, MIT accepted women within its first few years and didn't segregate them into a different ladies college like Harvard's Radcliffe College.

TW: That's true. MIT never specifically started out as a co-ed or single-sex college. Their language was pretty ambiguous as to students. I mean, they referred to students as their men, but there wasn't anything stating that women weren't allowed to enroll. MIT was founded in 1865, and at the same time, the faculty at MIT was teaching at the Lowell Institute, which was essentially a free college in Lowell, Massachusetts. There were a number of women taking classes there, especially in chemistry and biology. And those classes got so packed to the gills that over a couple of years, there were too many women and they had to stop holding classes. And about that time, a couple of women had contacted MIT to inquire about whether or not they were open to taking women. These were sort of informal inquiries, nobody had specifically applied until Ellen Henrietta Swallow, later known as Ellen Swallow Richards, sent an official letter asking to be admitted. She had just finished a bachelor's degree at Vassar and was interested in completing graduate studies at MIT.

At that time, universities didn't quite function the same way. And so she basically got a second bachelor's in science from MIT and then wasn't allowed to get her PhD because they didn't want the first person to get a PhD in chemistry at the university to be a woman. In fact, despite their language about being inclusive and not specifically ruling out women when Ellen was admitted to the school, she was admitted as a special student so she wasn't on the books because it was considered an experiment to have her enroll. And later Ellen noted in a letter to a friend that if she'd known that she'd been accepted as a special student, she didn't have to pay at the time, and she thought it was a sign of good faith in her. But if she'd known that she was being accepted with this sort of plausible deniability, she would never have accepted her position at MIT as a student.

So they were open-minded but sort of open-minded for the time and like not what we might consider open-minded. There's some stories that I've encountered in oral histories we have with some of the women who attended school after Ellen stating that before there were women's dressing rooms, they had to take some other classes in like the coatroom of a laboratory or they were pretty distinctly left out of activities that would have helped them learn more. This was particularly prevalent in any classes that required lab work. So doing hands-on experimentation. At that time, laboratory work was still a pretty new idea. It was called the Russian method. And a lot of the experiments in learning that students were doing are experiments that we probably did in like chemistry class, our sophomore year of high school. But because there was no changing room for women, women weren't allowed to be full students in chemistry or biology until later. So there were plenty of women in like the school of architecture, doing some engineering work, but anything that involved potentially getting messy, they weren't allowed to be official students in those classes. And so in 1876, Ellen and Professor John Ordway and a couple of other chemistry professors had been talking to the Women's Education Association in Boston, which was a group that was providing educational opportunities for women sort of in various fields. And they had agreed that they would co-fund a lab space for women that included a changing room for them. And so that's why we have the Women's Laboratory that was run out of MIT from 1876 to 1883. The reason it closed in 1883 is because they built a new building that had facilities for women. And so they were finally allowed to go into a regular class with men. But the Women's Laboratory was sort of this amazing opportunity because unlike other MIT labs where you were either enrolled as a special student or as a conventionally matriculated student, the Women's Lab was also open to area teachers who wanted to learn more about the topics that they were teaching. There were like weekend and evening classes that were held. And each woman had sort of a self-directed study, so it was an independent study where if you were really interested in learning about, say, mordants and dyeing fabric, then that's what you concentrated on. And you learned about the chemistry of that. You examined things with microscopes. If you were interested in water safety, you did pond sampling and examined things and did experiments that way. And so it was really this sort

of just like free-for-all lab where people could learn exactly what they were interested in pursuing.

AT: And so Ellen Swallow Richards also was an instructor in chemistry and mineralogy at the Women's Lab until it closed in 1883. And then she became an instructor in sanitary chemistry. And I freely admit, I don't know what sanitary - you would hope all chemistry is sanitary.

TW: Firstly, she was an unpaid instructor in the Women's Laboratory. She herself did most of the fundraising to get alumni and interested rich parties in the Boston area to fund the Women's Laboratory. It wasn't until the laboratory closed that she was officially hired by MIT as what we would consider an adjunct professor. And that was when she got a salary. It was a mission for her to increase access to scientific education for women. Sanitary chemistry, at the time, it was the term that was used for what was later considered home economics, which we now think of as bacteriology and doing things like testing food for purity, identifying lead in sugar. She definitely did a lot of work with water purity. She did this massive survey of all of the bodies of water in Massachusetts and measured their chlorine levels and arsenic levels. She was also interested in, at that time, there were all these crazy colors that people were using. And it turns out they were filled with arsenic because it was green and it was going to kill you. And so her work involved sort of identifying when there might be poisons and food you might give to a baby, or learning about germs. That was still a time where there was like the miasma theory of how you got sick because you slept with a window that was open. And so doing a lot of investigations into things that we now think of as just like obvious common sense, like, no, you don't eat food that hasn't been refrigerated for a week. But like at that point, it wasn't that the food was unrefrigerated. It was that there was something else going on, like rats were poisoning it or something. So it was a lot of like what we take for granted now was still being discovered and thought about.

