



Welcome to the Second edition of the relaunched Feminist Library Newsletter and our first of 2008. We wish all the volunteers, supporters and friends of the library a happy new year and look forward to a successful year at the library.

Containing over 10,000 books, 700 complete and partial sets of periodicals, 1,200 articles, over 2,000 pamphlets and ephemera, including many original posters, 600 unpublished papers and a small but important collection of archives from the Women's Liberation Movement, the Feminist Library is recognised as the most significant collection of contemporary feminist material in England.

2007 – a year of ups and downs

.....like many of the years in the history of the Feminist Library. Despite the efforts of a number of dedicated volunteers, and a change in management, the library had not been able to get itself out of the crisis induced in 2003 by a sudden vast increase in its rent. By January last year the management committee had dwindled to only four women and they decided to call an emergency meeting in a last ditch attempt to garner support from the feminist community to stop the valuable collection of many thousands of books, pamphlets and ephemera collected since 1975 from being lost. At a well-attended meeting, held on 24 February, a great deal of support was voiced for the library, and it was decided to make one last attempt to save the collection. Seven new volunteers came forward to join the management committee and a number of volunteers put themselves forward at the meeting to open the library to the public once again, carry out administrative duties and put together a new website.

And so, on the 14th April 2007, the Feminist Library reopened to the public in a blaze of publicity. Our Saturday openings were well attended and it was fantastic to see people in the library using and enjoying the collection after years of closure.

However, only ten days later, our landlord Southwark Council, locked us out of the library over the rent dispute. The next seven months were spent in negotiation with the council, trying to regain access to the library. As the Feminist Library has been unfunded for many years and had been surviving on donations from supporters,

we were unable to pay the huge rent demanded of us from Southwark. Thanks to the intervention of Simon Hughes, the local MP, and some goodwill on behalf of the council, a deal was struck, and in January 2008 a lease was signed and we regained access to the library.

While locked out of the building, the management committee tried to raise the profile of the library, raise funds, and secure its future. We had stalls at Feminist Fightback and Reclaim the Night; we chaired an open meeting at the Anarchist Bookfair on the future of radical libraries in the UK and along with the Bishopsgate Library, formed the Network of Radical Library's and Archives (NORLA - see newsletter number 1, available on our website) which aims to be a voice and support network for at-risk libraries and archives such as our own; we relaunched the Friends of the Feminist Library scheme, and also relaunched our fantastic newsletter.

So although 2007 was tumultuous for us, we are hopeful that 2008 will represent a turnaround in the fortunes of the Feminist Library. On January 27th we opened our doors to the Feminist Activist Forum, who had a tour of the library and used our meeting room to start planning a radical feminist history conference for 2009. Around 30 feminists visited the library that day, many of whom have now joined us as volunteers and we are hoping to hold similar events again. We are planning to restart Women's Monthly Events, to raise our profile and funds for the library. If you would like to hold an event at the library, or have any ideas about fundraising events, or you would like a tour of the library for individuals or groups, please do contact us.

Visiting the Feminist Library

The Feminist Library is now open on Saturdays between 11am and 4.45pm. We're really excited to finally be able to open the library again, and we're looking forward to welcoming visitors. We are hoping to extend our opening hours soon to at least one other day during the week and it is possible to visit the library at other times by appointment, (see page 3 for details on days we will not be open). Please email the library for details.

The library is open to everyone, although a very small section of the collection is women-only. The collection ranges from academia to popular fiction to poetry to zines, covering a period from the late 1960s to the present day. We have a particularly comprehensive collection of women's liberation material from the 1970s. Our non-patriarchal card catalogue is a wonder in itself; volunteers running the library will be on hand to explain its logic and help readers to find what they are looking for.

The library is near Southwark, Lambeth North and Elephant & Castle tube stations. The address is 5a Westminster Bridge Road – just off St George's Circus in a big brick building opposite a zebra crossing. We're on the first floor. We look forward to seeing you there soon!

The Feminist Activist Forum visits the Feminist Library

On Sunday 27th January 2007, more than 30 women and men from the Feminist Activist Forum (FAF) visited the Feminist Library. FAF was set up in April 2007 to create an intergenerational feminist activist community. The group aims to challenge negative stereotypes of feminists and feminism, to reclaim feminist histories and learn from them, in addition to making new links between activists. Visitors were shown around the library and given a description of its history and current situation, before gathering in the meeting room above the library to share a lunch of curry, rice, flapjacks and fruit. This was followed by a discussion of possible FAF history actions. Ideas included creating an exhibition about feminist history, collecting oral histories from feminist women, and finding out about London's hidden feminist landmarks. FAF activists were excited about finding information in the Feminist Library's collection to support these plans.

