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Outstanding issues:  
Gender, feminisms and librarianship

Rosemary Catherine Ilett

Part 2

## **Part Two : The legacy of contemporary librarianship**

### **Introduction**

To consider librarianship as a practice associated with women and for which linking in feminist understandings might be useful, part of my investigation has been literature-based, part has been an engagement with shifting processes, locations and events, but part has been through meeting with practitioners and observers and eliciting their opinions and experiences. In some senses, the three parts of this thesis comply with these different processes and stages.

### ***Naming the Parts***

In Part One of the thesis, in the first chapter, I discussed the contemporary crisis within librarianship at the start of the twenty-first century and suggested that its vulnerability may be linked to a range of internal and external pressures, including its social construction. I identified and reviewed the late nineteenth century and the 1960s and 1970s as significant times of change when the vulnerability of librarianship was revealed and enforced. Librarianship's concern with professionalism was interrogated utilising tools available at the onset of second wave feminism, during which it became clear that many barriers exist within librarianship from this viewpoint to professional status, and that the involvement of women in librarianship merits consideration with more gendered insights. It was also clear that using these tools without including an awareness of gender provided limited outputs.

In the second chapter, I reviewed second wave feminism and its main strands and ideologies, and the challenges it faced in incorporating diversity alongside its generation of a range of identities and allegiances, wider than that of the category of woman. I also set out my own histories as a feminist, and the integration of some aspects of this experience into my personal and professional life. The construction of knowledge and its origins was seen to be of central interest to second wave feminism. I proposed that for the purposes of this study, the impact of second wave feminist thinking on the theory and practice of sociology, and on research methodologies, was highly significant and needed to be reviewed further.

Chapter Three then reviewed the impact of second-wave thinking on sociology, particularly the creation of women's studies and its outcomes in methodologies and research approaches. It considered some of second wave feminist outcomes in feminist sociology that allowed the notion and experience of work to be discussed and critiqued. Work seen in this way as a process that articulates many attributes and skills determined by gender, rather than natural aptitude, raised questions of librarianship as something that could be challenged and could have been influenced via individuals and groups. Librarianship, as a female-dominated practice, has then been considered anew, and found to have inherited notions of female behaviours that may have limited those that work within public libraries, the key mainstream library setting with which I am most concerned, and to have ensured its secondary status. The identification of issues such as sex segregation and hierarchy, the role of the professional associations, the glass ceiling and roles and work remits also needed to be addressed during my field-work.

This chapter established the processes that I followed to develop my research questions and the methodologies I employed. It provided information about my engagements with many of the situations and histories that I discuss and analyse, and introduced reflexivity as a tool employed throughout the thesis to reveal the material more fully and personally in the context of post-second wave feminism. It considered feminist research activities derived through second wave feminist sociology and discussed how my interviews and personal reflections have drawn on these models. Researchers like Ann Oakley were suggested as pivotal figures in the development of feminist research, but along with other second wave feminist researchers, limited by the theoretical framework in which they operated. The processes by which I defined my research areas, identified and contacted my informant, and carried out other forms of research, including that into the legacies of Melvil Dewey and Andrew Carnegie, were set out. Chapter Three concluded by proposing the need for a more rigorous investigation of feminist legacies in research to position the thesis, and its propositions, processes and findings, more centrally.

In Chapter Four, the focus returned to work, where I discussed the impact of gender in the workplace and its effects on tasks, roles and work structures. I then was able to highlight librarianship as female-dominated and because of that likely to be devalued and to experience inherent difficulties. This chapter argued that the first three chapters had provided some important evidence about the structures and constructions of contemporary librarianship using second wave positions, but that there were other areas

that needed attention, and that thinking from the third wave might be beneficial. Chapter Five then went on to undertake this task.

In Chapter Five, I considered some pivotal issues from this theoretical perspective, namely knowledge, space, identities and communities, all of which have been described as relevant to librarianship. This investigation has begun to position women in libraries as at the borderland between the public and the private, in a role that appears to have elements that are domestic and connected to views of women's gendered attributes and skills, besides some that are technical. Librarianship's desire to be seen as professional, objective and scientific may therefore raise conflicts. Utilising categories such as space and knowledge are opportunities to delve deeper into the contemporary experience of librarianship and its component, historical parts. Through considering the work of feminist geographers and others, I considered the gendered and political constructions of space, and introduced and explored Foucault's important concept of heterotopia. It was proposed that this concept has huge applicability when discussing librarianship, especially as Foucault considered the library to be a heterotopia, but that integrating an explicit knowledge of gender and its impacts, is extremely important for this investigation. At the end of Chapter Five, I set out my definition and coinage of the term 'gendertopia' that will allow a post-second wave reading of the meaning of libraries and librarianship to take place, that will be increasingly useful in Part Three. The second part of my thesis will develop these discussions through using such tools to reflect on librarianship. It will provide a theoretical bridge between Part One and Part Two by revealing more explicitly the underpinnings of contemporary librarianship, and charting some of the challenges to librarianship generated through second wave feminist awareness.

### *Moving into Part Two*

In Chapter Six, I investigate in some detail the inheritance to librarianship of Melvil Dewey and Andrew Carnegie. Reviewing the input of Dewey is crucial to understanding the dynamics of contemporary librarianship, particularly concerning his development of a structured sets of practices with women playing a key role. The role of Carnegie is also vital in reviewing the construction of physical space and the creation of the recognisable nineteenth century municipal library that, as Chapter One identified, is now increasingly contested and his history and influences are discussed. It is proposed in this chapter that these important inheritances have had significant effects on librarianship, and have been

the subject of challenge, motivated by various sets of beliefs and ideologies, including feminism, as the next chapter will begin to explore.

To provide further understandings into the making of contemporary librarianship, its outcomes, and the pressure points that have attracted concern from a second wave feminist perspective, Chapter Seven will analyse new thinking within librarianship inspired by second wave feminism and its outcomes. The majority of this evidence is provided by librarians working in the sectors that are regarded as professional librarianship, although some examples will come from women working in libraries, inspired by feminism, that are not part of incorporated provision. This is demonstrated through discontents expressed in the librarianship press, by actions and challenges to long-standing thinking and practice within mainstream libraries, by challenges to the professionalism expressed by the professional library associations, and by collective engagement with second wave feminist activism and organising by some women librarians. This chapter concludes Part Two, having reviewed the impact of second wave feminist thinking in mainstream librarianship, and with some insights into the activities of women influenced by feminism that have developed resources to further promote women's status in society. Part Three will then address these sites in further detail to assess the insights that they may offer to understand the contested nature of librarianship and its engagement with gender issues in a post-second wave feminist period.

**Somerford Grove Library, Hackney, March 1988**

**Dear Diary**

I did a reading tonight at Somerford Grove Library for International Women's Day with the Centerprise Women Writer's Group. It's one of the Hackney libraries that has closed, but is occupied by librarians and local people who are resisting council cuts. The staff are amazing - women of course - and are managing to keep it (illegally) open - Hackney Council has completely misjudged librarians and the local community. It must be hard for public librarians trying to do things differently, torn between working for the Council and doing the right thing by their conscience. Interesting times, especially as I am studying to become one !

Somerford Grove is not one of the Carnegie libraries, of which there are quite a few in the area, but a modern mid-war one. Its not surprising that local people, especially in Hackney haven't felt welcomed in the public libraries and haven't used them. It's easy then for the Council to shut them down. There's obviously a whole issue about how to encourage people to use libraries, especially if they are seen as being about educating the masses.

It was a brilliant night ! We read our poems by candle-light - as the electricity has been disconnected. As it said on our flyer for the event - 'Library and Information Workers against the cuts !'. And local women as well !

**... feminists and librarians together !**

**Chapter Six : Melvil Dewey, Andrew Carnegie and the legacy for librarianship**

- Introduction
- The beginnings of the visions of Dewey and Carnegie
- Classifying the library
- The power of 10 - the role of decimals in organising libraries
- What were Dewey's influences ?
- Developing library science and the business of libraries
- From catalogue cards to rubber bands - the vision expands
- The birth of the American and British library associations
- Organising the American Library Association
- British librarianship follows suit
- The A.L.A. implements the vision
- Libraries for the people in a new type of space
- Carnegie's wish for social improvement
- Victorian women enter the library
- Making the public library homely - the world's first school for librarians
- Dewey's continuing mission of educational reform
- Lake Placid - the development of a model community

- Dewey and anti-Semitism
- Dewey and women
- Dewey's influence on women's domestic role
- Conclusion

## Introduction

In the last chapter, I built on existing tools from second wave feminism that have allowed a range of insights into the experience and role of women in the workplace, and introduced other approaches derived from later theoretical positions. This included discussions of space and the introduction of the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia to refer to counter-sites that operate within and against society, of which the library is one. This new thinking provides broader scope to interrogate the construction of librarianship and how feminisms have critiqued, interfaced and interacted with it. My overall intention has been to assess the impact on librarianship of changes wrought through historical, recent and current periods, especially that of the second wave feminist movement, using thinking derived from second and third feminisms. I have aimed to seek out and understand views of contemporary librarians who may be affected by historical notions, impacts of second wave feminist resistance and the current crisis in librarianship.

This chapter will explore the construction of nineteenth century librarianship and position it as a strong influence on the librarianship that came after, that is indeed its inheritance. Many of the inherent, and highly significant, aspects of librarianship, including its female nature, derived from this period. My investigation will therefore describe these trajectories of a new librarianship through the work of two men - Melvil Dewey and Andrew Carnegie. Modern librarianship as it emerged during the late Victorian period was greatly influenced by pioneering individuals including Dewey, as its designer and shaper, and Carnegie, as the philanthropic provider of the environment in which British and American public librarianship could flourish.

Their work will be positioned as catalysts for much of what followed in librarianship. Dewey was the 'the best known member of the modern librarian's pantheon of notables' who had reportedly 'an almost mystic influence over his followers' (*Harris, 1977, 10*) and helped establish the conditions that formed around this new librarianship where women played a central part. Carnegie used his extensive wealth to envision a community infrastructure that included libraries, schools and leisure spaces as a vehicle for cohesion and developing social capital. Dewey saw education as the vehicle for reform, supported by a paternalistic, ordered librarianship. I will thus consider Dewey's early life and influences, the systems and tools that he introduced (including the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme), his role in developing a revitalised sense of professionhood, and his actions in involving women within the library and library

education and his attitudes towards them. I will propose that his work has had an immeasurable effect on librarianship, and that much of the activity of librarians influenced by second wave feminism has been to challenge this legacy, as the following chapter will explore.

The chapter will also consider the role of Andrew Carnegie in supporting and forming public libraries, and a new form of public librarianship, throughout the world, but especially in the United Kingdom and the United States. His input in shaping the physical nature of libraries that facilitated many of the changes that Dewey desired, has had a continuing influence in how public libraries are perceived as spaces of quiet learning and reverence, but with a central community focus, and this will be explored. I wish to uncover more about the actions taken by Dewey and Carnegie to position librarianship and to shape it into the structures that still exist today, to question their ideological basis and value systems in order to understand the origins of their powerful inheritance.