AT: Okay, so let's go back to the part where she worked unpaid from a school that refused to give her a PhD for seven years because we were talking about 1876 is when the Women's Laboratory opened and then it closed in 1883. So seven years, who is paying for her? Because it is always interesting to me how often you find these stories where a woman was only able to succeed because they had a supportive husband, supportive parents and supportive people with money.

TW: She married her husband, Robert Hallowell Richards in 1875. She had had him as an instructor when she was at MIT and they had hit it off. But he didn't officially ask to begin courting her until after she had graduated. There's a note in his diary of like her name and address. And when he like started talking to her, he'd been faculty when she was attending. And there's also a list somewhere in his papers of the pros and cons of coeducation that he wrote up about the time that she'd applied that included like, an equal exchange of ideas and like all these great things and then on the cons was sort of like "distraction." Now, I don't know a lot about their relationship, but based on what I've read, I like him. He did end up after she died marrying someone who was much younger than him, which is not great, but was sort of the style of the time. But he supported her throughout this, he paid for her as she was doing this passion project at MIT. They also would allow women students to come and live with them. They never had children. They had what seems like a very nice life where they went on like geological expeditions together. And we have these books with photos of them like wandering around the woods when they were in their 50s. And it seems like a very nice, like he genuinely respected her mind and helped support her. His friend was the person who sort of like officially ran the Women's Laboratory. And so they were very close. And I think that he supported her as much as a man could at the time.

AT: And another issue that comes up a lot of times in university settings among other places that I've noticed is nepotism rules. So they would have rules about if you're married, only one of you can be a professor, even if they're in different departments, even if there's no reason to think that this person could influence this other person's career. And generally speaking, it was the the woman who lost out on, "okay, well, you have to be an

unpaid lab assistant, because that's the only, that's the highest level you're allowed to have because your husband works here." I don't think I've really seen many instances of the men losing out because of nepotism rules. But it is nice to see that that didn't impact her. And I don't know if MIT ever had those rules.

There have been obviously quite a lot of women at MIT over the years, so we're not going to get into every single one of them. But I did also want to highlight Katherine Dexter McCormick, who was a suffragist and a philanthropist. She funded most of the research to develop the first birth control pill. But before that, she was also a student at MIT.

TW: That's correct. She was a student at MIT. She also, my understanding is that she also did some of the, like, biological research for birth control. And I think sometimes she's described in a way where you think of her as a philanthropist, but she was also an activist and a scientist. She did, I mean, she's a fascinating person, and I think you could probably do multiple podcast episodes just about her and her using her wealth for good. She smuggled diaphragms into the country, sewn into her dresses when she went to Europe. She's really a pretty amazing person. And we have a collection of Katherine Dexter McCormick's papers at MIT. I was looking through them the other day, actually. We have, as well as her will and some correspondence, we have a large number of her student notebooks from classes that she took in the 1890s, mostly. And those are really cool because, as well as having student notes, she was very studious. She took much better notes than most of the student notes that I've come across in my time. Interspersed in the notebooks are pamphlets about women's suffrage. And I think it's such a cool indication of the multi-level person that she was, that it wasn't just science and it wasn't just suffrage, it was this combination of both happening at the same time. Later, she inherited a large amount of money from her husband who died fairly early, suffered from mental illness. She was essentially living as a widow while he was in a sanitarium.

She donated money to fund the first women's dorm at MIT. Before McCormick Hall, which was named after her husband, was developed at MIT in 1963, women's students didn't have any housing on campus. Originally, the earliest women's students had a women's dorm across the river in Boston and they walked across the bridge to get to school. Shockingly, a lot of those women didn't complete their degrees because it was like a physical barrier to them getting to class and working. And they either had to be able to afford to take a trolley, take a cab or walk, as well as paying to live in a dorm that was, like two or three miles away from campus, which is incredibly annoying. So she funded this dorm for women's students. In 1963, the dorm filled up sort of immediately. And so then in 1967, she funded a second dorm. She really cared about women's access to education. These dorms were not just like the dorms you or I lived in. They had living rooms, tea rooms, dining rooms, a piano room, date rooms, which I don't know what that means. But that's what the McCormick Hall design calls them.