For more information about Feminist Activist Forum and its other activities visit

www.feministactivistforum.org.uk

**Check out our website at
www.feministlibrary.co.uk**



Ladyfest London 2008 has pledged its support to the Feminist Library.

Ladyfest is a non-profit, volunteer-run feminist music, arts and activism festival that will be held in Camden between 8–11 May 2008. Ladyfest London is keen to involve the Feminist Library with workshops at the festival, and the library has been nominated as a possible beneficiary of any profits raised.

The festival celebrates the wealth of diversity of women's talents within the London independent art scenes and beyond, as well as promoting the do-it-yourself ethic and participation in feminist discussion and activism. People of all genders and backgrounds are welcome to participate.

Ladyfest London is looking for volunteers to help with all aspects of planning and running the festival. Please email info@ladyfestlondon.co.uk if you would like to take part in this fantastic Ladyfest event.

The Feminist Library banner is nearly done and will have its first outing on the Million Women Rise! International Women's Day march. Veronica, who is making it, using the dragon logo she designed, tells us how she's getting on:

Being a hoarder, of course I had the materials to hand. The purple cloth comes from a sari under-skirt that I bought in India; the green is an offcut that I saved while working in a bed and futon factory; the white from the end of a bale of sheeting. Quite a bit of the banner is hand-stitched because the tension on my sewing machine has gone wrong.

I projected the design on paper, drew the outlines, cut it out and drew round the shapes on to the coloured cloth. Then sewed the coloured shapes to the front of the banner. Part of the way through, I realised it would have been so much more simple to project and trace the design on to the back of the banner - tack the coloured cloth to the front, turn it over and sew round the outline on the back. Then turn the banner to the front, cut away the surplus from each shape and over-sew the ragged edges. With the clarity of hindsight and an efficient sewing machine it would have taken half the time. See you on the 8th of March!

Listings

International Women's Day

Here are few of the many events happening across London and the country on or around International Women's Day. For a full listing of events celebrating IWD visit www.internationalwomensday.com or www.womeninlondon.org.uk.

3 – 9 March Wise Words Festival, London

Venue – Rich Mix, 35 – 47 Bethnal Green Rd, London E1.

Celebrates International Women's Week with a diverse line-up of novelists, poets, playwrights, musicians and comics from around the world, such as Shazia Mirza and Ninia Benjamin.

www.richmix.org.uk

6 – 14 March Birds Eye View Film Festival London

A week of celebrating the best in new features, documentaries and short films from women filmmakers across the globe.

For full listings and ticket details visit www.birds-eye-view.co.uk.

Friday 7 March, 10:30 – 2:30 @ Glasgow Women's Library

From Puppets to Poetry, Paper Plates and Parachutes

An opportunity to sample inspiring workshops used in Paisley and Soweto to connect concerns about poverty, health and education and women and the environment and to hear from the pioneering group members about their exciting and moving journey across continents.

Full details at www.womenslibrary.org.

7 – 22 March at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow Glasgow Women's Library Presents... A Scots Helikon: Portraits of Nine Contemporary Scottish Women Writers by Anna Caro

GWL looks forward to its relocation to the Mitchell library and invites you to a free exhibition of Anna Caro's portraits of 9 contemporary Scottish women writers. No booking necessary. Enter the Mitchell Library at the Granville St entrance – opening hours: Mon – Thurs – 9am to 8pm, Fri-Sat 9am to 5pm.

Saturday 8 March – Million Women Rise!

Calling a million women to rise...

"Something has to happen for women and now".

Million Woman Rise! is expected to include a day of speeches, prayer and music. Hundreds of thousands of women are expected at the march and rally on International Women's Day, to address violence against women through a show of political, social, economic and creative solidarity. A Million Women will march... Saturday 8th March 2008. Assemble 12 noon at Hyde Park and march to Trafalgar Square.

For more details – www.millionwomenrise.com

To get involved email;

millionwomenrise@gmail.com Info line: 07862113308

Benefits are being held in Nottingham and other parts of the country over the next few weeks. For more info see website.

