THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

British Library of Political and Economic Science

LSE Library Annual Report to the Friends of the Women's Library

June 2021

Maria Bell, Learning and Engagement Manager; Dr Debbie Challis, Education and Outreach Officer; Dr Gillian Murphy, Curator; Anna Towlson, Archives and Special Collections Manager, LSE Library

Contents

Summary 2020- 2021 **3**

1 Collections **4**
Acquisitions 4
Digitisation 4

2 Supporting Research **4**
Services 4
Research project collaboration 5
Staff publications 5
Staff conferences, presentations 5

3 Supporting Education **6**
LSE teaching 6
Schools 6
New for 2020-21 6

4 Public Engagement **7**
Exhibition 7
Public Events 7

Appendix **9**
– Making Modern Women Audience and feedback

Summary 2020-21

Library services, LSE teaching and research activities have continued to be significantly affected by the pandemic. The Library adapted many of its services and activities online with most staff working remotely since March 2020. Since September 2020, LSE has restricted access to its buildings to LSE staff and students (in line with many universities). The Library was open for LSE student study and borrowing with a small team of Library staff on site. All in -person services were interrupted again with the national lockdown January – April 2021 with the Library being available for study for LSE students. Limited in-person services for LSE staff and students recommenced from 12 April 2021. The Reading Room remained closed until May 2021 when limited opening of the Reading Room to LSE staff and students began.

We are reviewing our Reading Room services and how we might be able to provide access to our collections in the future. The earliest we expect any change is the 19 July, however, LSE is closely following government guidelines and a decision won't be made until much nearer to that date. It is also likely that we will still see a phased return to opening and priority may still be given to LSE researchers during the summer.

Our curators provided support to all our researchers remotely, advising them on what collections were available online and discussing what was feasible. Between October and December 2020, we were pleased to pilot a scanning service which was in high demand. We are currently examining how best to deliver this service again when wider re-opening is possible.

Despite the restrictions to our in – person service, the Library continued with its work supporting research and education by:

- Collaborating with research projects, Time and Tide; Women's Resource Centre;
- Making new digital acquisitions – First Hundred Years;
- Curating a major exhibition online, *Making Modern Women* based on The Women's Library collections of women's magazines and periodicals;
- Delivering an extensive public event programme drawing on The Women's Library collections and themes to accompany the *Making Modern Women* exhibition;
- Expanding resources for schools online – with schools unable to make external visits, these online resources have been in high demand. These resources are hosted by online learning portals, MyLearning and TES Resources.

Our partnerships continue to be very important to us. The Library was an online hub for the LGBT+ Outing the Past Festival in February 2021. We took part in the Being Human Festival and Institute of Historical Research, History Day.

Planning 2021-22

The Library is planning for the new academic year and anticipating the wider opening of in-person services as national and LSE guidelines allow. It is clear from the success of our online services, exhibitions, events and education activities that we should continue to provide these blending them with our in-person services and activities. Our online exhibition and events enabled a much wider audience to engage and discuss women's issues and history and learn about the Women's Library collections.

1 Collections

Pandemic restrictions forced us to suspend acquisitions and cataloguing of analogue materials this year. However, we were able to continue work on both born-digital and digitised collections.

Acquisitions

- **First Hundred Years** https://first100years.org.uk/ project - The transfer of video interviews and transcripts was completed in March 2021 and the material is currently being processed ready for ingestion into our digital asset management system for long-term preservation and access.
- Agreements are also in place for us to receive and preserve collections of born-digital material from two external projects collaborations: **Sisters Doing It For Themselves**, https://www.wrc.org.uk/sisters-doing-it-for-themselves run by the Women's Resource Centre; and **Greenham Women Everywhere** https://greenhamwomeneverywhere.co.uk.

Digitisation

Our digitisation programme continued, and two new resources based on The Women's Library collections were published, both of which are now freely available online:

Inter-war Feminist Pamphlets This collection of pamphlets focusses on women's rights and their engagement in politics and public life from 1918-1940, documenting the ideas and activities of women's organisations, as well as individual campaigners, reformers and pioneers. It also includes perspectives of politicians, governments, and intergovernmental organisations, as they responded (or failed to respond) to issues raised by advocates of women's equality and rights. The digitisation of these pamphlets was undertaken in partnership with JISC in 2019 as part of the Digitising Social Movements of the 20th Century project: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/digitising-20th-century-social-movements

- **Oral Evidence on the Suffragette and Suffragist Movements: the Brian Harrison interviews (8SUF)** In Autumn 2020 a project was carried out to provide online access to these important and popular audio recordings. A new webpage, '**The Suffrage Interviews**' https://www.lse.ac.uk/library/collection-highlights/the-suffrage-interviews, was launched in October 2020 to showcase the collection and host the oral history recordings. The webpage marks a significant addition to our online material relating to the suffrage movement, women's rights and equality, and is already proving to be one of the most popular pages on our website – it is consistently ranked as one of our top 5 viewed pages.

