



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 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

This year has been an opportunity to regroup after the disruption caused by the pandemic. We remain fully committed to providing onsite access to our collections, reopening the reading room to external researchers in July 2021 and gradually extending the service as Covid restrictions eased and researchers resumed in-person activities. Over the coming year we will be expanding remote access to the collections, scaling up our digitisation activities, and launching a digital reading room and teaching space. Collecting activity has also resumed, and we thank the Friends for the items they have so generously donated over the past year, and the reopening of campus has also enabled us to continue with our cataloguing programme.

In February 2022 we said goodbye to Debbie Challis, our Education Officer, as she left us in to take up a position at the Portico Library in Manchester. We are in the process of recruiting a replacement for her, to ensure that our schools and public programmes continue to thrive. Debbie's achievements have provided a strong platform on which to build our programmes. Our support for teaching has seen our curators work with LSE teachers to re-introduce in person archive workshops. Seeing our students working in the Reading Room together with materials is a welcome and positive sight.

Our public programme developed to offer a blend of recorded filmed content with our series, *Out of the Box: stories from the archives*, available on YouTube and live online events until March 2022, followed by in person events in summer 2022 when all restrictions lifted.

As part of our development of online and digital content, there are plans for further filmed series that share stories and materials. The plans for 2022-23 will offer a blended programme of both in person and online activity. It is important for us to provide programmes that can be experienced by as wide an audience as possible. This is both the challenge and the opportunity for the year ahead.

2. COLLECTIONS

New acquisitions

After the lull in collecting activity forced on us by the pandemic, we have begun adding material to the collections again.

We purchased two lots at the Bonhams Women Through History auction in March 2022:

- A group of letters written by and about the suffragette Emily Wilding Davison. She is best remembered being hit by the King's horse at the Epsom Derby in 1913, dying eight days later in hospital. The Women's Library holds many items relating to her suffrage campaigning and her death. What is so significant about this new acquisition is that one of these new letters reveals that she regained some consciousness in hospital, when previously historians had always thought that she remained unconscious because of her injuries. There are also other interesting letters about her time in Holloway Prison and even some 'spirit' letters written by a medium as 'dictated' by Emily Wilding Davison.
- A rare, printed pamphlet of the women's suffrage petition of 1866 which was presented to Parliament in June 1866 by John Stuart Mill. The original petition has not survived, except for this printed pamphlet version, and another copy at Girton College, Cambridge. We are

extremely pleased that we now have this item in the collection as it marks the beginning of the continuous women's suffrage movement in Britain.

We also received the oral history interviews from two Lottery Funded projects highlighted in last year's reports – *Sisters Doing it For Themselves* (about current and past leaders in the Women's Voluntary and Community Sector (WVCS) and *Greenham Women Everywhere*. These should be available online through our digital library later this year.

Other new collections include the archive of Broken Rites, an international group offering mutual support and information to separated and divorced spouses and partners of clergy, ministers, and Church Army Officers; and small collections relating to the Hong Kong Women's Conference of 1975 and to the Association of Women Barristers.

All the above have been catalogued and are available to consult in the reading room. Our cataloguing priority for the coming year is to catalogue the remaining material gifted to The Women's Library during 2020-21, including the Cynthia Cockburn archive and the items so generously donated to the collection by the Friends.

Digitisation

The Library now has its own in-house digitisation suite, made possible by a donation to the School for the purpose of increasing access to the Library's unique and distinctive collections. While it will take time for us to develop knowledge and expertise in using the new equipment, in the longer term these facilities will enable us to scale up our publication programme. We will focus initially on digitising collections which are in high demand; or which are physically fragile or vulnerable in some way. Over the coming year we are planning to digitise the Autograph Letter collection, and selections of papers relating to the Association of Moral and Social Hygiene and to interwar women's organisations.

3. SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Access services

Covid measures at LSE meant that the reading room service was suspended or limited to LSE researchers for the first part of 2021. We began welcoming external researchers back to the reading room in July 2021 and have been gradually extending the service in line with LSE's Covid guidance. From 30th May the reading room will be open 10am-4pm Mondays to Fridays, with four fetch times each day.

During 2021, while the reading room was closed, we trialed a digitisation on demand service to enable researchers to access small quantities of archives and special collections material remotely. The completion of our new digitisation suite last month has enabled us to continue this as a regular service. We are now working on plans for a virtual reading room service, so researchers can book an appointment to consult material online.

Research projects

We continue to work with a range of academic projects to support both original research, and knowledge exchange and impact projects using The Women's Library collections.

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Women and the History of International Thought

Over summer 2022 we are hosting an exhibition curated by this Leverhulme-funded project based at Sussex University. The display draws on The Women's library and other collections at LSE Library to explore the ideas, genres, and contexts of women's international thinking in Britain and the United States in the first half of the twentieth century.

Liberating Histories: Women's Movement Magazines, Media Activism and Periodical Pedagogies

Over the next three years we will be supporting this AHRC-funded project led by Victoria Bazin of Northumbria University. The project will draw on our collections as one of its main resource bases and we will also host events for teachers, activists, and policymakers.