AT: I would assume that it was a question of, they required supervision if they were going to have male company. So I wouldn't be surprised if it was something like that's the only room that men are allowed to be in.

TW: Yeah, that's a great point. That's probably what it is then. It was really like a full mini city for these women that provided sort of everything that they would need. Because aside from McCormick Hall, prior to that, there were like two rooms specifically for women students at MIT. There was the Margaret Cheney room, which was named after one of the earliest students who was a student at the Women's Lab who died during her time as a chemistry student. She'd actually worked really closely with Ellen Swallow Richards. They published a paper together. And people fundraised to sort of have this dedicated space, which included nap rooms, like a shower later for women students who needed just like a place to chill out on campus when there wasn't a dorm. And so, MIT, not a great place for women to get to until the '60s.

AT: So why did they build a dorm so far away? Like, was it just not wanting them near the male students?

TW: Well, MIT had originally been housed in Boston. MIT didn't move to Cambridge until like 1916. And so I think they were just like, well, we have the women's dorm there, and there's not that many women students most years. They were special students who probably lived at home, more likely taking a couple classes, or like not misticulated. And the amount of students who actually were like officially enrolled was under 10, under 12. And so it probably just didn't seem like financially worth it.

AT: And then by the '60s, it was just, "oh, this has worked for the past decades. So it's fine."

TW: Yeah, I really don't know how I'm on that long without somebody doing something in the 50s and the 40s. I know during the World Wars, there were sort of like a dip in women attending because women were taking jobs in industry instead of going to school, all sorts of like war effort stuff. But it is pretty shocking that there wasn't actually a dorm for women until the early '60s.

AT: I mean, I think it largely comes back to the whole idea of not expecting women to be independent. And so the whole point of a dorm is you have a young person living on their own. You know, you would assume that most of these women were living with either their parents or a husband, as you mentioned, because you mentioned that Richards and her husband would allow students to stay with them. So I don't know if part of that was, seeing how hard it was for female students just to have that physical access that you mentioned.

TW: I think it must have been. And she lived in Jamaica Plain. So it was quite a commute. And in my mind, she probably took a carriage or the trolley with some of the women's students. I mean, she probably didn't have more than one or two staying with her at a time. And I know she was really tuned into the experiences of women's students at the time, especially since she graduated from an all women's college and had sort of a taste of like, what a more traditional school situation would be where she was living in a dorm. And I know she also really advocated for scholarships for the women who were taking courses at MIT. And we have a collection on the Women's Laboratory that includes a list of like, how many scholarships students there were each year and how much money went to them as well as how much money went to microscopes and things. So that's really interesting.

AT: Yeah, maybe they could put the money they weren't paying her towards scholarships. The book, *The Exceptions: Nancy Hopkins, MIT and the Fight for Women in Science* by Kate Zernicki just came out earlier this year. And it discusses a more recent fight for gender equality at the university.

TW: Starting in the early '90s, a group of women at MIT just sort of connecting with each other, talking about work experiences were like, "oh, hey, we're all getting shafted," basically. If it's one person and you're not talking to other people who are experiencing the same things, you think you're just dealing with a jerk, you're dealing with like one person or a group of people who aren't supportive, but in general, everyone's really nice. But when you get a group of people who are being discriminated against together and you notice that it's actually a systemic problem, then it's a different story. And so these women went to their dean in the School of Science and talked about it. He encouraged them. I was very surprised and pleased to see that he'd encouraged them to gather data to prove their case. And some of the stories I've heard and encountered have been very upsetting. And it was to the point where to gather data, especially about lab space, Nancy and some of her colleagues had to go in at night and physically measure the labs because nobody would believe that sure one woman might have a slightly smaller lab space, but that's just because she was sharing it with someone who was like a tenured professor or, this other one might have a smaller lab space, but it's probably because she started mid-year or whatever. But actually when they went in and they measured every single room and broke down who was in each room, it was indisputable proof that women were given less lab space than men as well as obviously being paid less, getting their syllabi and things copied by their male colleagues,

just all of those sort of standard terribleness that you might encounter in academia.