### *The beginnings of the visions of Dewey and Carnegie*

Melvil(le) Louis Kossuth Dewey (1851 - 1931) was born into a religious middle-class family in western New York, in an area described as 'hard-bitten', where the residents' main goals were survival and 'adherence to the basic codes of industry, frugality and self-reliance' (Elliott, 1981, 666). The Scottish-born steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie (1835 - 1919) was born into a poorer family, and moved from Dunfermline to America in 1848 when he was 13 years old. His working life began as a manual cotton weaver in his own family business, destroyed by the 'new world of the machine, the domain of mindless factory toil and child labor' (Livesay, 1975, 11) which precipitated the family's move to Pennsylvania.

From organising his mother's pantry to recommending that his father closed down (what Dewey observed to be) his inefficient store (Elliott, 1981; Foskett, 1969), Dewey was a serious and introspective adolescent, pre-occupied with the passage of time and the need for efficiency. A pair of cufflinks shaped in the letter 'R' (for 'reform') owned by the teenage Dewey perhaps heralded his life-time wish to create order from chaos and organisation from disharmony (Weigand, 1996). He advocated the metric system and simplified spelling to save time, as he considered that much schooling was wasted 'thru our stupid and antiquated spelling and jumble of weights and measures' (Dewey, 1920,

151). Spelling reform could reclaim those wasted years, and also help immigrants assimilate more successfully into American society (*Weigand, 1996*). Dewey's plans to be a college professor or a missionary were abandoned when he 'determined to make popular education my life work' (*Dewey, 1920, 151*) but the notions and values inherent in the latter, and perhaps the former vocation, arguably remained as strong influences. Aged 18, Dewey attended Amherst College, a conservative institution that aimed to build moral character through 'Protestant orthodoxy and Western culture and classics' (*Weigand, 1996, 15*) and a world view that unquestioningly accepted the status quo.

Unlike Dewey, Carnegie did not have the benefit of such education, bar five years of schooling before he started in the family mill, and worked his way up through his own resources and hard work. After arriving in America with his family, he worked as a bobbin boy in a textile mill, and moved into the developing areas of telegraphs and telecommunications. By his mid-20s Carnegie had established himself as a successful railroad manager, another growing industry that was developing to meet the needs of industrialising America. Unlike Dewey, Carnegie's background was radical, as his father and other male relatives were Chartists, one of whom had been imprisoned for his beliefs, and Carnegie was committed to addressing social and political inequality. Carnegie's mission was underpinned by a belief that wealth and philanthropy could help promote the intellect and redress socio-economic disparity, and by a wish to be regarded as learned and cultured (*Livesay, 1975; Van Slyck, 2002*). Although he abhorred snobbishness and elitism, he admired literature and literary figures, and according to Van Slyck (2002) fantasised of a life at Oxford University which clearly he never in reality sought or achieved. Carnegie enjoyed the company of writers, philosophers and politicians, and although his wealth facilitated access to this world, he appears to have 'received a genuine respect for intellectual rather than material achievements' (*Livesay, 1975, 126*).

### ***Classifying the library***

Librarianship is concerned with the dissemination of knowledge that library classification schemes are required to organise and make accessible. At any major structural or ideological crossroads, knowledge shifts and develops, and within librarianship, fresh systems of interpretation and organisation may be required. Dewey's creation of a scheme fitted his vision of a new form of librarianship, greatly facilitated by Carnegie's desires to benefit communities as I shall explore after discussing the implementation by Dewey of the necessary organisation for such a system.

Library work has always attracted people with obsessional tendencies . . . it is perhaps wiser to be obsessed by processes rather than ideas, and those who are blessed with this kind of temperament make excellent cataloguers.  
(Benge, 1970, 219).

Benge's comment confirms some of the notions already referred to in Chapter One, that librarians are viewed by some as uninterested in original thought but keen on routine minutiae, and arguably much of that image arises from the centrality of classification schemes within librarianship. Dewey's Decimal Classification Scheme, has underpinned the theory and practice of modern librarianship and is still 'the world's most widely used knowledge organization tool' (*Mitchell, 2000, 81*) - its 22nd edition was launched in summer 2003. Dewey, as a product of the nineteenth century, wished to categorise and classify the natural world, and to codify changing social and political arrangements for the efficient and successful use of the library. For Foucault (1970) such desires assumed scientific objectivity, but more importantly a right and determination to control the past and the present world, with librarianship and archives as the vehicle :

The ever more complex preservations of what was written, the establishment of archives, then of filing systems for them, the reorganization of libraries, the drawing up of catalogues, indexes and inventories, all these things represent . . . an order of the same type as that which was being established between living creatures.  
(Foucault, 1970, 132).

The arrangement of ideas in recorded form has historically been seen as the *raison d'être* of librarianship (*Palmer and Austin, 1971*). Library classification schemes order the world of knowledge, or a component area, by subject via structure and relationships for use and continued manipulation and development (*Keenan, 1996; Wyner, 1980*). Classification is concerned with creating order in the library, and implies rationality and neutrality, as it appears to impose 'a completely consistent system on a collection of unique texts' (*Radford and Radford, 1997, 252*). However, the order of subjects and ideas within classification schemes whilst apparently rational and objective, correspond to their societal status. This may encompass a particular perspective or ideology that differ from the world-views or belief systems of library users, and all systems of classification are influenced by values, judgements and beliefs. Bowker and Star (1999) thus asked 'What

are the categories ? Who makes them, and who may change them ? When and where do they become visible ? How do they spread ?' (3).

Bowker and Star rightly question the implicit judgements and shapings of the principles of categorisation exemplified in all forms of classification, and such practices have a long history. Francis Bacon's first attempts formally to classify human understanding and recorded knowledge appeared in his 1623 Chart of Human Learning and this, and other similar systems of philosophical systems of knowledge, were utilised and amended by Dewey and others for the needs of librarianship (*Wyner, 1980*). Benge's view of cataloguing and classification as the natural home of the obsessional, pre-empted Garrison's (1979) later observations of Dewey's potential obsessive-compulsive tendencies. However Dewey's inspiration for the Scheme arguably arose from his studies as a teacher, and his passion for decimalisation. Dewey (1876) regarded decimals as the most logical and historical system for numbering because of the ten human fingers and ten toes, which could provide a familiar framework for the design of this scheme.

### ***The power of 10 - the role of decimals in organising libraries***

Without systematic organisation, Dewey (1920) felt that libraries would remain diverse, separate and disharmonious, so infrastructures were needed that were simple and straightforward so that anyone, 'with little skill or training' (152), could use and work in them. In 1873, aged twenty-one, Dewey synthesised his interests in decimals and organised libraries and produced his first outline library classification scheme for Amherst College where he was then temporary Assistant Librarian. The scheme's principles came to him in a flash, as Weigand quotes, from Dewey's diary that captures his idiosyncratic shorthand :

"The solution flasht over me so that I jumpt in my seat and came very near shouting 'Eureka'! Use *decimals* to number a classification of all human knowledge in print".

(Weigand, 1996, 21-22).

Dewey (1920) later claimed that this revelation occurred whilst at church, an experience according to Maass (1972), reminiscent of Archimedes' bath-time discovery of his Principle or Galileo's sudden insight about the law of the pendulum in church. Whatever its genesis, this notion established the broad principles of Dewey's classification scheme

- that knowledge could be divided into ten main classes that could be further divided into ten subclasses. For Garrison (1979) as mentioned earlier, this concept of organising and placing human knowledge into ten sections was the realisation of 'the obsessive's dream' (115). Dewey's main classes - 000 for bibliographies, periodicals and encyclopaedias; 100 for Philosophy; 200 for Theology; 300 for Sociology; 400 for Philology; 500 for Natural Science; 600 for Useful Arts; 700 for Fine Arts; 800 for Literature and 900 for History - appeared to provide adequate scope and breadth, with no thought that recorded knowledge would ever develop beyond these headings. The scheme was intended to encourage access to libraries, as Weigand (1996) described to 'increase their usefulness, and thus help them assume their rightful place in educating the masses' (24). Dewey is synonymous with his eponymous scheme but observers have noted the assistance of others in its development.

### ***What were Dewey's influences ?***

Dewey took sole credit for his scheme, but some commentators recognise the efforts of Walter Stanley Biscoe, a fellow Amherst student, in undertaking preparatory work for the first version (Elliott, 1981; Vann, 1977). Maass (1972) goes further and questions Dewey's overall role. Maass described Professor William Phipps Blake's classification scheme for the objects displayed at America's first World Fair - the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia - a scheme of ten classes and sub-divisions. Blake's Decimal Scheme, covering knowledge in object form, is claimed to be the direct inspiration for the Dewey Decimal Scheme, as it was published and circulated to every American college, school and university two months before Dewey finished his scheme. Maass argued that Dewey would have seen the scheme through Amherst College, and claimed that :

*It is certain beyond the shadow of a doubt that Melvil Dewey studied this pamphlet by Blake (dated February 27th, 1873) and derived from it the draft of his Decimal Classification (dated May 8th, 1873).*

(Maass, 1972, 339 - italicised as text).

Weigand (1998) referred to Maass' claim, and Dewey's awareness of Bacon's Chart of Human Learning; Dewey (1920) himself stated that his own scheme followed an 'inverted Baconian order' (153). Weigand acknowledged the likely influence of Blake, and Dewey's knowledge of the classification schemes of William Torrey Harris in the St

Louis Public Library and Jacob Schwartz at the New York Mercantile Library and the eventual synthesis of his ideas with theirs to form the new scheme. Vann (1977) asserts that Harris had given Dewey direct information about his scheme, although after the latter had submitted his first version of D.D.C. to Amherst. Weigand (1998) concluded that Dewey wove the D.D.C. from diverse sources, 'selecting the threads from which its essential fabric was woven' (190), and these threads were the Harris scheme at St Louis Public Library with the ethos of Amherst College the backdrop.

Besides his religious, conforming background, Dewey attended college with a homogenous group of male White Anglo-Saxon Protestants mostly from New England; there were 'no Jews, no Roman Catholics, no women, no African Americans and no ethnic minorities' (Weigand, 1996, 24). This ensured effectively 'a mid-nineteenth century male white Western (and largely Christian) view of the world' (Weigand, 1996, 33) which coupled with the 'Amherst Method' of favouring discipline and objectivity, rather than 'research and intellectual inquiry' (Weigand, 1998, 183) made a powerful combination. Dewey's desire for efficiency and order led him to construct a transferable library classification scheme that would organise the world's knowledge and that could fit any general library collection. He appears to have wished to place a historical marker that ensured that librarianship of this period became the arbiter for the organisation of recorded knowledge. There are valid suggestions that some of the concepts of the scheme were not wholly original, but the influence of Dewey's social, class and racial background on his assumptions and thinking appears clear. In the next section, the wider arrangements and building blocks required for the formation of a new librarianship as evolved by Dewey, will be set out.

### ***Developing library science and the business of libraries***

The necessary preliminaries are finished and we are ready for actual work.  
(Dewey, 1877, 246).

I have discussed Dewey's mission for constructing a new librarianship through a classification scheme and considering the wider requirements of library service. Besides this, Dewey wished to develop a coherent and systematic librarianship based on a quasi-scientific paradigm, and to ensure that the right supplies and products were available to ensure libraries ran smoothly, scientifically and to the optimum. As the quotation above

indicates, he saw this work as an organised campaign that needed thorough planning before it could truly succeed.