The Women's Library Poster collection - Supported by the LSE Knowledge, Exchange and Impact (KEI) Fund, we are in the process of digitising 300 posters and badges from the 1970s and 1980s on the themes of women's liberation, men's violence against women and women's peace campaigning.

2 Supporting Research

Services

Our curators and archivists continued to support researchers remotely providing guidance on the collections and enquiry services. A scanning service was piloted October – December 2020 and we

are now reviewing plans for its re-introduction along with the wider re-opening of Reading Room services when the situation allows.

From October to December last year, we responded to approximately 80 requests that resulted in scans of The Women's Library documents. These were requests for material across the whole spectrum of TWL including pamphlets, minutes, photographs and correspondence.

The Reading Room was closed to all researchers from March 2020 – July 2021 and re-opened on a limited basis to LSE staff and students in May 2021. LSE restricted access to LSE buildings to LSE staff and students only from September 2020 onwards. Plans are underway to re-open Reading Room services later in 2021 to non- LSE researchers as LSE guidance and restrictions allow.

Research project collaboration

The Library has collaborated with publicly funded research projects:

- AHRC funded project, **Time and Tide: Connections and Legacies** https://www.timeandtidemagazine.org/ led by Dr Catherine Clay, Nottingham Trent University.
- HLF-funded **Sisters Doing It For Themselves** run by the Women's Resource Centre on 28 April 2021. The interviews will be archived as part of The Women's Library this summer.
- Supported AHRC application for **'Liberating Histories'** led by Victoria Bazin at Northumbria University.

Staff publications

Dr Debbie Challis, with Daniel Payne, *Giving Peace a Chance: Archives engagement at LSE Library*, in Andrew H. W. Smith (ed.), Paper Trails. The social life of archives and collections, UCL Press, July 2021 https://www.uclpress.co.uk/products/169046#

Dr Gillian Murphy, *International Women's Day: Liberation in Oxford.* Modern Art Oxford Blog, 4 March 2021 https://www.modernartoxford.org.uk/international-womens-day/

Dr Gillian Murphy, *"Balancing on a razor's edge": running the radical feminist lesbian Only women Press*, special issue Women's Cultural Review (forthcoming).

Staff conference papers and presentations

'The Body – Discussion between Gaby Edlin and Dr Debbie Challis on Menstruation and Reproductive Justice', *Unfinished Business: The Fight for Women's Rights*, The British Library, Online Video – March 2021 http://www.bl.uk/womens-rights/videos/body

Dr Debbie Challis, *Fading Rainbows: engaging school audiences during the pandemic*, Catalysts for change: transforming our practices, collections, and communities through times of crisis, DCDC 2021, Online, 28 June - 2 July 2021.

Dr Gillian Murphy, *Response of interwar magazines to Katherine Mayo's Mother India* for Decolonising LSE, October 2020.

Dr Gillian Murphy, *Making Modern Women and the research process* for students on the Interwar Culture course in LSE's International History department, February 2021.

Dr Gillian Murphy, *The digital collections of The Women's Library* for Association for Librarians and Information Professionals in the Social Sciences International Women's Day event, March 2021.

Dr Gillian Murphy, *Making Modern Women, interwar campaigning and internationalism*, as part of an event organised by Women's Pioneer Housing, 17 June 2021.

3 Supporting Education

LSE teaching

We continued to support LSE teaching providing support to LSE teachers as the curriculum shifted online for 2020-21. Departments were updated and informed of our Women's Library online resources - Women's Rights Collection, The Suffrage Interviews, Interwar feminist pamphlets, image collections - to relevant LSE departments and external HE groups who would normally have visited the archives in person as part of their course. Our Academic Support Librarians supported students to adapt their research projects to online resources and collections while national and HE physical archive collections remained closed. Our curation team supported teaching staff in adapting primary research workshops and seminars online.

