English teacher Barbara Freiberg, wearing literary map sweatshirt, and librarians Paula Watts and Beth Bingham, left to right, flank the new Louisiana Literary Map. The map is a joint effort of the Louisiana Library Association and the Louisiana Council of Teachers of English.

## Literary update

Map of authors with Louisiana connections compiled

By ED CULLEN
Assistant People editor

They are five women in professions not known for heroics. Yet, the women — a high school English teacher and four librarians — took on a project that would strike terror in the hearts of the bold.

The women set out to compile a list of Louisiana authors worthy of placement on a literary map. It took the better part of two years, but the women produced the map while avoiding bloodshed. Barbara Freiberg, who teaches English at LSU's University High, went to a library program on grant writing in 1990. Her proposal to update a Louisiana literary map done in 1957 never received a grant, but at least six people at the meeting passed her notes. One note suggested for inclusion on the literary map the author of a book on dogs. Another note was from East Baton Rouge Parish librarian Beth Bingham. Bingham suggested the state's librarians and teachers of English join forces.

The committee that was eventually formed consisted of Freiberg, Bingham, Virginia Smith, head of the Louisiana section of the State Library of Louisiana; Grace Moore, recorder of documents at the state library, and Paula Watts, a librarian at Tara High School. The women represented their respective professional associations, the 350-member Louisiana Council of Teachers of English and the 1,800-member Louisiana Library Association. Writer and editor Charles East was a consultant on the map.

The result is a 24-by-36-inch, four-color map on heavy, acid-free paper. The librarians and the English teachers paid printing costs with money from their associations' budgets. The librarians put up 80 percent of the money, Bingham said.

Matthew J. Armand of Baton Rouge designed the map. Printing was done by Moran Colorgraphic of Baton Rouge.

There are plans to develop a marketing strategy to sell the map and, more immediately, to write and distribute a lesson plan keyed to the map's authors. The maps are on sale for $10 at the state library, 760 N. Third St., or by mail for $12 by writing Louisiana Library Association, P.O. Box 3058, Baton Rouge, LA 70821. For more information on the map or the map on an all-cotton sweatshirt, call 342-4928. The committee knows there will be hurt feelings and criticism of some selections.

"The map will anger some people at the university level," Freiberg said. "We followed all the right steps," said Bingham. "This is an embarrassment to no one."

"That was the advantage of taking so long," Smith said. "We have hashed this to death."

The authors pictured on the map were selected with consideration to race, sex and placing writers near the towns they wrote about or where they lived. Robert Penn Warren, hovering over Lake Charles, is an exception. Warren, a native of Kentucky, received one of his three Pulitzers for "All the King's Men," a novel Warren said was about the myth of Huey Long. Warren, who won two other Pulitzers for his poetry, helped found the Southern Review at LSU.

If placement of authors' pictures on the map was influenced by artistic design and geography, the list
of authors at the bottom of the map was compiled along strict guidelines, members of the committee said. Anne Rice, whose vampire stories are set in New Orleans, Freiberg fought for.

Under a rubric of either/or, to make the map a writer must have been born in Louisiana, lived here, written about Louisiana, set stories here, been influenced by the state, produced writing of literary merit of lasting value, won major literary awards.

The committee hopes the map will accomplish several things: Point up the state's cultural diversity. Suggest to teachers, students and library patrons books worthy of reading and study. Show the rest of the country that books written in Louisiana don't always contain recipes.

The committee began its selection with a master list of Louisiana authors from the Louisiana Union Catalog, a catalog compiled by libraries in the state, and the 1957 literary map.

Dropped from the 1957 map were writers the committee felt hadn't stood the test of time.

"Probably the Anne Rices," Freiberg laughed.

Freiberg fought to put Anne Rice on the map "because a lot of English teachers in Louisiana teach her."

Rice and writers of historical romance are used to reach students who might not otherwise read, committee members said.

A check of library circulation records showed the books of Frances Parkinson Keyes (1885-1970) and Gwen Bristow (1903-80), popular novelists of their time, are checked out today at the rate of some writers of contemporary romantic fiction.

Teen-age girls, like their mothers, are big readers of such books. "And this is clean, historical writing," parish librarian Bingham said.

"Not bodice rippers," said state librarian Smith.

"Teen-agers want things that are relevant," said high school librarian Watts. "These writers lived and worked in this state."

The map is superimposed over entries from Sarah Morgan's Civil War diary. Sarah Morgan lived in downtown Baton Rouge during the Civil War. She recorded the events of daily life and war she observed on walks and buggy rides.

"A teen-ager can look at the map and see her (Sarah Morgan's) handwriting," Watts said. "That's a real teen-ager's handwriting."

The committee's librarians and English teacher say the map shows that while Louisiana has many citizens who can't or don't read, it has a literary tradition, as well.

"We have a proud heritage," said Bingham. "Louisiana has a great literary heritage, and it's all free at the public library."