At the end of 1875, when his temporary post at Amherst College ended, Dewey moved to Boston to work for the educational publishers, Ginn and Company, promoting labour-saving products linked to libraries and education. Dewey's interest in efficient and productive libraries underpinned his concept of library management, where uniform and efficient library administration and management, was 'the function of a library science' (Weigand, 1996, 42). Scientific management, as later developed by Frederick W. Taylor (1947) advocated rational knowledge, with science having a place both in harnessing and controlling the environment but also providing 'the ultimate legitimation for practical choices and everyday courses of action' (Larson, 1977, 141). This chimed with Dewey's vision of a science of librarianship, underpinned by a classification scheme that proposed an ordered, objective view of the world and its knowledge.

For Dewey (1877) making libraries efficient, controlled and economic was 'conditional upon the degree of uniformity in methods and appliances' (246). Garrison (1983) commented that the giving of power to 'disinterested experts' (46) within librarianship, acting in the name of authority and objectivity, as for many other 'new professions' of the time, chimes closely with concerns of scientific management. As Chapter One discussed, one of the main objections to librarianship's professional aspirations has been its reliance on the primary authority of others, and its seeming inability to assert its own opinions. However, Dewey felt convinced by his own ongoing power to make crucial decisions about the direction and shape of librarianship as he saw it.

### ***From catalogue cards to rubber bands - the vision expands***

During 1876, Dewey founded the *Library Journal* to promote methods to encourage reading, to help establish a national librarians organisation to galvanise the new profession, and to be a clearing-house for disseminating information about library supplies and in 1879 he established the Readers and Writers Economy Company (R.W.E.C.) as his umbrella organisation. In the spirit of spelling reform he changed his last name to 'Dui' and became R.W.E.C.'s President, promoting library and office devices and furniture, including the Economy Study Table, the Reader's Readyrest Perfect Vacuum Inkstand, the Economy Eye Shade and metric rubber bands. Many became standard items thanks to the American Library Association Committee on Co-

operation proposed by Dewey (1877). He recommended library co-operation to ensure uniformity, and described the range of items that the Committee could consider - including catalogue cards, call slips, special blank books, notices, borrower's cards, placards, ledgers, slip boxes, devices for holding books upright, trundles, steps, indicators and check boxes. Dewey's views on standardisation and time-saving were sometimes fairly esoteric. Praising a pilot system in Falls River Library that distinguished the sex of readers by coloured library cards, he added :

It sometimes helps in rapid work to know at a glance, without looking at the name, which sex the card belongs to; e.g. a boy or a girl hand in their cards and stand together at the desk. The attendant runs no risk of mixing cards if they are thrown on the table or dropped on the floor.

(Dewey, 1879, 194).

Besides such micro-management, Dewey also attempted to have unaccountable financial control. By 1880 the Reader's and Writer's Economy Company had offices in Boston, New York and Chicago and appeared very successful. However, an investigation of its accounts discovered financial mismanagement and an audit followed. Many of Dewey's methods were questionable, as moneys were moved within areas with which they were not strictly linked but Dewey believed that anyone 'would understand his motives, see his altruism, recognize his lack of desire for personal gain, and thus excuse or overlook unconventional business practices' (Weigand, 1996, 39). This view did not prevail and an injunction was taken out, and Dewey resigned as R.W.E.C. President and Director, later legally severing all links with the organisation. Dewey rearranged some interests under the title of 'Library Bureau' and continued operating from his previous office. Through an inheritance Dewey expanded the business, and although managers had control, he ensured that library, metric and spelling reform remained core concerns, and whenever under threat, Dewey 'used his control of majority stock to force his will' (Weigand, 1996, 235).

In 1895 with Dewey's support, the Chicago office launched a new journal, *Public Libraries*, to champion the increasing number of public libraries, many through funding from Carnegie as I will now return - effectively a rival to the *Library Journal* that Dewey had founded earlier. Lutie Stearns of Wisconsin, a member of the editorial board, was recommended as managing editor, but opposed by Dewey (a.k.a. Dui) unless she changed her name that he thought unsuitable for such a position. As she refused to do so, another

librarian took her place (*Weigand, 1996*). The pressure felt by Dewey to ensure that the structures were in place was partly because the linked activities of Andrew Carnegie to help support the growth of public libraries were gaining momentum, as I discuss later

### ***The birth of the American Library Association***

(Dewey) . . . set into motion the organizational machinery that would create the American Library Association and a whole new sense of librarianship as a scientific, yet sacred, endeavour.

(Garrison, 1979, 5).

Although moves towards an association of American librarians had existed from the mid 1830s through the efforts of Charles C Jewett and Charles E Norton, Dewey realised the vision in 1876 (*Elliott, 1981*). Topics discussed at the first ‘Librarian’s Convention’ held in Philadelphia in October of that year, included the ideal personality for librarians. Participants, amongst the leading librarians of their day, felt that as the general public was not intellectually able to choose its reading, librarians should recommend the most suitable material, introducing the concept of recommended stock as a key tenet of public librarianship. Of the 103 delegates at the conference, twelve were women and some contributed to discussions ‘although their modest remarks were naturally voiced for them by friendly male librarians sitting near’ (*Munford, 1977, 16*), so their full participation does not seem apparent. The Convention made a commitment to form an American Library Association (A.L.A.) and Dewey took a central role in establishing its constitution and organisation. Besides this, Dewey met his future wife, Annie Godfrey, at the conference, who shared similar values of service and duty, and a high regard for education and libraries.

Dewey later became the Association’s first member, and his son, born in 1887, the first child of A.L.A. members, became known as ‘the A.L.A. baby’. Like Dewey, all officers of the new Association were middle-, or upper-class men, interested in technical and practical matters than ideological or philosophical questions. The Association’s overall objectives were to promote library interests through exchanging views, encouraging co-operation, raising awareness of the value of libraries and by generating goodwill - in other words, towards ‘improving library practice, not theory’ (*Weigand, 1996, 52*). As discussed, Dewey used his various positions within the A.L.A., including those of Secretary and Managing Editor of the *Library Journal*, to influence the adoption of

standards and items, for example library catalogue cards, and then sold them to members through the American Metric Bureau. One card size (7.5 cm by 12.5 cm) became standard within librarianship from then on.

In September 1877, Dewey organised A.L.A.'s first Annual Conference and made 'a wholly favourable impression' (*Munford, 1977, 31*). Sixty-six people attended the Conference, of whom less than ten were women. It emphasised practical matters such as 'iron bookstacks, the renovation of books damaged by fire and water, the problems of infected books, cataloguing and accessions methods and procedures, the distribution of public documents, and the value of three new inventions - buckram, the telephone and the typewriter' (*Munford, 1977 23*). After the Conference, A.L.A. members, including Dewey and two women librarians, travelled to London to the first nation-wide meeting of British librarians that met soon after.

### ***British librarianship follows suit***

On 2 October 1877, the first International Conference of Librarians opened at the London Institution. Why during the 1870s ? Why in 1877 ? Why at the London Institution ?  
(*Munford, 1977, 3*).

The British Library Association was founded in 1878 and received a Royal Charter in 1898, after being originally proposed by Edward Edwards, Principal Librarian of Manchester Public Library and 'father of the public library' in 1859 (*Benge, 1970, 218*). The Public Libraries Acts of 1850 and 1855, driven by Edwards and others, established the framework for a public library service radically different from the previous paternalistic and charitable provision aimed at self-improvement of the working-class (*Rose, 2001*). In response to American developments, London librarian Edward Williams Byron Nicholson, 'one of the greatest of nineteenth century librarians' (*Benge, 1970, 217*), suggested a similar meeting in a letter to *The Times* in February 1877. The first British librarians' conference held in London in October 1877 as *Munford (1977)* states at the start, was attended by over two hundred individuals, including two women - Mrs Sarah Cooper and Miss Isabella Stamp (and two American women including Annie Godfrey). This probably accurately reflected gender dynamics within British librarianship at the time, as according to *Munford (1977)* women were to be 'a rarity on British library

staffs for many years to come' (29). The Conference established the Association as a constitutional body with the objective :

To unite all persons engaged or interested in library work, for the purpose of promoting the best possible administration of existing libraries and the foundations of new ones where desirable. It should also aim at the encouragement of bibliographic research.

(Munford, 1977, 30).

The British Library Association took the promotion of public libraries as its central mission, supported by increased legislation, including the Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act of 1887 that facilitated comprehensive public library provision (*Minto, 1932*). From 1896 onwards, membership of the British Library Association mirrored structures being devised through the burgeoning public library sector. Members were categorised as Fellows (Chief Librarians and others of distinction), Honorary Fellows, Members (individuals and institutions) or Associates (library assistants), clearly reflecting that 'the camaraderie of amateurishness had given way to hierarchical professionalism' (*Landau, 1966, 259*). Both the American and British library associations attempted to create a professional structure through membership arrangements such as these, and I now assess the continuing efforts of the A.L.A. to formulate an integrated librarianship through the work of Dewey and others.

### ***The ALA implements the vision***

Without Dewey's attention to mundane organizational activity, the ALA would not have so quickly prospered and grown into self - consciousness.

(Garrison, 1979, 166).

By mid 1890s, Dewey and others had ensured that the A.L.A. was a professional body overseeing a professional occupation - Dewey himself became A.L.A. President in 1890 although resigned a year later. At the 1893 A.L.A. Conference, of the 260 delegates 150 were women, and although a growing number of women were involved in American librarianship, there was little structural response. An A.L.A. women's section was proposed in 1892, but opposed by other women who did not want to speak out (*Rodgers, 1997*). The main topics discussed in 1893 strongly mirrored Dewey's own interests :

The conference devoted much of its attention to shelving, fixtures, binding, furniture, accession policies and procedures and librarians' salaries. Spirited discussions focused on technique, not theory, upon practical matters, not abstract thought addressing issues of meaning and discovery. (Weigand, 1996, 218).

At the 1897 A.L.A. conference, twenty years after its first meeting, Dewey reviewed the Association's achievements. In its first decade, the Association developed efficient libraries, in the second decade the role of libraries in supporting education was the main focus, and from 1896 onwards, Dewey saw the Association's role as being to 'filter bad literature and expose the public only to the good' (Weigand, 1996, 223). Dewey became embroiled in a heated debate that year concerning the A.L.A. Presidency, and his interventions were perceived as arrogant, deceitful and sanctimonious by A.L.A. board members - bitter feelings remained that would have a long-term effect on Dewey's ability to influence and direct American librarianship (Weigand, 1996). Dewey curtailed active participation in the A.L.A. and the New York Library Association after the 1906 Conference, which he did not attend after previous personal allegations (that will be discussed later). Thereafter Dewey remained on the periphery of the A.L.A. Whatever the outcome of Dewey's personal interventions, his influence on the construction of library space and public librarianship was significant, and much of this was facilitated through the funding of Andrew Carnegie, both of which I shall now discuss.

### ***Libraries for the people in a new type of space***

Between 1890 and 1915 nearly 1500 new public libraries were built in America with Carnegie funding, including 65 in New York (Johnson et al, 2002; Van Slyck, 2002), underpinned by the library infrastructures created by Dewey. British public libraries before Carnegie's funding, and the necessary legislation that introduced them, were either funded by benefactors who viewed the library as a manifestation of a civic culture that came from a 'mixture of municipal power, a belief in education as part of a project of social engineering, a recognition of people as citizens, and the emerging idea of public institutions serving a general good' (Greenhalgh, Worpole et al 1995, 54), or were supported through working-class associations and mutual improvement societies. Groups like miners, that did not include women, also established many libraries. Public libraries needed to present a world situated between the home and the outdoors, which could

facilitate personal and collective change. That world promoted male needs, as educating the working man and the professionalising middle-class was the priority.