And so their dean encouraged them to form a committee. They did a study, they did interviews, they presented the president of MIT, what the time was Charles Vest, with a report on the status of women faculty in the School of Science. And Vest read it and said, "you know what, you guys are absolutely right. I thought that this was not an issue. I thought that we were too scientific to be behaving like this, but you've given me indisputable proof and we're going to make changes," which is kind of like the best way that a scientist can react to something, right? Like you got the proof, you all did the work, you collected the data, you've like made this argument and proven it, and now we'll approach and change things. And so since then MIT has been working on it.

AT: Just thinking about all the times that like women have presented irrefutable proof and people are just like, "no."

TW: I know, right? And so everyone was like shocked and like so happy that that wasn't a case and no one was expecting it because it's not usually in the interest of a university president to be like, "you're right, we've done the bad thing." But he was somebody who was really interested in equity.

AT: And the question of the importance of male allyship, which we sort of touched on earlier with Ellen Swallow Richards, it does come up a fair bit in these conversations because yeah, there are situations where a woman could do everything right. She could present all of this evidence and the man in charge just says, "okay, that's nice," sticks it in a drawer, and goes on about their day without doing anything about the situation. So it is always nice to hear those positive stories. Although you kind of wish that he hadn't made them measure every lab on campus or whatever. I kind of wish he'd just taken them at their word in the first place.

TW: On the one hand right, that makes sense, you would just take them at their word and be like, "okay, I see that this is a problem you guys are experiencing," but this is a bureaucracy. Institutions are just giant businesses. And so I'm sure that they had to have a committee and do a study. The amount of committees that universities have is like outrageous. So many at all times, like what are they doing? I don't know. But this one actually did something and then there was like a solution, like women got back pay when it turns out that they weren't being paid the same as their male colleagues who had sort of the same level of experience.

AT: I mean, I do wonder how much of that was a sign of the times knowing that they could go to the press and they could potentially file a lawsuit. And there are just so many more protections in place than there would have been 100 years earlier. And when we're talking about the bureaucracy saying, look, it is better for the organization to get our stuff together and treat these women better because they've got the numbers. And if the Boston Globe runs a front page article about how MIT mistreats its women in 1999, that's going to have a much, well, first off, it wouldn't have made the front page in 1899. It probably wouldn't have made it into the paper at all. But also, you know, when we're talking about pay discrimination and everything, that's illegal, in theory, at least. So you do have to wonder how much of that is knowing the external pressure that could have been brought to bear.

TW: And I think that the report and the university's reaction really made the university look great. Also, especially in comparison to, it had a snowball effect. So these women at other institutions were also sort of speaking out after that. There was like a conference of the nine colleges, which was just sort of nine universities of varying types that met at some point to discuss their systemic built-in problems with how they treated their women faculty.

AT: Going back a little bit more, you've got Annamaria Torriani-Gorini, who was an Italian microbiologist, and

she became a professor at MIT in the 1970s. So what's her story?

TW: What I love about Annamaria is honestly her work outside of the lab. She was an anti-fascist fighter during World War II. She and her husband opened up orphanage for children who had been orphaned through the Holocaust. She was really active in social justice. Like half of her collection is lab work on biology, microbiology, things that are like maybe a little bit over my head scientifically. She kept copious notes, clearly like a brilliant person. She was on like all sorts of panels, she won awards. And then the other half is all like working against apartheid and organizing for racial equality on campus. And so she was actually the person whose collection inspired me to curate this exhibit that's going up that we're calling Under the Lens: Women in Chemistry and Biology at MIT. Because her collection had a lot of visual objects that you don't normally come across in an archive, right? In an archive, you mostly have paper: letters, maybe like an occasional diary, some photos. Her work still had the gels that she had done her electrophoresis study on. And like prints of the photo, like you can do like a photographic print of the gel. And so she had those and I was like, "this is so cool and interesting. I don't understand any of it, but I like to look at it," because I'm not a scientist, but I like to see like the tangible sort of evidence of the research. She worked at the like Louis Pasteur Institute and had like a Fulbright and was just one of those people who you're like, "how do you have all of the energy to do all this?" And I don't actually know if she had tenure or not. Something that I think is really interesting to think about is that even when women become professors, they don't always get tenure. And in fact, the first woman to get tenure at MIT in chemistry was Joanne Stubb, who got tenured in 1987, which considering that the first woman to be an instructor in chemistry was 1885, that's a pretty long time for there not to be any women with tenure.

