

They also Serve, Who Stand and Wait

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The Fourth International Women of the Mountains Conference was good for Utah Valley University, and I am personally glad that I got to help be a part of its student organizing committee. Though taxing at the conference presented lots of useful information and positively showed off the region we live in to many people from around the world.

As part of the Women of the Mountains Conference, I got to be there to help to provide logistics to my student colleague Molly Hone with a play written by Professor Nancy Rushforth from UVU titled: "In Her Own Hand: The Letters of Mary Hallock Foote." It was a story about life in the western part of the United States at the beginning of the 20th century narrated from excerpts from letters of Mary Foote, well-known 19th-century artist, and novelist. Dr. Rushforth was helped with storytelling by her colleague, Dr. Kim Abunara, Associate Professor from UVU.

My role was fairly minimal, as most of the setup was taken care of by Molly Hone. But as John Milton said: "They also serve, who stand and wait." Still, I arrived a good hour before the event got underway and provided backup by checking the preparedness of all equipment in the room. I was also privileged to meet many of the great people involved, as well as shake hands with dignitaries from around the world and their escorts-UVU students.



(R to L): Dr. Nancy Rushforth and Dr. Kim Abunara performing a play UVU.

The play provided the audience information on a woman named Mary Foote, who was an early settler here in the Rocky Mountains, and whose life in many ways exemplified that of the average woman in that time and place. At the same time, she also served as a bit of an early feminist, practicing birth control methods illegally and desiring some degree of independence (see the Comstock laws for more information). She was a fantastic artist and is famous for having illustrated The Scarlett Letter, a classic in American literature and something of an early feminist novel itself.



Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "The Interview." In *The Scarlett Letter* .., 87. Third ed. Boston, Massachusetts: James R Osgood and Company, 1874. Illustration by Mary Foote

I think that it's interesting to see how far equality for women has come since then. Mary Foote in her day had to do a little sneaking around just to avoid having more children (she used an early form of the modern condom). Something that today is not only legal but relatively cheap. (As a side note I find it funny that conservative elements in our country once banned all forms of birth control without a struggle, and now they have to fight tooth and nail to avoid paying for contraceptives. I guess history makes fools of us all.)

Through it, all Mary Foote continually wrote back and forth with her good friend Helena who remained back east. The play was mainly a dramatic reading of the two friends letters back and forth, wherein we in the audience got to see theory struggles, their hopes, and their dreams.



Yankila Sherpa, from Nepal, Mia Rowan, representative of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat and Deann Torsak, Executive Secretary of the conference after the show

I had a chance to interact and introduce myself to many dignitaries including from the United Nations and the United States Department of State in addition to prominent women from Nepal, India, Pakistan and many other nations, who made a long trip to Utah.

All in all the Conference was a good experience for me, and I'm certain a good experience for the university as a whole. The distinguished guests seemed to appreciate what they saw, as well as the place where it showcased.

Joseph Orr, UVU student, member of the organizing committee of the Women of the Mountains Conference