Libraries before the legislative public library programme mostly excluded women. Mutual improvement groups hardly considered their needs, and Rose (2001) mentions the Women's Co-operative Guild of 1883 as the first female mutual improvement association that adopted a first wave feminist agenda. Larger ad-hoc public libraries tended to exclude women from active use, and generally all-male library committees took various steps to ensure that public libraries were virtually men-only zones, so most libraries provided women-only reading rooms or tables for women (Moore, 1993). As women exemplified the domestic body and sphere, their presence in public spaces, especially in rational, managed Victorian cities, heralded notions of disorder and disruption (Wilson, 1991; 1994). Library spaces were not places that gave women positive opportunities to socialise and learn together. As later discussions cover, these attitudes changed through the increased number of women entering librarianship, and the deliberate softening of the Victorian masculine library, achieved through Carnegie's considerable commitment to public education.

### ***Carnegie's wish for social improvement***

Carnegie valued knowledge and learning, and knew the difficulties of the uneducated working class from personal experience. His desire to use his wealth for public good appears genuine as he publicly stated that men 'who made money had a moral duty to spend it for the common good' (Craig, 2003, 108), and to ensure the 'uplift of the general populace' (Livesay, 1975, 128). Developing facilities and spaces for public learning, community development, spiritual growth and relaxation, namely 'universities, libraries, hospitals, parks, meeting and church halls, swimming pools and church buildings' (Livesay, 1975, 128), was the way to achieve this. Carnegie made his first bequests to his hometown of Dunfermline - of a swimming pool in 1873, and in 1881, a public library. This, like the other nearly 3, 000 public libraries throughout the world that he eventually gifted (at an estimated cost then of \$57m) was termed a Carnegie Library, still a highly recognised term. However, money for this first library was only given on the condition that Dunfermline Council adopted the Free Library Act of 1867, voluntary legislation that empowered local councils to establish and maintain public libraries (Johnson, Reid and Baxter, 2002). From the 1860s, Carnegie became involved in steel production, brought, sold and developed several iron and steel plants, along with other business investments,

and in 1901, retired from work to devote himself to philanthropy and to share the benefits of his good fortune. Carnegie's business investments had been shrewd, and his relocation to America fortuitous - the wealth of the United States quadrupled between 1865 and 1900, making Carnegie one of the richest men in the world. It is estimated that he gave away £70,000,000 during his lifetime and established numerous trusts, many of which continue today.

Carnegie's love of learning and reverence for an ongoing pursuit of knowledge influenced the physicality and internal organisation of public libraries, that were considered 'visible monuments of learning' (*Wagner, 1992, 37*), where 'woodblock flooring and stained-dark wood panelling add to the general sense of changelessness' (*Maidment, 1975, 15*). Carnegie's commitment to the library as a living, public space meant that many of his libraries, especially those built in the twentieth century, contained children's areas, reference rooms, meeting and lecture halls, and were less likely to have private rooms for library trustees, benefactors and committees as previously the case (*Van Slyck, 2002*). I will now consider the changing nature of public librarianship and how women's roles began to be determined through the efforts of Dewey, and facilitated through the physical spaces provided by Carnegie.

### ***Victorian women enter the library***

Dewey's dream for a new public librarianship was only achievable through the integration of women and the attributes and qualities they were perceived to possess. To facilitate this, appropriate training was needed, women's roles had to be defined, and the library space shaped to fit and reflect the needs of women and library-users. Although women were not welcome unaccompanied in the external world of the urban space; where it was thought appropriate, Victorian women could decorate the domestic world by their mere presence, and help improve the design of interiors and buildings that were visioned and built by men (*Chase, 1996*). Within the public sphere at this time, there were some intermediate borderlands where public and private life met, such as the department store, the public library, the cafe, the hotel lobby and even the office, that were public, yet in many cases replicated private zones (*Wilson, 1994*). In these zones, women presented a replica of themselves as they appeared in the private sphere, often in places that imitated the home. The only space freely available to women, and reflective of changing patterns of trade and manufacturing as well as women's domestic role, was the department store (*Solnit, 2000*).

Whilst middle-class women were restricted in their input to architecture at this time, their role in adorning internal space developed, and there are some interesting insights from the domestic library. For example, the American novelist Edith Wharton helped establish the practice of interior design, and challenged the gendered nature of the American upper middle-class library. In her Massachusetts home, the library, normally for men, served both herself and her husband (*Chase, 1996*). As Spain (1992) similarly commented, in such homes libraries were often located at the back of the house with a separate entrance, so that men could use them without disturbing the women of the house, who would not either be disturbed by the knowledge possibilities of the library. As she went on :

Segregation in the home, specifically in terms of a male domain of office and library with a separate entrance, removed women from the interaction with men that might have exposed them to information related to their public status. (Spain, 1992, 123/124).

Women were thus prevented from access to space in which they could read and learn, in which they could create and write for themselves and others and where their social and gender position might become dangerously revealed. The domestic library, like the Oxbridge library to which Virginia Woolf could gain no access without a letter of introduction from a man, could then remain ‘venerable and calm, with all its treasures safe locked within its breast’ (*Woolf, 1928, 10*) away from women. If the domestic library was traditionally reserved for men, any awareness of gender difference was also excluded, and ‘sexuality did not enter or occupy this room reserved for reading, writing, and the pursuit of knowledge’ (*Chase, 1996, 153*). For access for both sexes, the domestic library needed to be gender-neutral, although bringing together the sexes opened up the library space to a range of sexualised possibilities (*Chase, 1996*). For Dewey, feminine aspects of decoration, tidiness and domesticity needed to converge with masculine learning and knowledge to underpin the new public library environment.

### ***Making the public library homely - the world's first school for librarians***

For Dewey, the modus operandi of public libraries and required codes of behaviour were order and adherence to manners, but homely attributes and services could encourage knowledge and learning. Dewey introduced services within Columbia College Library such as drinking water, cloakrooms, stamps and mail collections, and encouraged feedback from users. Devices to keep the library quiet were introduced, including rubber

tipped furniture legs and book trucks. Library users were encouraged to walk quietly and only talk to library staff, smoking was forbidden, hats could not be worn and readers were not allowed to put their feet on furniture (*Weigand, 1996*). Dewey devised a card given to anyone who dropped litter, that later became standard throughout American libraries :

“I picked up these pieces in the hall and infer that you threw them on the floor. My time and that of my assistants is too valuable for this work. Still we prefer to do it rather than have the building so disfigured”.

(*Weigand, 1996, 84*).

To encourage a cultivated and literate public and to ensure that order and reverence was maintained, libraries needed the right type of staff. Dewey (*1876*) explained his vision of librarianship in the first issue of *Library Journal*, and the ideal librarian. He argued that the best librarians were positive, aggressive individuals, and born leaders, who should ‘speak of his occupation as a profession’ (5), and be an educator ‘side by side with the preachers and the teachers’ (5). The earlier attitudes of librarians were no longer suitable - librarians should ensure that libraries contained the best books ‘on the best subjects’ (5), and should encourage and support library users, partly through teaching them about good books. Librarians could then influence more widely than the library, as ‘he may soon shape the reader, and through it the thought, of his whole community’ (6).

Dewey maintained that librarians needed formal training for their expanded remit. Whilst other professions had training schools, the librarian, ‘whose profession has been so much exalted’ (*Dewey, 1879, 147*) had to learn whilst working in a library. The opportunity for trainee students to therefore experience ‘personal intercourse with the men full of the library spirit’ (147) was for Dewey an important part of education, and library schools should be attached to working libraries, so students could experience library work at first hand. (Dewey’s suggestive terminology perhaps heralds a more literal reading as will be later revealed). In 1884 Dewey set up the Columbia College School of Library Economy without full college support or financial assistance, and encouraged college-educated women to apply, against the College Board’s wishes, who revoked Dewey’s plans. He procured some unused space within the college and opened the school without official approval. Of the first twenty students, seventeen were women and, women librarians from Columbia Library, Dewey’s colleagues from the library community and college faculty members gave lectures. Dewey supported women into library training, although

his unofficial enrolment form asked female applicants about their weight and height, hair and eye colour, and suggested that a photograph was enclosed (*Elliott, 1981*).

The curriculum covered technical and clerical skills and was based on the routine of a librarian (*Elliott, 1981*). One section covered personal character including health, education, reading interests, library experience and church affiliations; another tackled library management and developing expertise to help users; whilst another provided the tools needed to recommend books and information sources. Dewey felt that although librarians should recommend reading, learned societies and individuals were better equipped to recommend texts in which librarians could be confident. For Weigand (*1996*) this prevented primary expertise developing within librarianship but Dewey's 'optimism for librarianship and his ideology of reading' (*95*) led him to ignore this. This therefore ensured that librarianship relied on the expertise of others to define core information and assumed a secondary role that arguably prevented the creation of an identifiable knowledge base, as discussed in Chapter One, and potentially reduced the professional status of librarians.

In late 1888, Dewey was suspended from his post of Chief Librarian while an investigation took place about his use of college time to work on the library school, and his over-spending. In 1889, he took up a new post in New York, as will be discussed in the next section, and later opened a new library school and for the first time, academic librarianship qualifications - Bachelor of Library Science, Master of Library Science and honorary Doctor of Library Science - were available. Dewey undertook some teaching, helped by 'a devoted group of assistants' (*Maack, 1986, 404*) including five women, that effectively ran the school. Basic subjects like cataloguing and classification, shelf listing, accessions, library economy and library history were covered, and although an original thesis was required, many students researched bibliographies instead.

Dewey's preference for practical instruction led to conflict with the Library School's Vice-Director, Mary Salome Cutler, who favoured creative and abstract thinking. (*Weigand, 1996*). For Cutler, the image of the public library as a male, clerkish environment was wrong, and the library should be a place where women greeted their guests who visited for recreation, education and relaxation. In other words, the library should be an extension of the domestic sphere. Cutler also believed that librarians needed expert knowledge to inform and support library users, which differed from Dewey's view about reading lists designated by others. Dewey's views predominated and new

curriculum subjects included practical and gendered topics like bookbinding and typewriting, whilst theoretical courses like subject librarianship (for example, law, medicine or music), reading and literary methods, plus the requirement of a thesis for Bachelor degrees, ceased.

### *Dewey's continuing mission of educational reform*

In his role as Director of the State Library, and Secretary to the Board of Regents who ran the University of New York, Dewey highlighted the work of the librarian through encouraging good reading, and greatly extended the power of the Board and the Library. Dewey's work was controlled from his office 'command post' (Weigand, 1996, 191) and carried out by staff, 'loud in neither voice nor appearance' (Weigand, 1996, 195), in other words, women. The State Library at this time received a number of donations, including a Women's Library, assembled for the World's Columbian Exposition led in Chicago in 1893, for which Dewey provided a separate alcove in its new home. As Malone (1996) comments, the Women's Library was designed by Candace Wheeler, one of the new breed of female interior designers at the forefront of reinterpreting the previously masculine library space as open to both sexes.