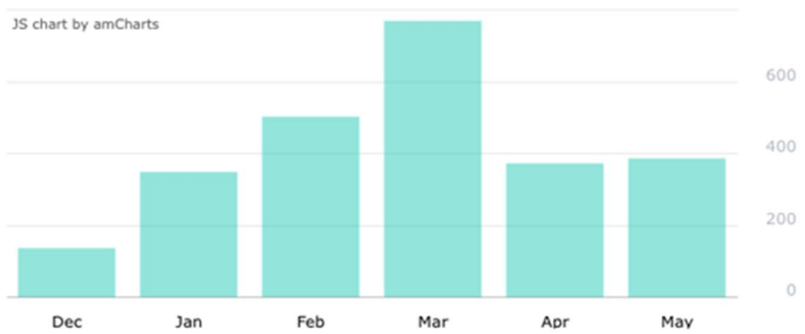
New collection highlights were added to the website: Feminism and Religion (https://www.lse.ac.uk/library/collection-highlights/feminism-and-religion) and Women's Print Media (https://www.lse.ac.uk/library/collection-highlights/womens-print-media).

Schools

The Women's Library collection relating to Endell Street – scrapbook and Nina Last's papers – was the archive focus of the Library's LSE Festival project with a primary school in which 180 students participated. The resources created for the project – **Fading Rainbows** and **The War and the Flu** have been shared online https://www.lse.ac.uk/library/whats-on/fading-rainbows .

There were no taught sessions on campus this year but one A-Level history session on suffrage material, using the handling box, took place with Debbie, the Education and Outreach Officer, via Zoom.

More teacher resources relating to The Women's Library collection are available on the resource section of the Times Education Supplement website (https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/shop/d_challis). Unsurprisingly, we have seen a large spike in downloads of all of the resources on TES this last year. It's impossible to break down the numbers for all but the most recent resources, but this 6-month overview gives a glimpse of their popularity:



New for 2020 -21

- **Mrs Dalloway, Woolf and Women's Magazines** – An A Level resource for English Literature connected to the Time and Tide: Connections and Legacies project: 64 downloads.
- **Woman and Politics: Interwar British History** – An A Level resource for History connected to the Time and Tide: Connections and Legacies project: 32 downloads.
- **The War and the Flu** – A Primary School resource relating to the history of the Influenza epidemic and Endell Street Military Hospital: 266 downloads
- **Fading Rainbows** – COVID 19: Experiencing and Remembering the Pandemic – A Primary School resource connecting the 1918/19 Influenza pandemic to the current situation: 917 downloads.

4 Public Engagement

Exhibition

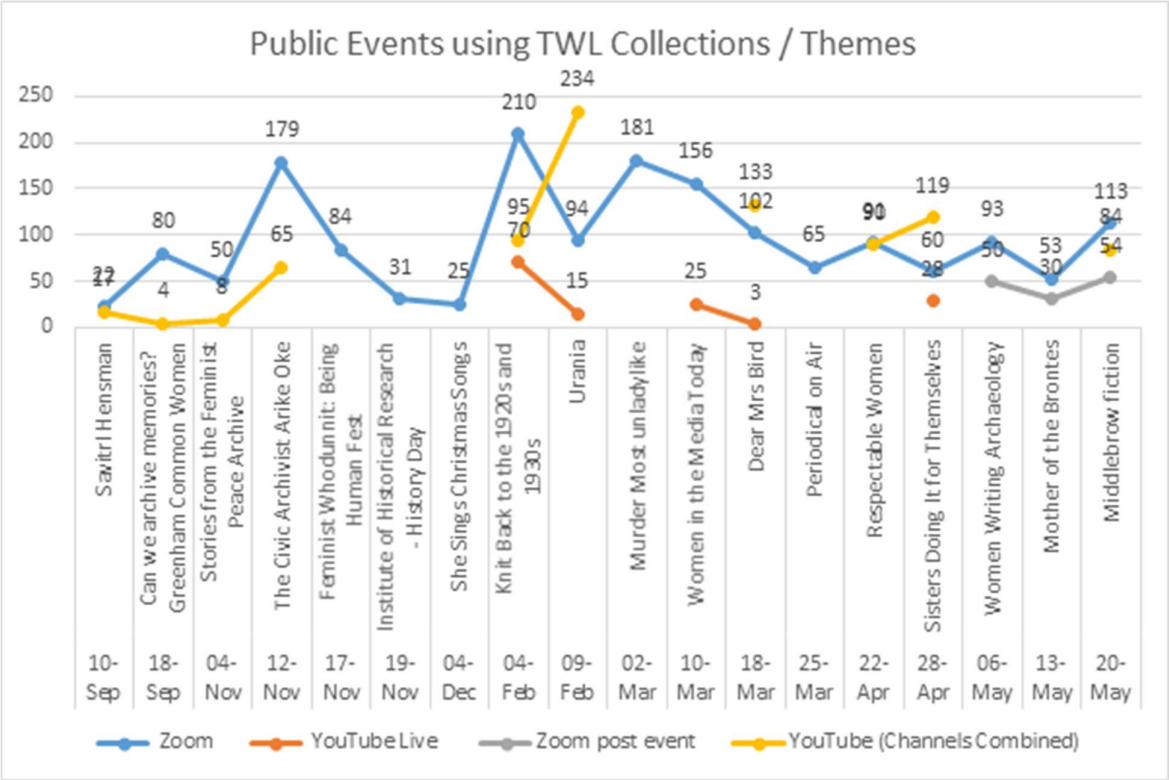
In February 2021, we launched an online exhibition ***Making Modern Women: women's magazines in interwar Britain*** https://www.lse.ac.uk/library/whats-on/exhibitions as part of Time and Tide: connections and legacies, an AHRC-funded project led by Dr Catherine Clay and assisted by Dr Eleanor Reed. Our core collaborators were Catherine Clay, Maria DiCenzo, Barbara Green and Fiona Hackney, co-editors of Women's Periodicals and Print Cultural in Britain 1918-1939 (Edinburgh University Press, 2018), which inspired and underpinned the exhibition. We also marked the centenary of the Six Point Group, the leading gender equality campaigning group of the time. Across five sections – Reading Women, Fashioning Women, Home and Work, Campaigning Women, International Women – the exhibition showed that women's magazines presented new ideas about the 'modern woman', offering a new world of opportunity to them as British female citizens. We unearthed The Women's Library's rich resource of interwar women's magazines demonstrating the breadth and vitality of women's activism in this period.

