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Women of the Year

Korenman (Finally) Named, for 2001

Commentary
By Dianne Lynch
Special to ABCNEWS.com

May 2 — It had to happen.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS
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DIANNE LYNCH
 WIRED WOMEN

If we waited long enough, and slogged through enough dot-com rags-to-riches (and back again) sagas, sooner or later we had to get real about the Internet.

About what it is and what it isn't. About value — marketplace or otherwise — and its less auspicious imposters.

This year, even the Web's self-congratulatory celebrations are getting with the program: Last week, San Francisco Women of the Web, a nonprofit, grassroots organization for women in technology, announced its annual list of the Top 25 Women on the Web. And for the first time since the award's inception in 1998, WoW nudged out the dot-com divas and the Web market wunderkinds and filled in the roster with women devoted to less transitory things — like education, mentoring, and quality content widely distributed.

To nobody's surprise (except hers, of course), Dr. Joan Korenman was among them.

Full Disclosure

By way of full disclosure here, I am a Korenman fan. In fact, 18 months ago, in the depths of the dot-com delirium, in the face of *Time* magazine's naming of Amazon.com's Jeff Bezos as its Person of the Year, I nominated Joan Korenman as the only sane alternative.

"You don't hear glass ceilings crashing or e-commerce sites ka-chinging when you talk to her," I wrote (with unusual prescience). "But Korenman, who lives her life online at the human scale, could teach Bezos — not to mention the editors of *Time* — a thing or two about being Person of the Year."

That was an aeon ago, in Internet time. And unlike almost everything I can think of in Internet time, it's still true today.

Bona fide Web Woman

Korenman is director of the Center for Women and Information Technology (CWIT) and a professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. An author, a researcher,

[The List of the Top 25](#)

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the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. An author, a researcher, and the producer of the best women's resource site online, Korenman is an unparalleled expert on women's relationship with and to the Net. She's gregarious, witty, and self-deprecating in an era when that's about as rare as VC funding. And as of last week, she's a *bona fide* 2001 Web Woman of the Year.

"This year, there was a little more focus on education, on Web content, on the quality of information that people find on the Web," she says. "I think that's where I fit in."

I think so, too.

Korenman spends her professional life working to ensure that the diversity of women's lives and roles is accurately depicted online.

But in a world of optimized, commercialized search engines, the universe of Web content can be reduced to a short list of its largest constellations. Type "women" into a search engine, Korenman suggests, and you'll still get one of two things: pornography or iVillage and Women.com — "the 1950s vision of what it means to be a woman."

"I'm not trying to banish iVillage," she says. "Some women find that kind of thing helpful. But let's not reduce all women to our horoscopes and the 10 ways to hang on to your man."

Women in Real Life have moved beyond that kind of stereotypical silliness, and "it would be a tragic irony if technology actually results in the narrowing of our perceptions of women's roles and women's lives," Korenman says.

Here's an expansive suggestion:

Skip Google, AltaVista, iVillage and Women.com altogether. Log on instead to Korenman's CWIT (see Web link) and let her introduce you to a universe of women who look and sound like somebody you might recognize — women who can figure out how to keep their men (or not) all on their own. ■

A teacher and a journalist, Dianne Lynch is the author of Virtual Ethics. Wired Women appears on alternate Wednesdays.

The Top Women of the Web

Monika Henzinger, Ph.D., Director of Research, Google Inc.
 Karan Eriksson, Partner, CEO InterestAlert, CP Software Group
 Tracy Wilen, Ph.D., Operations Management, Cisco Systems Inc
 Katharine Mieszkowski, Senior Writer, Salon.com
 Jayne Cravens, Project Director/Webmaster, Virtual Volunteering
 Sharron Rush, Executive Director, Knowbility, Inc.
 Joan Korenman, Ph.D., Director, Center for Women and Information
 Technology, University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)
 Mari Matsunaga, NTT DoCoMo
 Ardith Ibanez Rigby, Creative Director, akimbo design
 Bonnie Bracey, bracey-pearl.org
 Barbara Simons, Ph.D., Educator, Assn. of Computing Machinery
 (ACM)
 Tiffany Shlain, Founder and Director, The Webby Awards
 Ruann Ernst, Ph.D., Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Digital
 Island
 Ann Navarro, President, WebGeek, Inc.
 Louise Kirkbride, CEO, Broad Daylight
 Carol Muller, Ph.D., Executive Director/Founder, MentorNet
 Netochka Nezvanova, Art Director
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