The needs of the wider population and the relationship between academic and public libraries were becoming embedded in Dewey's constructions of the new public library. Dewey also instigated new services that became standard. For example, he established systems for chartering public libraries that included adherence to lists of approved books so quality reading became directly linked to funding. This led to the creation of 'Best Books' lists, many based on student bibliographies, that Dewey promoted at library and educational meetings and which eventually became accepted countrywide. Dewey (1920) saw the public library as demonstrating the importance of libraries in education - if schools taught reading, then libraries could furnish and support it. For Dewey, education happened in informal, as well as formal settings, and he saw 'home education' as covering libraries and reading, museums, social clubs and mutual associations, distance learning and correspondence courses. In all these aspects, the library was at the heart of a concept that alludes to future definitions of lifelong learning. Dewey also considered equitable access to literature and written materials. He obtained funding for books for those who were blind or visually impaired, and established a children's floor in the State Library. He established mobile collections of books, pictures, slides and photographs that visited remote New York communities, and developed the notion of

mobile stock - 'one hundred-volume collections of popular books' (*Watson, 1994, 239*) - that moved between smaller libraries that could not afford permanent collections.

To be included in mobile collections, most of which by 1899 were run by women, books had to be of good style and language, and not profane, vulgar, trustworthy, objectionable, immoral or weak. The role of clubwomen in supporting and developing public libraries, including travelling libraries, in late 19th century America, was acknowledged by Dewey (*Watson, 1994*). It is thought that about 75% of American public libraries were originally founded by this active sisterhood (*Van Slyck, 2002*). Their motivation accorded strongly with that of Dewey :

They saw the travelling library as a natural adjunct of the public school and as a major force for public education. They hoped that traveling libraries would awaken the desire for a free public library where there was none. More than this, they saw these hundred-volume collections as a means for improving the lives of ordinary people living in harsh and relatively deprived conditions.  
(*Watson, 1994, 240*).

Although Dewey's reforms in New York libraries were largely successful, in 1895 he was accused of mistreating books, cutting salaries, forcing staff to buy books and other items through him, 'boarding his own employees and visiting guests at his private residence . . . and treating the State Geologist unfairly' (*Weigand, 1996, 160-161*). Dewey was investigated by an internal committee, but defended some of the charges. According to *Weigand (1996)*, he agreed that he had sold bicycles to staff, but as part of a fitness drive, and although he had advanced staff 'the purchase price without interest if they repaid him \$5 per month' (*161*) this was entirely justified. Dewey's explanation succeeded and claims against him were dismissed. During this period however, Dewey's interests beyond librarianship were becoming focused into creating a leisure facility for the middle-classes that incorporated many of his beliefs about the world's natural order.

### ***Lake Placid - the development of a model community***

In 1895, Dewey built a summer resort for his wealthy friends at a place called Lake Placid.  
(*Home Town Network, 2002*).

Dewey felt that middle-class professionals who worked long hours needed to be able to relax and have their commitment and self-sacrifice recognised. From 1878 he began to imagine a type of country club where members invested moneys - 'a co-operative vacation club' (*Thompson, 1977, 136*) - that would be 'a laboratory where underpaid middle-class reformers . . . could observe the benefits of efficiency and order and enjoy the positive effects of healthy activity in a clean environment' (*Weigand, 1996, 56*). It would provide structured and useful leisure time, where 'rituals, customs, and hard work, all of which bound inhabitants together' (*Weigand, 1996, 252*) would be highly valued. As will be demonstrated, Lake Placid was the location where some of the internal barriers, that had perhaps prevented Dewey's real behaviours and opinions from being revealed before, came down.

Dewey bought land in the Adirondack mountains in upstate New York in 1893 to realise this dream of Lake Placid as a moral Christian community, and a sanctuary for professionals away from increasingly multicultural, urban realities. Although Dewey felt that immigrants to America should integrate and librarians had an important role in facilitating that, he also worried that established Protestant values were under threat. Lake Placid therefore :

. . . was an organized community to avoid contact with the kind of people (working class, African-American, Jewish) that professionals were expected to assist as part of their professional responsibilities. It purposefully and by design would exclude cross-class (and other types of) social interaction. (*Weigand, 1996, 252*).

Lake Placid would be a haven for White Anglo-Saxon Protestants away from the disorderly environments to which they devoted their labours but did not want to spend their leisure time, and regular entertainments were provided for members. Weigand's (*1996*) description of decorated boats floating on lakes, surrounded by fires in the woods, with members wearing native American garb, evokes the annual get-togethers of Bilderberg Group members (world statesman and corporate plutocrats) in California's Bohemian Grove worshipping giant owls on fiery gondolas, whilst dressed in lederhosen and hoods (*Ronson, 2001*). The difference being that many contemporary Bilderberg participants are Jewish, whereas no members of Lake Placid were, and at Lake Placid, the weekly lakeshore gatherings included group hymn singing, and no drinking or dancing

was allowed. Dewey's intent in constructing Lake Placid as a setting with a particular racial make-up had huge consequences.

### *Dewey and anti-Semitism*

From 1899 onwards, the New York Library Association held its annual event at Lake Placid. In 1903, Henry M Leipziger, a Jewish librarian, discovered that Lake Placid barred Jews, even those of exceptional personal qualities, as no-one could join who could be potentially objected to on physical, mental, racial or social grounds. Such a statement, and the ethos of an ideal community, clearly reflects contemporaneous thought on eugenics, or the science of selective breeding. Eugenics was part of a wide-ranging Victorian discourse of White Anglo Saxon Protestant order, standardisation and conformity of which classificatory systems and schemes were a part. Dewey's admission policy for Lake Placid suggests such views, and Weigand (1996) confirms that the Deweys' varied interests at that time included 'cremation, eugenics, birth control, prohibition, women's suffrage, and the League of Nations' (331).

Leipziger had previously requested information about the Club, but this time consulted a solicitor who felt it inappropriate that a public official ran a private club that openly excluded Jews. He filed a petition, described by Dewey as 'the Jew attack', (Weigand, 1996) signed by high-profile members of New York's Jewish community which caused Dewey's employers to request his removal. As Weigand (1996) commented, although Dewey's prejudices were not unique, the fact that he acted on them openly set him apart :

By late-twentieth-century standards Dewey was, like most of his Anglo-Saxon contemporaries, a racist and an anti-Semite. Unlike most of them, however, he was not unwilling to parade his bigotry in public and "sacrifice" himself for the greater good of WASP culture.

(Weigand, 1996, 377-378).

Dewey denied anti-Semitism, and the resulting public debate 'forced a visible split in the American Jewish community' (Weigand, 1996, 278) and brought into the open many long-standing feelings about Dewey. As well as excluding Jewish people, those with physical impairments or illnesses were also banned. This excluded some who may have benefited from Lake Placid, such as the staff and patients of sanatoriums for tuberculosis

sufferers, many of which were in close proximity to Lake Placid's mountain setting (*Elliott, 1981*).

After deliberations, Dewey's employers rebuked him and advised him that running a private business was incompatible with senior office. Dewey however remained as State Librarian, and publicly criticised the charges and his treatment by the Regents. In September 1905, the Regents and Dewey agreed on his resignation, and although the outcome attracted public comment, there was silence from librarians on Dewey's anti-Semitism (*Weigand, 1996, 295*). Dewey also resigned as Director of the New York Library School, and devoted himself to the Lake Placid Club and the continuation of the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme through his own publishers, Forest Press.

After Annie Dewey's death in 1923, Dewey continued to develop Lake Placid, and in 1924 married Emily Beal who worked at Lake Placid. In 1927, the new couple founded Lake Placid, Florida as a winter resort where a similar ethos prevailed. Women were not allowed to smoke in public, and alcohol, gambling and dancing were forbidden. In 1931, prominent women Club members petitioned Dewey about the ban on female smoking but Dewey retorted that the Club's purpose was for members to get away from 'smoking women' whom he saw as radical, and more likely perhaps to hold disruptive, feminist views. After Dewey's death in 1931, the new Lake Placid was selected as the site for the 1932 Winter Olympics. This attracted vocal protests from Jewish Americans about public money being spent on a place that still barred Jews. Due to world depression, both Lake Placids foundered, and as time moved on their anachronistic appeal and practices failed to excite post-war America. Eventually both clubs were sold, and only Lake Placid in Florida still stands today. At Lake Placid, besides being open about his racial and religious prejudices, Dewey's attitudes towards women became increasingly overt, and indicate a need to further investigate its implications for the construction of librarianship as a female-dominated profession.

### ***Dewey and women***

Like mid-nineteenth century Baptist women, turn-of-the-century female library professionals could be counted on to deliver uplifting messages others had already prescribed as valuable for the masses.

(*Weigand, 1996, 373*).

Dewey (1886) regarded women as having the best character for librarianship, as they were well-read, moral, interested in public service, had ‘quick minds and deft fingers’ (109), very much like the women entering late nineteenth century administration that Chapter Three described. Some have commented that Dewey ‘cursed the field of librarianship, like a wicked but smiling stepfather for all time’ (Rodgers, 1997, 182) through introducing a view of women that has never disappeared. For Dewey bringing women into libraries introduced a form of gentle control that maintained boundaries and borderlines between the public and domestic world, the internal mind and the external world of knowledge and chaos and harmony. Women librarians could keep in check the disorderly potential of the library user, with ‘the capacity to disrupt and ultimately prevent the ideal of the complete library’ (Radford and Radford, 1997, 218). It could be suggested that women helped reinforce the notion of the library as a heterotopia, but one that prevented deviance and encouraged conformity, as Hornsey (2002) commented.

In 1883 Dewey first hired seven graduate women whilst at Columbia College as librarians, which was a new departure, especially within an all-male campus. Dewey was partly driven by economics as he recruited a work force ‘with high character for low cost’ (Weigand, 1996, 85) through employing women who received half the salary of their male colleagues. The long-term effects of being a feminised profession were thus established at this time. In his classic speech, ‘Librarianship As a Profession for College-Bred Women’, Dewey (1886) promoted librarianship as providing women with an elevated social role and increasing status. He agreed that women could find librarianship frustrating, as they were promoted less often than their male colleagues and earned less money, but there were reasons for this. Women suffered more poor health than men and were likely to be absent more, and also lacked the appropriate levels of business acumen for senior library posts, as while their brothers were ‘trading jack knives and developing the business bumps . . . girls were absorbed with their dolls’ (109). Dewey also noted that as women marry and have children, they are unlikely to view their work roles as permanent, and finally, do not possess men’s physical strength :

If a man can do all the other work just as well as the woman and in addition can in an emergency lift a heavy case, or climb a ladder to the roof in case of accident or disorder, can act as a fireman or do police duty, he adds something to his direct value . . . there are many uses for which a stout corduroy is really worth more than the finest silk.

(Dewey, 1886, 110).

This is a classic gendered justification of the secondary status of women in the workplace, and of inequalities experienced by women as earlier discussed. Dewey's behaviour towards individual women perhaps reveals more of his deep-seated attitudes, and the complex image that he still has within librarianship. Most descriptions of Dewey describe his keen interest in women, and his preference for women colleagues and friends (*Garrison, 1979, 1983; Weigand, 1996*) and refer to specific examples that questioned his reputation. At the 1905 A.L.A. Conference Dewey hugged, squeezed, and kissed several women who later complained. According to Weigand (*1996*) this was common, but his earlier targets had either endured it, or avoided him and not complained. Weigand surprisingly suggested that Dewey may have had difficulties coping with his first wife's serious illness, and 'felt the need to reach out for comfort' (*301*).