Public events 2020-21

The events for 2020 were related to exhibition Social Revolutions due to the postponement of 2 events from March 2020 following the lockdown; Savitri Hensman in September and Arike Oke (The Civic Archivist) in November. There were two events on feminist peace that drew on TWL collections in September and November. In November 2020 we hosted an event with a PhD candidate from UCL on feminist theory for the Being human Festival and Gillian gave an introduction to the Women's Library collection for History Day at the IHR. The majority of the events in 2021 were related to the Making Modern Women exhibition with exceptions being a book event on the Mother of the Brontes and the Sisters Doing It For Themselves archive launch. An online survey was available for these events.

In figures:

- 18 public events relating to collections in the Women's Library have been organised at / by LSE
- 1830 people have attended online 'live' events. This is an increase of over 1,000 on the mixture of live and in person events in 2019/20.
- 983 have watched recordings after the event, with a further 3132 watching Eleanor Reed's knitting event on YouTube.

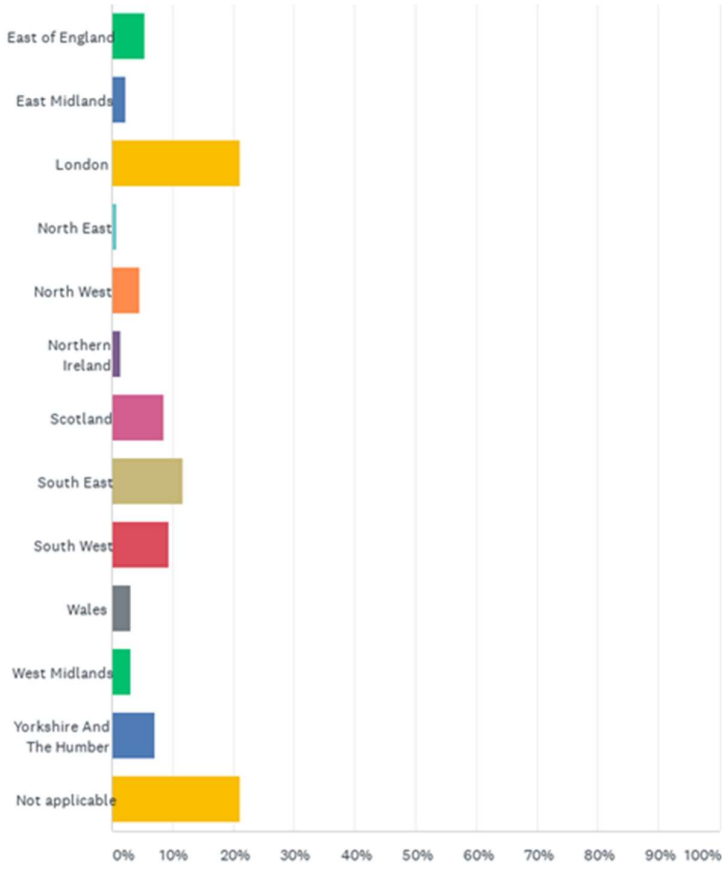


It is clear from both the increase in numbers and feedback on the survey for the *Making Modern Women* Events that online events should continue. We hope that in-person or in-person / online events will be re-introduced by LSE in the new academic year. Currently we are planning to pre-record archive focused talks to broadcast them to an online (and possibly small in-person) audience.

Appendix – Making Modern Women Audience

Snapshots of who attended our events from February to May 2021.

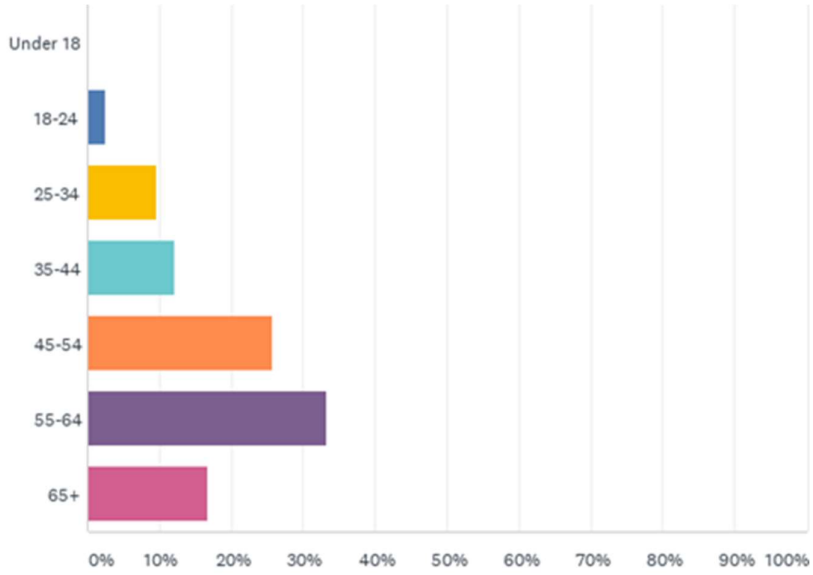
1.Where people came from:



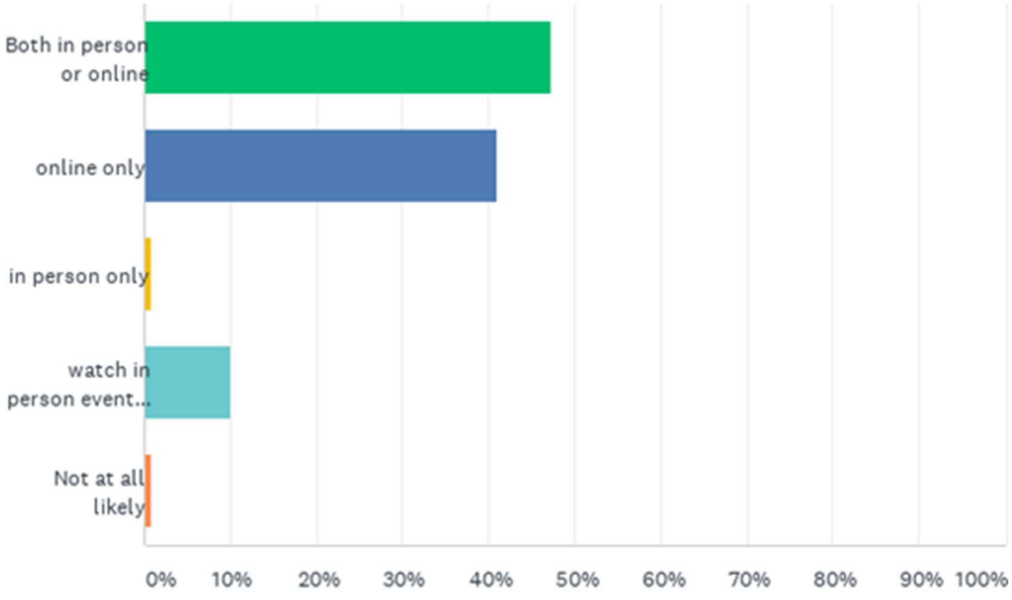
- Not applicable will mainly be overseas audiences

- The majority of people were 'general public, followed by people in HE, then museum or library professionals.
- 90% of attendees were women, 9 % men, 1 % non-binary.
- 75% of attendees had not been to LSE Library events before.
- 60% had been to online events elsewhere, 35% had not.
- 70% could not have attended had the event been in person.

