



Newsletter No. 1 October 2007

We are glad to announce that we are re-launching the Feminist Library Newsletter which we aim to produce at least quarterly. Produced by a volunteer editorial team, we hope to include features on a wide range of women's issues, interviews, book reviews, news of events and activities by women's groups, and of course updates on the Feminist Library's own work. We're mailing to everyone on our email list, as well as posting copies to try and reach as many friends and potential Friends of the Feminist Library as possible.

Welcome to the New Feminist Library Newsletter. This revamped newsletter is part of our efforts to revive the library's fortunes. We look forward to hearing from you with ideas for the future of the library and content for future issues of the newsletter.

What is the Feminist Library?

Containing approximately 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partial sets of periodicals, 1,200 articles, over 2,000 pamphlets and ephemera, including many original posters, 600 unpublished papers and a small but important collection of archives from the Women's Liberation Movement, the Feminist Library is recognised as the most significant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. The collection includes both fiction and non-fiction, and also a large collection of feminist poetry. It ranges across all aspects of women's lives and issues from education, politics and the law, to health, travel and sport. Many of the items are unique to the library, such as a transcript of the first Women's Liberation Conference, held in 1970 at Ruskin College, Oxford. We have also been responsible for rescuing other threatened parts of our history – in June 2006 we stopped the Women's Health library being thrown in a skip, so we are now holding an extra 75 boxes of materials from them.

The classification scheme used by the library is unique. It was compiled for us by a feminist librarian, and was the first to take issues of concern to women as its central organising principle.

Formerly known as the Women's Research and Resources Centre, the library was set up in 1975 by a group of women to record and document the Women's Liberation Movement and safeguard its history. It provided a place where women could network and educate themselves, and became a central contact point for women locally, nationally and internationally. As well as running courses and seminars and collecting materials that women were writing, it evolved and developed, alongside the Women's Liberation Movement out of which the library grew, to become an information and library service for all women, with an active drive for inclusion and accessibility. Run by and for its users, the library is run entirely by volunteers with a management structure that embodies the egalitarianism it works to promote. The library has been sustained for 32 years by the goodwill, passion and commitment of many individual women, so if you would like to play a role in developing and protecting this vital resource, then please get in touch - we would love to hear from you.

The Year So Far

It has been a hectic year for the Feminist Library, full of ups and downs. In recent years the library has faced many crises, particularly in relation to funding, and facing the possibility of closing the library and dispersing the collection. In February an emergency meeting was called to discuss our future. The meeting was well attended, with several enthusiastic women joining the management group, and many more offering to volunteer at the library. We decided to try and secure the future of the Feminist Library, and find new premises. Our current location, as well as being expensive, is extremely damp and cramped, and not suitable for storing our valuable collection. In May we reopened the library to the public after years of closure, only to be locked out by our landlord, Southwark Council, two weeks later. We are currently negotiating to regain access to the library, and are hoping to be back and open to all very soon - Simon Hughes, our local MP, has been doing his best to help us. Regardless of the situation with Southwark, we are determined to re-house the collection in more suitable, long-term accommodation. Ideally we would like to stay independent, but are currently exploring all options, including housing ourselves with other radical libraries and archives, or within an academic institution.

A note about our new Feminist Library logo: the Dragon is a symbol associated with the Great Mother Goddess (via the snake) and hence, represents the female principle and matriarchy. St George is usually seen plunging his sword into her, which is a visual metaphor for the triumph and hegemony of patriarchal principles over the matriarchy. Originally designed as a card to cheer up the locked-out sisters of the Feminist Library, the message was that the dragon couldn't be arsed to enact her part again this St George's Day, because she was curled up at the Feminist Library with a book.

First meeting of a new independent libraries network

London lacks the radical book culture it once had, and libraries and archives across the board are feeling the effects of funding cuts, rent increases and the many other challenges threatening the information sector. These factors have been especially catastrophic for independent libraries and archives, such as the Feminist Library.

On July 6th, representatives from a wide range of London-based independent and/or radical libraries and archives met at the Bishopsgate Institute with the aim of forming a network of radical, minority and independent libraries and archives across the UK. Members of the Feminist Library, Bishopsgate Library, Klinger-Kaizer Yiddish Library, Peace Pledge Union, 56a Infoshop, Housmans Bookshops and London College of Communication attended, with many other institutes (including the Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive, London Metropolitan Archive, Commonwealth Library, Women's Library, University of Bradford and the Working Class Movement Library) also expressing interest in participating.

With many of the organisations facing the challenge of finding suitable and affordable accommodation in the near future, one solution discussed was a consolidated building housing some of London's current potentially at risk radical archives and libraries. This building could be an archive/library, with perhaps a café, bookshop, and meeting facility.

The new network will offer a shared pool of information and support, and a united front with which to face growing challenges, and it will aim to provide a united voice for radical, minority and independent libraries and archives across the country.

For more information about the group please contact the Feminist Library.

Visit to Feminist Archives North

Four members of the Management Committee visited Feminist Archives North (FAN) at their home in the Brotherton Library, Leeds University on 9th June 2007. FAN's current facilities, including temperature-controlled storage and a project to digitalise their catalogue, had us drooling with envy. Within the stately, art deco Brotherton Library, they have a spacious office with shelving units and tables for reading, administration, and cataloguing. The collection, which is predominantly made up of personal archives and periodicals, remains the property of FAN, although it is hosted by Leeds University.

Finding secure premises has enabled FAN to focus their efforts on fundraising and other projects. For the past year, they have employed a professional archivist using a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Their position within the university has helped them to find student volunteers to help with the running of the library. They have also been running a programme of publicity events including a Feminist Antiques Roadshow, producing invaluable oral history recordings with women's liberationists from Leeds and West Yorkshire. Quite wonderfully, they have also been producing an education pack on the Women's Liberation movement aimed at Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils.

FAN gave us lots of invaluable advice about our situation, having had similar problems with finding suitable premises in the past. They suggested we produce clearer campaigning documents, and identify new approaches to fundraising and lobbying. They gave us a lot of motivation by showing what can be achieved with a lot of hard work and the assistance of a supportive host organisation.

Visit Feminist Archive North's website at www.feministarchivenorth.org.uk.

RECLAIM THE NIGHT 2007

women's march against rape and male violence

SATURDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2007

Assemble 6pm Trafalgar Square

Women's march to University of London Union for mixed rally for men and women with speakers, stalls, bands and DJs til late — Reclaim your right to party!

In Britain, there are an estimated 47,000 rapes every year. And each year, an estimated 300,000 women are sexually assaulted (British Crime Survey 2001). Yet Britain's conviction rate is the lowest ever, at just 5.3 per cent.

In the workplace, 1 in 2 women are sexually harrassed (EOC 2000). Now more than ever women must come together to say 'no' to violence against women.

**International Day to
> End Violence
Against Women**

To get involved or for more information, contact the London Feminist Network:
www.ldnfeministnetwork.uk.com or e-mail londonfeminist@yahoo.co.uk

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 is reopening 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.

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.....

PostcodeEmail address.....

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/...../.....
- all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise
- all donations I have made from 06 April 2004, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise

Or

- I am not eligible for Gift Aid.

If you are unsure whether your donations qualify for Gift Aid tax relief, ask for your local tax office for leaflet IR113 *Gift Aid*.

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Contributors: Una Byrne

Polly Cassidy

Kate Lomax

Veronica Planton

Gail Chester

Email: feministlibraryappeal@gmail.com

Contact Details

The Feminist Library

5 Westminster Bridge Rd

London

SE1 7XW

Online: www.feministlibrary.co.uk