When Dewey claimed that there was an active conspiracy against him, he received some support. One librarian, Helen Sperry, suggested that many women who complained were motivated by their own 'unexplored sensual reminders' (*Weigand, 1996, 305*), perhaps an early sighting of the powerful notion of women librarians as repressing their sexual desires. Mrs Dewey wrote a letter in which she alluded to his frequent disregard for boundaries and unconventional behaviour, but argued that his motives were innocent. This sentiment was echoed in a letter from Dewey in which he argued that his behaviour towards women in librarianship was different because he had more trust in women than other men did. He also argued that 'pure women would understand my ways' (*Weigand, 1996, 308*); suggesting that women who repelled or criticised him did so because of their rampant or repressed sexuality.

In 1920, Dewey was accused of what appears to be an unfounded allegation about sexual wrongdoing from a colleague at Lake Placid, but his daughter-in-law also made a simultaneous complaint about his unwanted advances. One woman from the New York Library Association accused Dewey of being morally irresponsible and having long preyed on women librarians, to which Dewey responded by describing his behaviour as unconventional and that such allegations were false. The President of the New York Library Association interviewed all parties, and although the case was not fully concluded the Association did not meet at Lake Placid again. Although views on Dewey's behaviour differed, male librarians involved in the investigation appeared keen to protect the image of the Association, and little 'concerned about the anguish Dewey's conduct has been causing library women over the decades' (*Weigand, 1996, 340*). A very similar pattern to the earlier silence from librarians to Dewey's anti-semitism.

In 1927, a Lake Placid administrator accused Dewey of molesting her in public. After being forced by Dewey to resign, she issued a legal writ for damages. This was eventually settled out of court, and Dewey had to pay over \$2,000 - a then considerable amount of money. For Weigand (1996), Dewey was, 'like most of his male middle-class professional contemporaries, also a sexist' (377-378) and represented common views about women and their availability to men (especially those in power and authority) but went beyond this in acting on them :

(Dewey) . . . pushed his harassing behavior with women to such lengths and with such frequency that he was banished from the very profession he helped structure and then blamed the victims of his behavior for not understanding the purity of his motives.

(Weigand, 1996, 377-378).

Dewey's sexual feelings about women proved too powerful, and prevented the continuation of his work in librarianship, ironically where his attitudes towards women and their employment, from his point of view positive ones, were embedded (Weigand, 1996). Garrison (1983) however, argued that although Dewey was indiscreet, there is little evidence that he breached moral conventions. Commenting that Dewey 'continually shocked those who were cramped into a more cautious lifestyle' (42), Garrison appears to imply that those who accused Dewey of unreasonable activity were the ones with the problem. Although there appears to be evidence of such complaints providing useful ammunition for his detractors, such interpretations seem misguided. Dewey's personal interpretation of women's roles, as well as being sexually available or sexually repressed as already seen, incorporated explicit notions of their presence in the domestic sphere. How these relate to library classification will now be briefly explored.

### ***Dewey's influence on women's domestic roles***

Domestic scientists loved to create models of the ideal housekeeper, their modern woman - someone serene, unhurried, and with a mind fixed on eternal truths, who would move through the day of chores and challenges like an invisible force for good, applying the laws of chemistry and biology to every mark of disarray. (Shapiro, 1986, 25).

Lake Placid provided meeting facilities and support for other professional groups, especially whose interests and vision co-incided with those of Dewey. In 1899, besides the American Library Association's gathering that eventually ended Dewey's career in librarianship, the first conference of American domestic scientists took place at Lake Placid. This group of mainly women were also attempting to reposition their work as scientific and professional, and crucial to industrial America, as Shapiro (1986) described. A national association could change domestic science from merely cookery and housework into becoming a new, knowledge-based, rational discipline. In other words, to move the domestic, homely female experience into the scientific, masculine knowledge domain, as 'the mid-Victorian woman cultivated her own public symbols of professional authority and scientific expertise' (Garrison, 1983, 31), very much like librarianship hoped to achieve.

The Deweys were interested in this work, and Dewey permitted the new American Home Economics Association to influence their subject placement in recorded knowledge. The group wished to secure the right placing in the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme, and chose the name 'home economics' partly to ensure that, as a library subject heading it linked to 'economics', rather than 'to cooking or cleaning' (Shapiro, 1986, 178). Dewey had previously positioned 'domestic economy' under 600 : Useful Arts, between Agriculture, Communications and Commerce. The group felt this inappropriate and chose their own placing (339) in Sociology, locating Home Economics between Political Economy and Law :

Dewey had assigned Number 339 to another topic - Pauperism - but it seemed plain to the Lake Placid group that pauperism resulted from a "lack of attention to home economics".

(Shapiro, 1986, 178).

This then meant that specific topics including food, cooking, sanitation and domestic furnishings remained classified under 'Useful Arts', whilst the revised classification for Home Economics presented the desired dynamic image. Although this classification was eventually reversed and Dewey's original allocation prevailed, the improved image invoked through defining 'Home Economics' was felt successful (Shapiro, 1986). The Association continued, similarly to the American Library Association, developing training establishments, influencing domestic gender roles, and increasingly appropriating science to devise and authorise standards. Home economics saw its goal to

support American capitalism through providing nutrition, protecting the home, repelling dirt, and maintaining the boundaries between ‘people, activities and places that are thought to be antithetical’ (*Oakley, 1981i, 179*). Very much like the women librarians within the new Victorian public libraries who were expected to act as intellectual cleansing agents, ensuring that the library space promoted moral values and knowledge acquisition that was clean and unsullied.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the importance of Melvil Dewey and Andrew Carnegie in establishing the physical, cultural and ideological frameworks of librarianship that still maintain power and influence and that which are currently in crisis. Their legacy, especially that of Dewey, although innovative, has been found to be based on concepts of domestic gendered conformity that were felt necessary to allow the public library to flourish. I have revealed various components of librarianship theory and practice derived from this period that Part Three of the thesis will further consider through an integrated third wave feminist reading. These notions are standardisation and classification, the affordability and acceptability of women librarians, the repositioned nature of the public library space as home, the secondary function of librarianship, the librarian as value-free and perhaps, inevitably, passive. I will now summarise these in turn, suggesting the overall legacy of Dewey and Carnegie, with the former especially important.

The first aspect, standardisation and classification, was felt by Dewey as necessary to ensure that libraries could function and be run by virtually anyone. The implications of this for ensuring uniformity and suppressing individuality are obvious. For Garrison, positioning women as the main practitioners and increasing the role of standardisation, permanently undermined librarianship:

The “professionalization” of librarianship required the solemn treatment of commonplace problems, but . . . (his) crusade for the standardization and mechanization of library science was achieved at the expense of genteel cultural ideals and an intellectual stance for the public librarian.

(Garrison, 1979, 167).

For Dewey, libraries were manifestations of knowledge and science, and ‘active agents of conservative reform’ (*Weigand, 1996, 205*). Classification can be viewed as the skeleton and the corset of librarianship, and to also symbolise the desire of Dewey to suspend human knowledge in spaces and systems that allowed little scope for movement or challenges. Classification provided an opportunity for Dewey to embed his concept of the world in time and space, and although the Internet and changing librarianship practices have undoubtedly affected the role of classification, the Dewey scheme is still described as ‘the bedrock on which our profession is built’ (*Will, 2000, 461*). Dewey’s decisions, grounded in nineteenth century certainty, have impacted on libraries and librarianship world-wide ever since, and ‘the perspectives Dewey cemented into his hierarchical classification schemes have helped create in the minds of millions of people throughout the world . . . a perception of knowledge organisation’ (*Weigand, 1996, 371*). Views of individuals, librarians, groups and corporations have arguably been influenced by using the scheme which is assumed to be, and ‘accepted as “natural”’ (*Weigand, 1996, 371*) or neutral. From the next chapter onwards, attempts to move beyond these tight interpretations, derived from this set of circumstances, will be explored.

Secondly, introducing women into librarianship through Dewey’s efforts, as outlined, was motivated by a view that women’s attributes could ensure the successful utilisation of the new public libraries, at a lower cost where staff would be more amenable to undertake tasks that could be perceived as administrative and less expert. His legacy of constructing a public librarianship, which provided women with work opportunities threaded through with stereotypical notions, has had a notable effect on the function of the library and librarianship itself. As Chapters One and Three especially have outlined, these efforts appear to have ensured that librarianship has never been able to be regarded as a robust profession.

Women’s library work had a large educational element, based round appropriate and recommended texts, and a significant function in maintaining the library as a quasi-domestic space. This third factor again has shaped librarianship, its proponents, customers, content, impact and history. Dewey’s views of women and their power to control, order and refine their library readers, within a domestic, yet repressed environment, cannot be ignored. Carnegie’s role in providing a suitable type of physical space that could contain and promote these messages is important. As Wagner (*1992*) suggested, there has been a close association between the ‘conceptualized purpose of public libraries and their buildings over the centuries’ (*37*). Public library space was

commented on in Chapter One where current moves towards on-line information supermarkets may signify the nature of the contemporary domestic space, and Chapter Four and this chapter have both established some direct linkages between the involvement of women and the blurring of boundaries between notions of private and space. The next chapter will consider this legacy and its impact on women who began to realise that librarianship and the spaces in which it took place, although accommodating and familiar, were also filled with gendered barriers and containments.

The fourth component of modern librarianship that I have reflected is the development of librarianship as a secondary function, or effectively a semi-profession, as has been described at various points in the thesis. Dewey's perception of the necessary skills and aptitudes needed by librarians also suggests the potentially gendered nature of his vision. As already set out, occupations dominated by women are often seen as easy to learn, and librarianship has become categorised by the comparatively short period of professional training required to become qualified, and by the lack of intellectual originality that is allegedly required.

The emphasis of the early library schools has been blamed by some for the shape of contemporary librarianship and its lack of a clear professional status. Miksa (1986) for example, highlighted a lack of engagement with academic standards, an emphasis on technicalities over abstraction and a disregard for research as typical areas of criticism. However, he dismissed these claims as 'marred and troubling' (361) and attempts to undermine - and cloud - the work of Dewey. For Miksa, this is unfair and, although prevailing views could be corrected, they 'must emphasize that complex of goals and vision of the library movement out of which his educational work arose' (361).

It is certainly the case that gender relations entwined with finance, significantly influenced decisions made by Dewey and others at the time. Although some public libraries could afford to employ graduates from Dewey's library schools, they often only had funding to employ 'local women willing to work for less money who possessed the right "character" and could pick up the necessary skills' (Weigand, 1996, 311) by reading textbooks or attending summer library schools. These women were the mothers of all those who followed after, as women librarians, created by Dewey, changed the face of librarianship for ever. Garrison's thesis of the 'tender technicians' leads her to claim that public libraries became less intellectual because of the presence of women librarians :

Women librarians could not be afforded intellectual leadership, because they were women and the standards of “femininity” prevented them from seeking such a role for themselves. The presence of women also helped to lessen the attraction of educated men to the profession and to keep wages low, thus ensuring continued feminization.

(Garrison, 1979, 167).