The Business of Women's Words: Purpose and Profit in Feminist Publishing

TWL collections feature strongly in '[Feminist & Women's Publishing & Cultural Industries: a guide to archives and resources](#),' a print and online publication produced by the University of Sussex-based project team.

Jill Craigie: Film Pioneer

This four-year AHRC-funded project will be ending this summer. The project has used letters, photographs, and other papers from the Jill Craigie collection in the Women's Library to explore the life and work of the filmmaker Jill Craigie and reflect on women's involvement in film production more generally. In May 2022 we hosted a screening of *Independent Miss Craigie*, the film produced by the project, followed by a Q&A with director and principal investigator Lizzie Thynne.

Staff publications

Gillian Murphy (2021) 'Balancing on a Razor's Edge': Running the Radical Feminist Lesbian Onlywomen Press, *Women: a cultural review*, 32:3-4, 442-456, DOI: [10.1080/09574042.2021.1973735](https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2021.1973735)

The team have shared their work at events such as the History Day fair and at LSE's own Education Symposium.

4. SUPPORTING EDUCATION

2021 –22 saw LSE return fully to in person teaching. This enabled the Library to host LSE classes working with our physical archives and special collections in our Reading Room and Education Room again. Teachers have welcomed the opportunity for their students to work with the physical materials in addition to those available digitally.

LSE staff and students

Curators worked with departments of Economic History, Geography, Media and Communications, International History, introducing students to primary sources and supporting their coursework projects.

In the Lent Term 2022 we welcomed five groups of LSE students to explore:

- archive material on right-wing women for the course 'Women as Weapons: The Conservative Political Tradition in the Cold War' (2 groups)

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- Women's Library print material with a Black / Asian focus for students studying 'Mediated feminisms' (3 groups)
- an online session for those studying 'Archival Interventions: Feminist, Queer and Decolonial Approaches'.

Material from The Women's Library was also included in a series of workshops in May designed to support LSE students and staff who would like to use creative methods to communicate their research. These workshops covered topics such as research poetry, art-based communication, and digital storytelling. We used 3D objects from the Women's Library (e.g., Ginette Leach's typewriter, Betty Boothroyd's shoe) to inspire those attending the research poetry workshop.

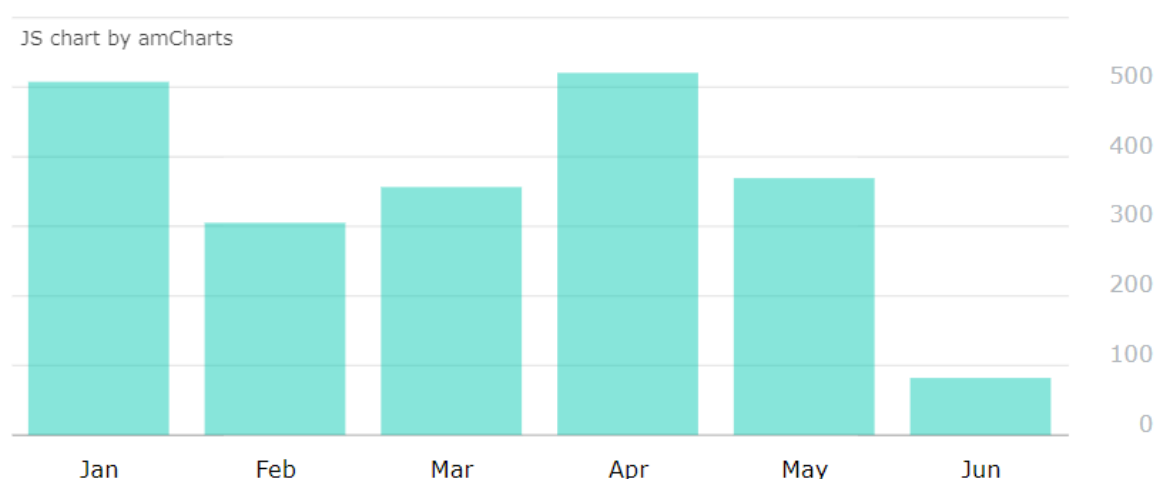
External HE groups

The lifting of all covid restrictions in April 2022, has seen external group visits restarting in Summer term 2022. We welcomed three groups from US universities,

- University of Georgia – students focusing on women's rights leaders in England from suffrage to the current day
- Brigham Young University – students focusing on Human Rights, Women's Rights
- Florida State University – students focusing on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Schools

The Library continues to develop and deliver learning activities and resources for schools. School group visits to LSE have been restricted, however, teaching was delivered online direct to schools during Michaelmas term 2021 and [teaching resources online](#) continue to be used by teachers across the country. This includes the latest additions, *Suffrage Oral Histories* and *Sunbeams: valuing children and their voices*. The last 6 months graph below from TES illustrates how consistently materials are downloaded.