Saturday 8 March – Capitalwoman 2008, London.

Organised by the Mayor office, it is open and free to all and includes an audience with Angela Davis, an on-site enterprise centre and workshops.

To register for this event visit www.london.gov.uk/capitalwoman.

Sunday 9 March – Women's day at the Farm Spitalfields City Farm, London E1 5AR, 12 – 4pm, FREE

The annual opportunity to showcase the work of the highly successful Coriander Club, a pioneering women's group which gives socially excluded Bengali women the opportunity to socialise, share recipes and health concerns and grow giant exotic vegetables. The group will be on hand to share gardening tips, give tours of the farm and discuss their work.

Saturday 15 March – Legacy! What Women Have Done For Us All – History and archives Conference

10am – 4:30pm £25/ £15 concs including lunch

Exmouth Market Centre, London EC1R 4QE

Organised by the LMA this conference examines the work of significant figures like Mary Ward Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Mary Seacole, as well as the influence of grassroots movements and unknown activists. Speakers include the Feminist Library and Women in Local Government.

For tickets call 020 73323820, email

ask.ima@cityoflondon.co.uk or write to London Metropolitan Archives, EC1R 0HB.

17 October 2007 – 29 March 2008

Sinners, Sroungers. Saints: Lone Mother, past and present

The Women's Library, Old Castle St, London E1 7NT

The exhibition addresses the ways in which lone mothers have been represented over time, showcases new research and tells the stories of lone mothers from the 1700's to the present day, challenging perceptions and questioning stereotypes.

For more info ring 020 73202222 or email moreinfo@the.womenslibrary.ac.uk.

13 Jan to 7 April 2008 Combined Unity: Jo Holland

The Women's library, London.

Jo Holland makes photographs without the use of a camera or film, directly exposing the object onto what becomes unique print. Her current series is of the human placenta.

26 April FEM 08 at Sheffield University Students Union

A free conference aiming to educate and inspire men and women to get active in Feminism. Speakers include Jess McCabe and Germaine Greer.

To book a place visit www.femconferences.org.uk

Saturday 8 March

The Feminist Library will be closed on 8 March because we will instead be joining our sisters on the Million Women Rise! March. If you'd like to walk with us, please look for our banner at Hyde Park or on route.

The library will also be closed 15 March as we will all be attending the Legacy! Conference at the London Metropolitan Archives.

Instead we will be opening on Sunday March 16 from 2 to 5 for an open afternoon. Please come down for a tour.

We plan to start doing book reviews in the newsletter, so if there is any book that you would like to write about or if you know any publishers who would send review copies please get in touch.

Become a Friend of the Feminist Library

We are optimistic that, with financial and moral support, the Feminist Library has a future, so the management group has reopened the Friends of the Feminist Library scheme. Friends of the Feminist Library will receive a quarterly newsletter, join our Friends' mailing list, be invited to events at the library, and be involved in some of our decision-making processes. You can become a Friend of the Feminist Library by filling out the form below to set up a regular standing order payment to the library. Doing so will help a crucial resource and archive survive for future generations, and therefore furthering the feminist cause.

Thanks to all our new Friends who have recently set up a standing order, your support is greatly appreciated. We would also like to give an especially big thanks to all the long-term Friends of the Feminist Library, whose unfaltering support has been critical in keeping the library going.

Become a volunteer at the Feminist Library

The library is completely run by volunteers and we always need more help with our work. Please contact us if you would like to join the management group and/or volunteer to help in the library, with fundraising, organising events, office administration, cataloguing, the newsletter, or any other task that contributes to the running of the library.

Together we can help the Feminist Library survive and flourish.

Please return this form to the address below. We will forward it to your bank and send you a copy.

To (name of your bank).....

Branch and address:

.....Postcode.....

Bank sort-codeAccount no.

Please pay to the account of The Feminist Library, NatWest branch sort code **60-60-04**, account number **26060728**, on/...../..... and thereafter monthly, on the same date each month, the sum of £2/£5/£10/£20(delete as appropriate) or £..... (in figures)£..... (in words) until further notice.

Signed.....Date.....Your name.....

Address.....

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I do / do not wish my gift to be publicised (delete as appropriate)

I would like The Feminist Library to treat as Gift Aid donations (please tick):

- the enclosed donation of £.....
- the donation(s) of £..... which I made on .../.../.....
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Or

- I am not eligible for Gift Aid.

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