For Weigand (1996) the involvement of women in librarianship was to maintain a social and cultural status quo, as they ‘did not constitute a threat to the canons of the dominant culture’ (372). Weigand acknowledges Dewey’s efforts to facilitate the entry of women, but argues that the feminisation of the profession is an effect rather than a cause of librarianship’s low status, an opposite view to that of Garrison and Harris (Garrison, 1979; Harris, 1992). For Weigand, the view that others should provide the expertise informing the opinions of librarians, as advocated by Dewey, has ensured librarianship’s weakness and led to its permanent status as a second-class profession by ‘making its highest priority service to the authority of other’s expertise’ (309), rather than the creation of its own. Weigand (1996) argued that, because ‘western capitalist democracies have allocated the power to determine value in information products to their producers and to their consumers’ (373), those that only deal with information, will never have power. If this remains, ‘librarianship will likely remain a marginal profession, no matter its gender composition, no matter its name in this new “information age”’ (Weigand, 1996, 373).

The final areas that I wish to review at this point have also been identified as highly consequential. As discussed, encouraging female influence into the public library brought in a philosophy that appeared more open and democratic. Van Slyck (2002) charted the moves from the nineteenth century closed stack public library, where readers presented librarians at the delivery desk with their requests, to the early twentieth century Dewey and Carnegie-influenced public library where open stacks allowed readers to help themselves to books directly from the shelves without negotiating their needs through the librarian. The creation of library work as one suited to women, devoid of intellectual content and that denied women ‘the opportunity to exercise professional authority even over the reader’ (Van Slyck, 2002, 165) ensured that librarianship remained low-paid, although containing educated and skilled female staff who forever after had problems in achieving recognition or promotion. The feminised nature of the new form of librarianship was also reflected in librarians’ working environment. Within many of the

small Carnegie libraries, women librarians had little private space and were located in the main body of the library, amongst readers, performing a role similar to that of secretaries and other female office workers :

The librarian worked in a seated position, at a work station designed to minimize unnecessary movements; she was surrounded by technologically advanced tools that defined and structured the work into a series of repetitive tasks; and she was unable to complete the assigned tasks of the job without these specialized tools. Finally for all these women, job success was measured quantitatively, in the number of books discharged, in the number of cards filed, in the number of calls put through, in the number of pages typed.

(Van Slyck, 2002, 171).

For many of these women, their presence in the main body of the library exposed them to the scrutiny of their male librarian managers who adopted a Panoptic approach in closed offices from which they could view their staff and service users. In this chapter, I have shown that whilst male professionals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were gaining more control over their physical, knowledge and professional space, women were entering a librarianship constructed by Dewey that appeared to value their skills, but that failed to provide them with the same status as their male peers. This powerful legacy is determined to a great extent by the personality of Dewey himself. Dewey had much in common with the professional reformer, linked to the expansion of the American public sector at the end of the nineteenth- and beginning of the twentieth- century, who 'defined the form that institutions, policies, or services were to take, reserving for themselves, at least in principle, the role at the helm' (*Larson, 1977, 148*). It is the contention of the remaining chapters that this juxtaposition still affects librarianship, and the involvement of women has to be understood as an outcome of this, and what has since followed.

**Centre for Women's Health, Glasgow, January 1994**

**Dear Diary**

To be the person to start up a new women's library is a real challenge. Literally from scratch ! It's got to meet the needs of women on all aspects of health and wellbeing, as well as staff from the NHS and the Council, and it's got to have an interface with those organisations as well. Trying to do that in a way that meets all their needs, and also is properly organised as a library so its systems work is going to be hard. What should it look like - a conventional library ? An informal women's space ?

The classification issue . . . given that all of the schemes render women invisible or even worse, I have no idea what can be used. Perhaps I will have to make something up. There doesn't seem to be any women's classification schemes to my knowledge yet, but I need to see if there are any. The balance between librarianship and feminism is going to be quite interesting to think about.

**Mmm . . . intriguingly yours**

## Chapter Seven : Second wave feminist responses to Dewey's legacy

- Introduction
- Section One : British and American librarianship at the start of the second wave women's movement
  - Changing contexts in British and American libraries
  - Feminism and librarianship - second wave responses from America
  - Feminism and librarianship - second wave responses from Britain
- Section Two : Male librarians speak out for, and against, feminism
  - Hai karate ! - the fear of the bra-burning librarian
- Section Three : Women in the public library and stock selection
  - Introducing women's values into stock
  - Feminising the public library - has it happened through stock ?
  - Contemporary understandings of stock selection
  - Stock challenges, issues and experiences
- Section Four : Library classification and second wave feminist critiques
  - Second wave feminist awareness about classifying general material
  - Classification and women's books
  - Second wave feminist responses to classification amending existing schemes
  - Contemporary issues about classification
- Section Five : Professional library associations
  - First wave women and gaining entry to the library associations
- Section Six : Second wave responses to the professional associations
  - Starting Women in Libraries - a radical response
  - The onset of the Library Association Women's Group
  - Attempting to influence from within the Library Association Women's Group and the continuation of Women in Libraries
  - Women in Libraries continues
  - The impact of Women in Libraries and the Library Association Women's Group
- Conclusion

## Introduction

As the last chapter demonstrated, modern librarianship was an outcome of myriad pressures in the late nineteenth century - to become a recognised profession, to provide public education, culture and useful leisure, to be a vehicle of standardisation and control, and to accommodate the natural skills and attributes of middle-class women. The efforts of Melvil Dewey and Andrew Carnegie to inform this movement was highly significant as I have explored, and a set of sexual attitudes that worked alongside and within these Victorian values in America and the United Kingdom have been revealed. There is a need to explore further the legacy of Dewey and Carnegie in shaping an occupation traditionally associated with and dominated by women, and to understand the challenges and responses made through the influence of second wave feminism to some of this inheritance.

Seven sections make up the chapter. The first section will chart reflections on librarianship at the start of the second wave feminist movement, when some British and American library women sought to question and understand the gendered context in which they found themselves, and the theory and practice of librarianship. The second section will contextualise these feminist voices further against the background of librarianship at that time, and include views on the undesirable impact of women's liberation on the dominant librarianship culture that were being expressed by some male librarians through the library press, particularly in the United States.

The role of stock within the public library is vital, and the role of women in choosing and validating stock for library readers was part of the construction of late nineteenth century librarianship as the last chapter described. The third section will therefore consider the outcomes of this feminised role on public librarianship and the public library, including reflections from women librarians in the 1970s and 1980s. Contemporary pressures affecting the choice of stock will also be considered, with comments from some of the women librarians in my sample.

The fourth section will cover classification schemes, and will reflect an engagement of feminist perspectives concerning the classifying of general materials and the placing of materials about women. The development of the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme specifically for public libraries will also be considered from a second wave feminist perspective with examples of feminist challenges and alternatives given. Women's studies, a direct outcome of second wave feminism, will provide a useful case study of the inflexibility of classification schemes to women's experience, and the potential responses of feminist-influenced librarianship.

Modern library associations, also established through the vision of Dewey, have long been problematic for women in librarianship, as the issues of being a feminised occupation and how that affects ambitions to professional status, have not necessarily been mirrored in the associations. Challenges from first and second wave feminists need discussion and will thus form the fifth and sixth sections of this chapter, specifically the experiences of British women. The discussion will chart the history of women's organisations in British library associations from the early twentieth-century, from the first wave Committees of Women Librarians to the second wave work of Women in Libraries and the Library Association Women's Group. It will also reflect on contemporary women librarians perceive the Library Association, as it was when I carried out my fieldwork. The chapter will conclude by setting out what has been learned through reviewing the application of second wave feminist insights to nineteenth century librarianship, and suggesting that expanding the theoretical toolbox and employing insights gained from third wave perspectives might be even more helpful.

### **Section One : British and American librarianship at the start of the second wave women's movement**

A key feature of the women's movement has been the way in which work on defining and redefining social problems has led to the development of a whole range of initiatives which have focused on the specific welfare needs of women. Such work resulted in putting gender relations on the map of social problems, exposing its detrimental effect on the welfare of women, children and men and equalising some of the power relations embedded in work on defining what constitutes a social problem. (Dominelli and McLeod, 1989, 21).

For some practitioners in social work, community work, counselling, therapy, adult education and youth work, second wave feminism provided a route to understand more fully the experiences and aspirations of clients, to provide more effective and holistic responses and to illuminate any occupational and professional differences between women and men. Dominelli and McLeod (1981) suggested that for social work, as one example, such insights could have great significance. Librarianship was exposed to new feminist thinking as it developed from the late 1960s onwards in the United Kingdom and the United States and some women, and men, began to use it to question existing arrangements and practices, and to propose different approaches. In this section I will set out the context in which librarianship then operated, including the status of women, and then consider developing feminist responses from women librarians.

*Changing contexts in British and American libraries.*

In 1970, British librarianship was beginning to introduce computerisation and co-operation and needed new skills and approaches (Benge, 1979). The 1964 Libraries and Museum Act and the 1973 British Library Act had established a national public and county library service with the new British Library at the core. The expanding academic sector, the National Health Service and industry needed libraries to underpin changing practice. Librarianship was beginning to view itself as an occupation with much to offer, but women were excluded from many of these opportunities. Research in the late 1960s found that British married women librarians were continually discriminated against, and could not obtain professional posts even though there were shortages, especially in the expanding public library sector (Ward, 1966). As Ward (1966) commented, 'there is concern today regarding the social wastage of women, particularly those who are graduates and those who hold a professional qualification' (7). Library vacancies existed, but many women librarians were excluded because of their domestic, and gendered, situation.

The *Library Association Record* letters page conveyed some of this debate from mid-1973 onwards. Turner (1973), for example described the 'great army of unemployed female librarians' (119) that, besides denying individual needs and talents, was 'a disgraceful waste of national resources' (119). He suggested that this also kept librarianship salaries low, as the effective glut of librarians ensured that librarians could not be considered rare commodities, confirming the argument that female-dominated professions are inevitably lowly-paid as Chapter Three highlighted. The employment situation did not improve however for British women librarians in the 1970s. Ward (1975) repeated her 1966 research nearly a decade later, and found that the situation for some married women had improved, as more could combine librarianship with family life, but little else had changed. Similarly, in the United States in 1970, women in librarianship were a decreasing majority, forming 80 % of the total library workforce, but with men more likely than women to obtain head librarian and senior posts (Deckard, 1983). Women librarians again earned less money and had limited opportunities, but those in posts were increasingly expected to respond to changing social challenges. As will now be described, this situation began to activate some women librarians with a developing feminist consciousness.

*Feminism and librarianship : second wave responses from America*

Consider then, the peculiar problems and position of women in libraryland. Our profession is highly female - we are all familiar with the "ascribed role", the stereotype - but our profession is too frequently administered by men. The all too obvious conclusion is that men are inherently better administrators, and that women cannot organize and lead because of their "different" mental, physical, or psychological makeup.

(Detlefsen and Schuman, 1970, 962).

