Our Bodies Ourselves: 42 Years of Women's Health Education and Advocacy

THE FIRST DECADE

The publication of Our Bodies, Ourselves helps to launch the women's health movement in the United States.

1969 Twelve women meet during a women's liberation conference in Boston. At a workshop on "women and their bodies," they talk about their own experiences with doctors and share their knowledge about their bodies. The discussions at the conference are so provocative and fulfilling that the following summer, each woman researches a health topic close to her heart. They decide to put their knowledge into an accessible form that can be shared with others and that can serve as a model for women who want to learn about themselves, communicate their findings with doctors, and challenge the medical establishment to change and improve the care that women receive.

1970 A 193-page course booklet on stapled newsprint entitled Women and Their Bodies is printed.

1971 The authors change the name of the book to Our Bodies, Ourselves, to emphasize women taking full ownership of our bodies. Republished by New England Free Press, the book puts women's health in a radically new political and social context and quickly becomes an underground success. It sells 250,000 copies, mainly by word-of-mouth.

1972 The Boston Women's Health Book Collective formally incorporates.


1974 The Italian and Japanese editions are published.

1975 A Danish edition is published.

1976 A revised and updated version of Our Bodies, Ourselves is published. A national bestseller, it is recognized by the American Library Association's Young Adult Service Division as one of the best books of the decade. In addition, a French edition is published.

1977 The Boston Women's Health Book Collective self-publishes Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas, the Spanish adaptation of Our Bodies, Ourselves.

1978 An English (British) edition is published.

1979 An update of Our Bodies, Ourselves is published and becomes a bestseller.

Our Bodies, Ourselves has stirred controversy since its inception. It has been banned by high schools and public libraries across the country. In the early 1980s, it was famously condemned by Jerry Falwell of the Moral Majority as "obscene trash."

THE SECOND AND THIRD DECADES

The success of Our Bodies, Ourselves necessitates a more formal organizational structure for The Boston Women's Health Book Collective. The group transitions away from a collective to a nonprofit organization.

1980 German and Swedish editions published.

1981 Greek and Netherlands editions published.
1982 An Israeli edition is published.

1984 A revised version of the original, The New Our Bodies, Ourselves, is published.

1991 A Telugu edition is published.

1992 The New Our Bodies, Ourselves: Updated and Expanded for the 90s is published.

1995 A Russian edition is published.

1996 South African (English) and Thai editions are published.


1999 The first installment of BWHBC/Our Bodies Ourselves records are given to the Schlesinger Library for their collection on women’s health.

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH DECADES

Women’s groups from around the world continue to culturally adapt Our Bodies, Ourselves into print, digital, and social interactive formats. OBOS launches two single-topic books.

2000 A revised and culturally adapted edition of Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas is published, produced with input from two dozen Latina organizations in the United States and Latin America.

2001 Judy Norsigian, a founder of the collective, becomes executive director.

Three cultural adaptations of Our Bodies, Ourselves are published by our global partners: Armenian, by the Armenian Charitable Foundation on Population Development in Yerevan; Bulgarian, by the Women’s Health Initiative in Bulgaria in Sofia; and Serbian, by the Autonomous Women’s Center Against Sexual Violence in Belgrade.

2002 Because most people associate the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective with the book Our Bodies, Ourselves, the organization begins to do business under the name Our Bodies Ourselves. The legally incorporated name remains the same.

In Moldova, a Romanian adaptation of Our Bodies, Ourselves is published by our partner, National Women’s Studies and Informational Center.

The Our Bodies Ourselves Latina Health Initiative develops Promotoras de Salud, a peer health-educator training guide based on the Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas.

2004 A Polish adaptation of Our Bodies, Ourselves is published by our partner Network of East-West Women in Gdańsk, as is an inspired French edition for sub-Saharan Africa by Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et les Lois au Senegal. Our partner in India, Anveshi, reprints its Telegu edition into English to reach a wider audience in the country.

2005 Our Bodies, Ourselves: A New Edition for a New Era is published and, months later, our partner in Korea, Alternative Culture Publishing, releases a Korean adaptation. The Tibetan Nuns Project, our partner in India, also publishes Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, with a foreword by the Dalai Lama.

2006 Our Bodies Ourselves produces its first single-topic book, Our Bodies, Ourselves: Menopause. The organization also launches Our Bodies, Our Blog, a daily blog on women’s health news and controversies. A reprint of the 2004 French inspired-edition (for French-speaking Africa) is released in Senegal and our partner in Albania, Gender Alliance for Development Center, publishes an Albanian adaptation. And finally, the OBOS Latina Health Initiative produces, along with Childbirth Connection, De Camino a la Maternidad, the Spanish language version of Journey to Parenthood: Your Guide
2007 The Tibetan Nuns Project publishes a back-translation in English of the Tibetan adaptation and our partner in Russia, Women’s Health in St. Petersburg, publishes a Russian e-book for the region.


2009 Our partners Sanlaap, in India and Manavi, in the US collaborate and publish a Bengali booklet adapted from Our Bodies, Ourselves for India and Bangladesh.


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2010 Our partner in Armenia, “For Family and Health” Pan-Armenian Association publishes Women’s Voices for Health, to inspire and empower Armenian women to become engaged in peer-advocacy for sustaining good health for themselves and their communities.


Our partner in Israel, Women and Their Bodies, simultaneously launches Hebrew and Arabic adaptations of Our Bodies, Ourselves through a peace-building initiative of Jewish and Palestinian Israeli women. At year-end, Mavi Kalem, our partner in Turkey, releases Bedenlerimiz Biziz through a prestigious publisher planning nationwide distribution. Finally, our partners in Africa continue to use their content adapted from Our Bodies, Ourselves into Yoruba and Pidgin English (Nigeria) and Kiswahili (Tanzania) in innovative and interactive outreach efforts in the community.

2012 “Our Bodies, Ourselves” is one of 88 books included in the 2012 Library of Congress exhibition “Books that Shaped America,” a list of important works “intended to spark a national conversation on books written by Americans that have influenced our lives.”

**Books:**


**Contact Us**

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