



*This special joint podcast from **LSE Equality and Diversity** and the **LSE Review of Books**, examines the history of the newly acquired Women's Library at the London School of Economics through the eyes of a long-term librarian.*

**Transcript of joint LSE Equality and Diversity and the LSE Review of Books podcast on the Women's Library @ LSE: Interview with David Doughan MBE**

*Amy Mollett/AM: You're listening to a special joint podcast of the LSE Review of Books and LSE Equality and Diversity on the subject of the Women's Library. The London School of Economics acquired the Library from the London Metropolitan University earlier in 2013. The Library holds an internationally renowned collection, including UNESCO recognised documents. The collection covers the changing social and political circumstances in the lives of women from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The collection developed from the suffrage movement and now includes over 60,000 books and pamphlets, 3,500 periodicals as well as hundreds of press cuttings, making it into a researcher's dream.*

*David Doughan worked at the Library for 23 years, first as an assistant, and then as a librarian and was awarded an MBE for services to Women's Studies through his contribution to the Library. In this podcast, LSE's Equality and Diversity Adviser, Asiya Islam, talks to David Doughan about the continued significance of the Library and its role in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century feminist movement.]*

**Asiya Islam/AI: When we think about the women's movement in the UK, there's no doubt that the library provided an intellectual space to women that they might not have had otherwise, but coming to the present age, what do you think is the importance of the library today and what is its continued significance?**



*David Doughan with his wife*

David Doughan/DD: It is getting a focus on women, getting a woman friendly space and not all academic libraries are what you would call particularly woman friendly spaces, some are more so than others. But a library that has good academic backing, good foundation, plenty of history and plenty of experience in this field which has reputation of being a place where women who are involved in academic research can come and find what they want and if they can't find it there, they know there are people there who can tell them where they might find it. Specialising in just 52% of the human race.

**AI: And it is quite a specialist area, isn't it?**

DD: Oh yes, and when you are dealing with half the human race, you'd be surprised at how specialist, in quotes, it seems to be or shall we say how specialist it is regarded. It's always on the finish there somewhere.

**AI: Today when we talk about the women's movement, there are some men supporters but there are also men, and indeed women, who oppose the movement. As a man who was involved with the feminist movement and the women's library in the 70s, what was your experience like?**

DD: Well, in fact, I had very little doodling, I just sort of fitted in, I felt fitted in. Plenty of men at that time certainly were supportive in one way or another of the women's movement and there was a fairly sharp line drawn. There were those who we knew were saying "Good God! These bloody women! Why don't they get back into the kitchen?!" but those even in the 70s were already an embattled minority. I remember in the 1980s there was this funny little periodical brought out called 'Vive la différence' which was supportive of the 'real woman', the nice stay-at-home woman who didn't do nasty things in public and certainly didn't take any part in public life. They had a bit of trouble in the 1980s, it was actually quite like Margaret Thatcher. There was another thing called the 'men's movement' which is about a sort of men's equivalent of the women's liberation movement but I was never really involved in it. I just sat there on the side lines and watched sympathetically, shall we say? My movement is the women's movement.

**AI: You mentioned that the collections of the library grew over time. Today when we think about the library we think of it as a very comprehensive resource. I was wondering if you saw the collections growing during your time at the library?**

DD: Well most of the acquisition of different collections had happened before the move. One of the big ones was the acquisition of the Josephine Butler Society Library, which is a tremendous resource, vastly underused, underexploited because partly it's not visually interesting as things like the suffragette movement. Most of the materials look rather grey, the subjects they are talking about are not. You know there's still this idea that the Victorians never talked about sex. You look at things like the Josephine Butler collection, you wonder if they ever talked about anything else! And one of the things though, talking about the visual appeal of a lot of things, it was very frustrating in the Fawcett Library because we were stuck in the basement and we had lots of stuff to display, marvellous displayable stuff and nowhere to display it. As we were moving, we found banners just sitting in the Fawcett Society. The Fawcett Society was also moving at the time and we see this pile of materials underneath the table, we got over 50 banners just from that. Again, all this lovely museum style displayable material, and very frustrating having great difficulty in trying to find somewhere to put it up.

**AI: You worked for so long at the women's library, if you were to talk about one most interesting or exciting thing that you came across during your time there, what would that be?**

DD: Oh now that...that is a real googly! There were so many unexpected things, little things, big things, things that I learnt. I learnt very early on, when picking up telephone calls particularly, very often to bite my lip. There was one occasion when a woman called to know what we had about belly dancing. And I can't remember what I said but I sort of gave the impression that we're not that sort of library and my ear got chewed off on how the origins of this was in ante natal exercise and real feminism etc etc. And also on the phone you got these women saying "Oh I'm not one of these dreadful women's libbers" and I learnt very early on not to say "Tough, I am!" There was all this talk about oh yeah feminism, we don't need feminism. All these young women who say no, we're not interested in feminist, you pick up one or two feminist issues and watch their reaction, they just don't call it feminism.

*[AM: That was David Doughan talking to Asiya Islam. The Women's Library @ LSE will reopen to the public on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 2013. Visit the LSE Equality and Diversity blog at [blogs.lse.ac.uk/diversity](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/diversity) for posts on diversity initiatives in higher education and wider. You can also find reviews of the latest academic titles on [lseviewofbooks.com](http://lseviewofbooks.com). This podcast was produced by Cheryl Brumley. The music came courtesy of Duke Hugh for his song Sweet and Lowdown from the Freemusicarchive. I'm Amy Mollett. Thanks for listening!]*