To Speak Feb. 18:

Bloom Is Thorp Lecturer

Dr. Lillian D. Bloom, professor of English at Rhode Island College, will deliver the Mary Tucker Thorp Lecture in the Arts and Sciences on Wednesday, Feb. 18 at 4 p.m. in Fogarty Life Science Building, room 050. Her topic will be "Samuel Johnson's 'Lady': The Letter Writer as Artist and Historian."

Her remarks will "encompass the highlights of an adventure in literary detection and rediscovery that began a decade ago." The research she will discuss is planned to culminate in a multivolumed edition of the letters of the "lady", Hester Lynch (Thrale) Piozzi, compiled and edited by Professor Bloom.

"In the sparkling and essentially masculine society of late 18th Century and Regency England, (Hester Piozzi) was a celebrity in her own right: author, traveller, social renegade," Bloom explains.

"She was the intimate friend and correspondent of such redoubtable figures as Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, Sarah Siddons, Edmund Burke, and Charles and Fanny Burney, to name but a few. Through salon and correspondence, she was on familiar terms with the great and near great, with dignitaries of Church and State, with nobility, with celebrated scientists and antiquaries of England and Europe. Remarkable for her wit, conversational brio, intelligence and learning, Mrs. Piozzi was a letter-writer of exceptional literary quality in a letter-writing age. Indeed, she excels."

Professor Bloom has brought together - from a variety of private and public repositories - some 1,400 letters, most of them hitherto unpublished and often almost inaccessible. They are letters which offer fresh even surprising insights into lives and events ranging from the personal and affective to the public and history-making. They recount everything from Hester Piozzi's own domestic peccadilloes to the French Revolution to the rakish scandals of a dissolute English court. "Through all these letters, the responsive voice of Mrs. Piozzi rings forth with memorable charm, authority, and wisdom," says Professor Bloom. "If she recreates for twentieth-century readers an era now almost 200 years distant, she also creates for the first time, and 'in her expressive idiom, an autobiography of complex dimensions."

The author of more than 30 articles, most of which deal with the history of ideas in 18th Century literature, Professor Bloom is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. She was the Donald Grant Mitchell - University Fellow at Yale, an American Council of Learned Societies Fellow, a Huntington Library Senior Fellow, and a Guggenheim Fellow. Currently, she is a two year research fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities. While on sabbatical leave from RIC in 1981-82 she will serve as an adjunct professor at Brown University.

A champagne reception will immediately follow the lecture in the Alumni Lounge of Roberts Hall. RSVP - 456-8106.