The 2022 LSE Festival included the schools and family project [Sunbeams: valuing children and their voices](#) drawing on the work of Eglantyne Jebb and the Children's Charter of 1924. The project developed lessons exploring Children's Rights asking how did the Children's Charter of 1924 - a message of hope for children - come out of war, disease and famine?

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Debbie Challis, artist Becci Kenning and poet Justin Coe developed a creative workshop with Frith Manor Primary School. 2 workshops were delivered in February where pupils created artwork and writing in response to questions - What can we learn from this? Can we do something similar after the COVID-19 pandemic? What do children think they and we should do to create a happier future for them? The workshop was also part of the LSE Festival in June delivered by Becci Kenning and Justin Coe.

The Library is looking forward to re-introducing in person group visits for schools in 2022-23. In June, we hosted a meeting of school librarians to share our collections and school support. LSE's Widening Participation programmes are returning in person and the Library is working with the Widening Participation team to support school students in using the Library spaces and its collections. 16 –18 year olds will have access to study in the Library and under 16 students can visit in accompanied groups.

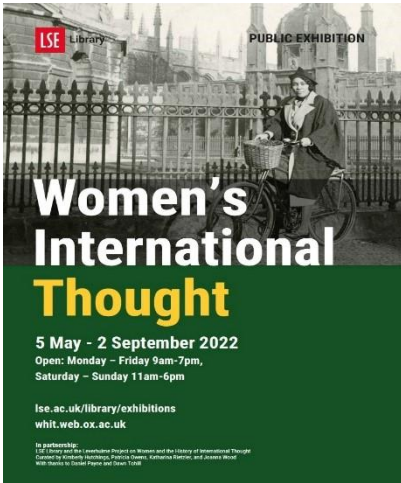
5. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Our public programme has been delivered both online and in person this year. In the Autumn we offered a blend of online talks and filmed content from the Reading Room to accompany the first physical exhibition since 2020, *Out of the Box: stories from the archives*, curated jointly Gillian Murphy, Inderbir Bhullar and Daniel Payne. Their personal selections illustrated the depth of the Library's collections. The filmed content enabled us to share the themes of the exhibition more widely while Covid restrictions remained in place on campus.

Filmed content and event recordings are now delivered via the LSE Library [YouTube channel](#) developed in 2021. Filmed conversations from the Reading Room include, Dr Natalya Vince on women's lives and colonialism; Dr Dina Gusenjoiva discussing the pamphlets of the inter-war period and Sarah Edwards on feminist messaging and fashion.

Most online public events are recorded and available after the event giving more opportunities for audiences to access and engage. To date, the figures are:

- Sarah Edwards, *The Quotable Feminist* (Being Human Festival 2021) - attended by 30; viewed afterwards 71 times.
- Benjamin Lipscomb, *The Women are up to Something* – attended by 184; viewed afterwards 290 times.
- Sheila Rowbotham *Daring to Hope* – attended by 96; viewed afterward 317 times.
- Rachel Holmes *Sylvia Pankhurst* - attended by 116; viewed afterwards 135 times.
- Outing the Past Festival *Sexual Politics, Peace and Place* – attended by 58; viewed afterwards 83 times.



Talks recorded in previous years continue to be viewed demonstrating the interest in the subjects and materials of The Women's Library collections.

In addition to filmed events and conversations on YouTube, a selection of 26 extracts from the suffrage oral history collection have been added, [Suffrage stories](#). These provide an excellent entry point for the full collection.

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/library/collection-highlights/the-suffrage-interviews>

The summer 2022 exhibition in the Library Gallery, [Women and the History of International Thought](#) opened in May to accompany a 2-day conference on the same theme hosted by LSE International Relations. Several events for viewing the exhibition were held in June. For those unable to visit to view the exhibition, the curators have recorded audio descriptions available on the website <https://www.lse.ac.uk/library/whats-on/exhibitions>



In May, we were pleased to welcome, artists Helen David and Isabel Castro – Jung to run an interactive in person creative workshop for **The Penelope Project – an examination of gender inequality** using art, craft, and performance.

11 women took part enthusiastically discussing, listening to, and sharing their experiences. The project is planning an exhibition later in the year to capture the discussions from the workshops.

The summer term has featured 6 in person events – exhibition views, film screening of *Independent Miss Craigie*, the *Penelope Project workshop* and the LSE Festival family workshop, *Sunbeams*.

Throughout the year, the Library's social media team plan a schedule of communications for Twitter which focus on sharing narratives from our collections, highlighting the new, revisiting the known and drawing out the lesser-known materials, as well as promoting events and activities. Using social media means we can share content and developments and build interest and engagement with the collections.

6. CONCLUSION

2021-22 has been a year of recovery, refreshing and restarting activities that had been paused – physical exhibitions, in person archive workshops and events. Excitingly it has also been one of new acquisitions, launching newly digitised collections, introducing digitisation services and providing online and in person public activities.

The focus for 2022-23 will be to provide blended services to enable access, research and engagement with our collections to our audiences wherever they are based.



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