AT: That's just a century of women without tenure.

TW: A lot of the HR records are closed because they are HR records and we don't have access for 75 years. And so trying to sort of track down women faculty is challenging because you have to go through like the yearly president's report to see who's getting tenure and who isn't for 150-plus years. And then if you want to find out, for instance, I'm still trying to figure out who the first black woman who got tenure in chemistry or biology is because that's not actually accounted for anywhere, but it's really hard to find. I've found out the first Asian woman to earn tenure at MIT who was in chemical engineering, ChoKyun Rha. And we know sort of the first black student or the first Latina student to earn a PhD or things like that. But with faculty, it's a little bit harder to figure it all out, which is harder to paint a complete and accurate picture of the past when it's hard to research.

AT: Well, let's go back because you mentioned briefly, ChoKyun Rha was the first woman of Asian descent to receive tenure at MIT, but she taught there for more than 40 years. Like it's not just, she was a first, and that's all we have to say about her because she was also a really interesting person. She had four degrees from MIT.

TW: She was a genius as far as I can tell. I've been going through her papers, she unfortunately passed away recently, and she had a full filing cabinet's worth of patents. Some of the ones that I thought were really interesting were working with finding the best way to process shredded wheat. And then also the rheology of peanut butter, which has to do with like its smoothness and moving as far as I know. And then also, the fabric that you use for a sheet mask she worked on. And then like also cancer medicine. So she was just constantly like thinking about and studying things. She worked with a bunch of different businesses, helping them do research for like specific tools, including, I've seen things in her work about offset printer ink and sort of developing the best ink to use for like book printing or magazine printing because it had to do with color ink. And then also research on how to make soy milk taste less bean-y, which I would like to personally thank her for because I remember what soy milk tasted like in the 1980s and it's a lot better now. So she was just a fascinating, incredibly intelligent, busy person. She got tenure in 1980 and then was promoted to full professor in 1990. She was also very dedicated to advising first-year students, the amount of letters that we have

communicating with her students who went on to graduate. It's just enormous. She held scheduled potluck meeting sort of things to help her students like catch up and think about their work. She seems like a really dedicated mentor as well as like a brilliant scientist.

AT: Yeah, I was just looking at a brief bio that I'd found for her and like you said, she held more than 20 patents. She published more than 200 papers, but she was also a founding member of Women's World Banking. So that provides support to microfinance institutions that give credit to low-income entrepreneurs in the developing world, particularly women, as the name would suggest. She's traveling to Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, like she formed the Malaysia-MIT Biotechnology Partnership Program. Like she's just doing all the things.

TW: And she grew up in Korea, so English wasn't even her first language and she was achieving all of this in a setting where speaking English perfectly was a must-have. So it wasn't just science and it wasn't just entrepreneurship and mentorship. It was also a capacity for languages, just like so much going on in that room.

AT: And so her husband was also an MIT professor of microbiology, Anthony Sinsky. And we have to assume that he was probably like the other husband that we've talked about, you know, supportive of his wife's career. And I would also have to assume that as an immigrant, as someone who's for whom English is not their native language, for someone who was a person of color, that we would hope that this was not as difficult in the 1950s and later than it would have been several decades earlier.

TW: Although MIT did accept more Asian women students than Black or Latina women students, the first Japanese woman we have on record attended MIT in 1907, the first Chinese woman attended MIT in 1909, I believe. We did have one Black woman who attended a couple semesters at MIT in 1909. But we didn't have our first Black woman graduate until 1968. There was a very small, small number of Black students at the time. First Black women didn't graduate until 1968. And then 1969, the Black Student Union was formed and there became more of a push by the administration to seek out Black and Latino and Indigenous students. They formed like a strategy and a program to do outreach to high schools. But yes, she and her husband Sinsky, he had a very close relationship, they had like a business partnership on the side where they were doing consulting. And I think they worked very, very closely together, although in all of her papers I've seen, I think only maybe like half of them are offered with him. He clearly was like very, very supportive of her work. And I don't think he was her instructor, which is nice.

AT: Switching gears to someone who's a little more recent, Susan Lindquist was the director of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research from 2001 to 2004, which made her one of the first women in the US to lead a major independent research organization.

