



## **OWIT: 1989 – 2009 A Celebration of Achievement**

This year, OWIT celebrates 20 years of fostering international trade and creating opportunities that allow women around the world to reach unthinkable levels in business! Reaching this milestone in 2009 could not have been made possible without the amazing accomplishments and contributions of our members and leaders who have been committed to advancing women in international trade.

OWIT's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and new logo are the focal point of our branding campaign this year. They not only set OWIT apart from similar women's organizations, but are also used to increase our reputation, awareness about the organization, membership, and global trade opportunities for women.

“In this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year for OWIT, I am proud to be President and amazed at how far we have come,” says Ania Jakubowski. “I, along with the Executive and Board, have been working hard to strengthen our relationship with our members, partners, and sponsors to ensure our growth and ‘value add’. Together, we can strengthen our dynamic and influential organization and continue to advance women's global trade opportunities around the world for another 20 amazing years.”

### **Our History**

#### ***The Beginning***

- In the mid to late 1980's, numerous groups focused on women in international trade started to form in the US:
  - 1985- Chicago, Los Angeles and Orange County
  - 1986- Washington and New York
  - 1987- Boston
  - 1989- Northern California, Detroit and Texas
- Most were founded independently, without knowledge of each other.
- When they became aware there were other similar groups in existence, they wondered if there would be benefit in joining together. At that time, very few women were in upper management positions in international trade.
- It was felt that women in trade needed to connect with each other and to connect with their counterparts in other cities.
- This connection would allow them to mentor, network, exchange information, learn about new trade developments, and enhance their own professional development.

- A brainstorming session in the Washington, D.C. area resulted in a consensus that a larger organization should be founded.
- In 1989, the first formal board meeting of what would become the Organization of Women in International Trade (OWIT) was held in Los Angeles.
- The name of the organization was chosen, officers and directors elected, and organizational goals and mission drafted.
- In 1990, OWIT held its first national conference in Washington, D.C. and published its first membership directory

***Founding Chapters***

There were 12 chapters in 1990:

- Atlanta
- Boston
- Chicago
- Detroit
- Los Angeles
- New York
- Northern California
- Orange County
- San Diego
- Seattle
- Texas
- Washington

***Founding Board***

Members of the founding board were:

- President - Julie Hughes (Washington DC)
- Vice President - Michelle Rodenborn (Los Angeles)
- Secretary - Laura Jones (New York)
- Treasury - Dorothy Schumacher (Chicago)

***Annual Conference Hosts***

<i>1990- Washington, DC</i>	<i>1999- Washington, DC</i>
<i>1991- Chicago</i>	<i>2000- San Diego</i>
<i>1992- Northern California</i>	<i>2002- Dallas</i>
<i>1993- Atlanta</i>	<i>2003- Alberta (Canada)</i>
<i>1994- Arizona (Phoenix)</i>	<i>2004- Tampa Bay</i>
<i>1995- Miami</i>	<i>2005- Washington, DC</i>
<i>1996- Bermuda</i>	<i>2006 – Northern California</i>
<i>1997- Boston</i>	<i>2007 – Miami</i>

1998- Los Angeles (Long Beach)	2008 – Monterrey (Mexico)
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### *Milestones*

- **1996:** First conference held outside U.S. (in Bermuda)
- **1999:** First board meeting held outside U.S. (in Dominican Republic)
- **1999:** 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrated at international conference in Washington, DC
- **1999:** Website launched
- **1999:** First Canadian chapter (Toronto) joins OWIT
- **2000:** Launched online speakers' bureau
- **2003:** First board meeting held in Europe (Geneva)
- **2005:** 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrated at board meeting in Washington, DC
- **2008:** Website relaunched
- **2009:** 21 active chapters and over 3,000 members worldwide in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Europe and Africa.

### *Chapter Celebrations*

As OWIT marks its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we are tapping into the innovation and ideas of our diverse chapters to foster connections and a greater sense of our collective strength.

Here is a sampling of what chapters are doing this year to celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary:

- *Charleston:* Celebratory cake and a table with literature and information.
- *Hampton Rhodes:* 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary feature in e-newsletter and a networking reception, co-sponsored with the Hampton Roads Foreign Commerce Club.
- *Geneva:* Celebration on December 2
- *Houston:* Wine tasting.
- *Nairobi, Kenya:* Special holiday event
- *Northern California:* Presentation highlighting OWIT's history and achievements with special cake; invited past presidents
- *Toronto, Canada:* Incorporating celebration of 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary into annual Awards gala that will also mark OWIT-Toronto's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary; special panel of founding Board members addressing the changing landscape for women in trade over the past 10 to 20 years.
- *Washington, DC:* Commemorating 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary at Awards Gala.

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