The audience age was higher than previous years at in-person events, mainly as LSE Students have not attended. LSE Public Events have also experienced this.



When asked how likely they would be to attend events – online or in person – in the future, the majority indicated both or online:



Selection of feedback from public events in the Making Modern Women series:

The Furrowed Middle Brow – Elizabeth Crawford

Thank you so much for bringing Elizabeth Crawford to my life!

Books by women as artefacts, being borrowed through Lending Libraries and sold in women's bookshops.

It was interesting to learn more about some authors I didn't know. It was also interesting to hear more about the lending libraries, which often appear in the middle brow novels I read.

The Mother of the Brontes – Sharon Wright

Research into Maria's early life, because if you look hard enough there is fascinating information out there!

I knew nothing about Maria Bronte, so literally everything was new to me so her life as whole stood out.

Passion and research, completely see Maria Bronte in a new way, and have been a lifelong obsessed fan of Brontes.

Women Writing Archaeology – Dr Amara Thornton

Have worked on site in Iraq, Syria and Egypt so seeing the old photos in particular was interesting; learning that Katherine was a great photographer was very interesting to hear. The breadth of publications that women published in. Will follow up a number of the references.

I was interested in Katherine Woolley's work in Ur as I was lucky enough to visit the site in 2003 when I was posted there with the British Army. At the time I had not heard of the place, had no idea what it was and had only 30 mins to walk around it. Now I have a wealth of links to find out more.

Understanding of links between archaeology and imperialism.

Making Respectable Women

Thank you! The findings shared by Prof. Mary Evans thought provoked me to look at the norms of respectability within the past century in my home country.

A Periodical on Air

I particularly enjoyed the online talk about Woman's radio during the inter-War years.

The insights into the life of housewives in the interwar period--a group that is perhaps rather overshadowed by the 'professional' women of the day!

Dear Mrs Bird - A J Pearce

The actual response from one of the agony aunts to the women who had lost her hits and child when her house was bombed.

Loved to hear about the research and inspiration behind the writing of the book.

Excellent interaction with author from the host.

Urania

The lives of Esther and Eva became more alive.

Jenny is a really engaging and passionate speaker. I loved that she described herself as a 'fan' of EGB and ER because as someone now working a graduate job after finishing my masters, it inspires me to want to keep up some of my academic passions in my own time and keep exploring things that interest me. Love the history of the women.

Knit Back to the 1920s and 1930s

The talk was very well presented. The speaker was lively and her slides were good. She was very knowledgeable and answered the questions well.

Ellie's talk was fascinating and so well structured.

It was wonderful to join in with fellow knitters from around the world.

The jumper with the Egyptian motifs, which the presenter replicated herself, because it tied the past to the modern day so effectively.

My two daughters sat and watched the talk with me. They are 18 and 20 and they both enjoyed it and felt inspired to do some knitting and crochet.

Other Comments

Being a wheelchair user who finds getting to London a real problem, and getting around the city worse, Online events such as this are transformative! Thank you for making it available

This was a fabulous talk and I'm glad it was available on-line. One of the silver linings of lockdown is how much more accessible things have become--I could never otherwise attend such events because of distance and costs. I would guess speakers like reaching people from so many different places, too. ..They're both great options for someone who lives far away from London.

I have so valued the talks I have attended. Thank you. They have provided me with new ideas and new (old) books to read.

I have been enjoying all LSE Library's lectures related to women's rights and common struggles.

Fantastic event, would never have got to see the author other than online.

Please continue to offer online events. They have served a useful purpose especially during lockdown, but they are most enjoyable and it would be lovely to have access to events one couldn't attend in person.

I'm so glad to have found this talk. It was fascinating and I will watch out for more from LSE Library. I will also pass on details to my daughter who is studying sociology as I think she would find your online material very relevant to her degree. Thank you.

I thought it was a wonderful exhibition and thoroughly enjoyed the lecture on knitwear. Would love to see other lectures tied to the exhibit online. Thank you!

Fabulous to watch this after the event on YouTube.

LSE Library, June 2021

LSE Library
The London School of Economics
and Political Science
Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE

Email: library.enquiries@lse.ac.uk

lse.ac.uk/library

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