TW: Yeah, she has done really astounding work. One thing that I appreciate in her papers is the amount of context that is provided with her research. Because again, if you're a historian, you're doing research and you're not a scientist, you're like, "what is this book of graphs and lists of numbers?" But because she was working with grad students and MIT also has a thing called UROP, which is like undergraduate research opportunities where an undergrad will do basically grad level work with a faculty member. She was very clear and everything. And so we have a lot of understanding for us non-science-minded people. I tried in the exhibit to not just focus on our most outstanding faculty, but I will say that MIT does have just outstanding women scientists. And so everyone who we picked ends up being an award-winner or something. And it's just such a different world than the humanities. And it's really interesting to see how these people operate and the amount of work they do. Whereas in humanities writing, like five or six books is crazy. And then Professor Rha wrote over 200 papers. It's really just a very different type of world. And so I think it's really interesting.

AT: I mean, the number of papers that someone publishes and the number of people who then cite that paper, that's widely considered a metric of how influential they are. Lindquist, she won so many awards. Like, I was just looking at the list of awards. And she got the President's National Medal of Science, which is the highest scientific honor bestowed by the US. And there's just this whole long list. And so talking about Dr. Lindquist's work, I freely admit I don't understand what she was doing, but it sounds really important. She was working on prions, which are a type of protein. And this can help with treating like degenerative neurological illnesses, like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Huntington's. I have no idea how that works, but it sounds really impressive.

TW: Yeah, I also, I know I work at MIT, but I'm not a science person. The lab notebooks that we have from her include work done by students who have gone on to work for Pfizer, for AstraZeneca. People just really interested in solving biological problems. And it's all like a great mystery to me. And again, it's one of these things where you see this absolutely brilliant woman who then also expands energy mentoring students, not just women students, although frequently I've seen these women have the close relationships with their women students. Yeah, the amount of work that goes into just the scientific research, and then just creating syllabi and teaching, and then also just doing advising for students. And then also just maybe raising a family is a lot. And it's really astounding.

AT: And so currently we've also got Paula Hammond, who is the head of the Department of Chemical Engineering. And again, getting into stuff that I'm pretty sure neither of us actually understands, her work is largely centered on nano-based drugs, immunology, and immunotherapy.

TW: Paula Hammond was the first black woman to head the Department of Chemical Engineering. Chemical engineering split off from chemistry in 1917. At that point, there's sort of been enough learning about chemistry to know that there's engineering, like what you do with the stuff, and then also chemistry, like what the stuff is. She is working with nanoparticles, doing stuff with RNA, cancer therapy, different forms of chemotherapy. But again, she's this like award winner, she has the American Institute of Chemical Engineers Margaret Hutchinson Rousseau Award, which is named after one of our earliest alumni who helped worked on the plans for the first mass produce penicillin. She interestingly is listed in some of our records as Mrs. Rousseau, and then you don't know who that is, unless you know who that is. But she is also just an award winner, had like a Ford Foundation Fellowship, used to be a postdoc at Harvard, just another one of these people who's like an amazing achiever whose brain works in a completely different way than mine.

AT: And from what I can tell, it looks like her work is largely to do with how to more effectively deliver medication. So things like biomedical implants that release drugs, things that can help with like healing wounds, bone regeneration and vaccines. Anyone who is listening to this and just thinking how dumb we sound - fair! Google Paula Hammond, and try and figure it out for yourself, because I'm sure there are plenty of people who know more than either of us about her work. But a recurring theme that sort of seems to keep coming up is the role of mentorship that these women are filling. And I'm wondering how much of that is just it's a natural part of academia? How much of it is women are sort of expected to take on that sort of nurturing role even in the workplace? And how much of it is just that deeper drive to help others, particularly other women? Or is it just all of those things and more factors that I probably haven't even thought of?

TW: I think it's all of those things. I think that obviously we're sort of used to thinking about academia as like involves mentorship. And I think that's even more the case in science. It's sort of this like apprenticeship situation where you're working in someone's lab and really learning from them, learning by doing. But also, right, these women didn't have to accept other women into their labs if they didn't want to. They could easily have maintained their status as like the one woman in the room. And they didn't. And I don't know how much of that was sort of like a deep feminist drive to increase access to the world of science for women and how much



of it was just like a natural friendliness and connecting with people and sort of an even-handed approach to things. So I think it's really sort of a mix of things. And like who could say from one person to another? But overall, I think there is a really strong community of women in science. There's these organizations for women in science that really sort of push being aware of your role as a mentor and as support and community. And I think that does play a big part in it.

AT: Join us next time on the Infinite Women podcast. And remember, well-behaved women rarely make history.