In the United States, thinking from the radical counter-culture had encouraged critical approaches within librarianship from the late 1960s and early 1970s onwards, especially concerning the needs of a more diverse and open society. For some this highlighted a clear need to construct a 'new librarianship' that acknowledged its limitations, as well as its strengths (*Wasserman, 1972*). If developing a new librarianship paradigm to support changing communities was required, due to librarianship's over reverential attitudes towards its past, its lack of desire to change and the few genuine leaders at its disposal, Wasserman (*1972*) for one felt this unlikely to happen. The need to respond to all of society - the central social responsibility of American librarianship - alongside the need to maintain neutrality and ensure unbiased coverage of all interests and concerns was beginning to be debated.

The first published feminist reflections on librarianship arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s amongst a small number of American women librarians. Many acknowledged the personal satisfaction of being a librarian, but questioned librarianship's underlying gendered inequalities, and how it had shaped their own situations and those of their colleagues. These early American feminist responses were published in library journals, but this was not the case in the UK where the dissemination of such ideas was limited. The *Library Association Record* for many years only aired debates around women's issues in the letters pages, as I will later describe.

In 1970, an American women librarian asked in the *Library Journal* (established by Dewey, as the last chapter described) whether feminism had implications for librarianship (*Freedman, 1970*). Her article 'The Liberated Librarian : A Look at the Second Sex in the Library Profession' noted the lack of management opportunities, the stereotyped allocation of library tasks, the problem of the married woman librarian, and the failure of library schools to improve women's position. Freedman noted that although in the minority, men managed librarianship, women had less opportunities for promotion and senior men were considered to offer 'more dynamic leadership than the females whom they replaced' (*1709*). Women were segregated in areas associated with female-assigned characteristics - their "housekeeping"

talents and aptitudes for accuracy and neatness were likely to be employed in serials, acquisitions, and cataloging work, or ‘their “patience and warmth” in school libraries and children’s department’ (1709-1710). Dewey and his colleagues, as Hildenbrand (1996) commented, proposed women’s natural patience, as a central reason for women’s aptitude for librarianship, chiming with Garrison’s later analysis (1979).

Detlefsen and Schuman (1970) were amongst the first American librarians to explain second wave feminism in the library press, suggesting that ‘the movement is made up of women from all spheres of life, and the issues cut largely across political and class lines’ (962). Issues like child-care, abortion and job discrimination potentially affect all women they continued, but for ‘educated’ women, presumably in librarianship, discrimination is usually revealed through job selection, when ‘male graduates are given aptitude tests, and females, typing tests’ (962). This reinforces comments in Chapters One and Three both about the dubiety of librarianship’s knowledge base, and the seeming emphasis in librarianship of administration and office tasks. Women’s exclusion from influencing library management roles was also noted, and it was felt that librarianship’s image as ‘a genteel profession, a safe profession’ (964) that gave women limited opportunities until marriage needed to change. Otherwise, librarianship denied women as both librarians and library users, and ‘cannot continue to be a valid profession in service to the total populace’ (964).

The September 1971 edition of *Library Journal*, later described as ‘a feminist manifesto for library women’ (Garrison, 1979, 240), was devoted to the women’s liberation movement. It included an extensive bibliography of feminist material and identified feminism and librarianship as having mutual concerns of equality, freedom and access to information (Schuman and Detlefsen, 1971). This special edition attracted comments from readers of both sexes. One criticised an article by Lowenthal (1971) that advocated anger to achieve women’s liberation, saying that she would ‘rather be an competent, happy, unliberated woman’ (Moore, 1971, 3701), whilst another reader considered that such issues excluded the ‘older conservative element’ (Aldrich, 1971, 3701). Others praised the edition and its focus on the ‘iniquities that women presently face and have faced over the years in our profession of librarianship’ (Josey, 1971, 3701). I will now chart the parallel development of early thinking within British librarianship influenced by second wave feminism published within the mainstream journals of the library associations.

### ***Feminism and librarianship : second-wave responses from Britain***

Before considering the discontent amongst some British women librarians in the early 1970s, it is important to consider the culture within librarianship at that time. Stereotyped images of women librarians condoned by official librarianship bodies were prevalent in Britain in the

late 1960s and early 1970s. Besides archetypal sexually repressed spinsters and motherly children's librarians, some female librarians were regarded by their own professional organisations as potential beauty queens. There was much delight in the British library press when it was discovered that Miss World, 1969, Penny Plummer (the former Miss Australia) had once been a library assistant (*Assistant Librarian*, 1969). Her success was hoped to encourage female librarians and library students to enter the annual Miss Book World competition, organised by the Association of Assistant Librarians to promote National Libraries Week. Sarah Dewar - Miss Book World 1969 - was described as :

Sarah, aged 20, is petite with the 1969 look. She is a brunette with green eyes and wore a white crepe mini dress with gold trimmings which she had designed and made herself. One of her main interests is her horse - Chou Chou. The name means "My little love" and comes from a French film she saw once called *The sweet sins of sexy Susan*. Films are another interest and her favourite men on screen are James Coburn, Terence Stamp, Clint Eastwood, Steve McQueen, Paul Newman, Peter O'Toole and Alan Bates.

(Shearman, 1969, 46).

The heady attraction of female librarians proved enticing and there was much pictorial coverage in the library press of the promotional work undertaken by the winners and runners-up of these contests. Little comment was made by readers about these sexist events, and even in the 1980s British library journals carried articles about women librarians undertaking atypical library tasks, but that concentrated on their personal appearance rather than their pioneering work. For example, one such article, accompanied by a photograph of its subject, library technician Helen Andrew, who 'is 5 ft 3 in tall and weighs only 105 pounds, but . . . drives one of the largest mobile libraries' (*Library Association*, 1980, 157) was published with little comment about this unusual breaching of women's traditional library roles. The most complaints about imagery of women in the *Library Association Record* came after its women's issue in August 1985, that I will cover later, which attempted to represent women's changing experience in librarianship and to take a more gender-aware approach. Besides highlighting women's devalued status within librarianship, it included, as one angry letter writer described, a 'photo of two young female librarians posing in schoolgirl fishnet stocking garb for a charity event' (*Bailey*, 1985, 474).

Frustrations amongst British women librarians first began to come to light in the letters pages of the *Library Association Record* in the late 1960s. Although these opinions were often restrained, they demonstrate the discontent of many disenfranchised female librarians and some evidence of an embryonic feminist consciousness developing. The earliest such correspondence began in November 1969 and revealed the plight of the married female

librarian unable to get professional work, under the heading 'Library work for housewives'. Mrs Coffin (1969) deplored her inability to obtain library work and bemoaned the fact that there seemed little option but to 'spend my time selling wigs, beauty products, kitchen-ware and corsets, distributing leaflets, or crocheting bootees, which appears to be all that is available for "housebound housewives"' (337).

Other similarly disappointed women wrote in. Parker (1970) agreed that library opening hours did not suit married women with children who wanted part-time hours, and that she had worked in shops and market research, as 'it becomes uneconomic to pay for child-minders, house cleaners and travel expenses' (33-34) in order to work full time. Another 'housebound housewife', Mrs Addis (1970), wrote of her distress at being unable to use her qualifications and ten years library experience. Before the British Sex Discrimination Act of 1973, employers could still advertise specifically for male or female staff. A chain of letters appeared in the *Library Association Record* in 1971 under the title 'Sex discrimination' that began with a complaint about jobs being advertised for males only. Clark (1971) wrote :

While you cannot be held responsible for the prejudices of your advertisers, I find it strange that a journal representing a largely female profession should accept such an advertisement. Friends in other professions have often expressed envy that I am embarking on a career in which my sex offers no obstacles to my ambition. It seems they were wrong.

(Clark, 1971, 60).

The view that librarianship discriminated by excluding women from certain jobs, was denounced by another reader who felt that it was legitimate that jobs could be advertised in this way, so it would 'save prospective applicants of the "wrong sex" the disappointment of not being called for interview after spending a considerable time approaching referees and writing out an application' (Webster, 1971, 98). Debate then ensued about whether jobs could be sex-specific and require different skills, but with little initial indication that women and men might be treated differently within librarianship, or that this might be socially constructed. However, an American respondent introduced a more gendered analysis, with her last comment mirroring Freedman (1970) :

While it is true that women do not experience any difficulty in being accepted into the library profession at the bottom rung of the ladder, since it has been widely accepted as a “feminine” profession, this happy state of affairs does not last for long. After a few years of experience, the ambitious female librarian may begin to apply for positions involving more responsibility, higher pay, and perhaps the supervision of junior librarians. It is at this point that we often find that a man of mediocre talents is promoted over a better qualified or more ambitious woman . . .

(Hansen, 1971, 200).

This developing recognition of sex-defined barriers began to indicate that within librarianship women’s contributions were restricted to specific, bounded areas, but that some women in librarianship were developing a feminist consciousness. Although librarianship was often ignored by broader second wave feminist discussion on women-dominated occupations, whereas the treatment of secretaries, nurses and teachers was often highlighted (*Hildenbrand, 1996*), there were occasional glimpses of librarianship being seen by those outside it as unwilling to move beyond its historical construction of women. One young letter-writer to *Spare Rib* expressed this forcefully when considering her future career choices :

I am obsessed with the idea of studying, going to college and qualifying at something-or-other (librarianship perhaps) yet cannot enjoy working towards this goal. I think this is because I am very afraid of two false stereotypes : the sour puss spinster married to her career or the despised housewife with only her kids to talk about.

(Haggart, 1976, 5).

This letter conveys the limited opportunities that librarianship then appeared to offer, and the *Library Association Record* letters page continued to capture the growing, more outspoken, frustration that many women inside librarianship felt, and for the first time terminology from the women’s movement emerged. For example, one correspondent’s suggestion that public libraries were ‘one of the last bastions of male chauvinism’ through their reluctance to appoint women to senior positions (*Newiss, 1975, 97*) caused a long-running debate. Academic libraries and library schools (*McNeill, 1975*), legal librarianship and children’s librarianship (*Moore, 1975*) were also labelled as chauvinistic institutions, and editorial captions like ‘Whatever happened to women’s lib?’ firmly acknowledged (although perhaps sotto voce) the feminist origins of such discourse.

Women’s need for part-time hours and flexible training to maintain work and home responsibilities was mentioned by many (*Duckett, 1975; Ralph, 1975; Southan, 1975; Tennant, 1975*). *Ralph (1975)* raised the interesting point that the image of spinster librarians - ‘afraid to take on any domestic or emotional ties which will ruin their career prospects’

(253) - is perhaps correct but inevitable, given the exclusion from the library workplace of married women or those with children. The choices made by many women at this time between having a family or a career has undoubtedly affected librarianship, as for other occupations or professions in which women form the majority, and derives from a series of cultural and legislative factors from the nineteenth century onwards in librarianship's case, as Chapter Six described.

This section has highlighted the grievances that were being articulated by both British and American women librarians during the second wave feminist movement, much around the structure of librarianship and its failure to value or recognise the work of women librarians and needs of women library users. There were differences however in the content of these grievances and discontents and how they were being expressed. Those from the United States were more grounded in feminist theory and discourse than those from the United Kingdom, and had wider amplification. The American library press was more liberal in its editorial policies, allowing a broader range of feminist ideas to be published, whereas British women were restricted to letters' pages for many years. It can be argued that there are clear signs of a feminist librarianship agenda developing at this point within America, but less so within the United Kingdom. Although both countries were restructuring librarianship at this time of great social change, there was little cohesion around gender politics or a comprehensive awareness about women's issues. Within both countries however, these challenges by women to librarianship's sexism, albeit sometimes muted and polite, caused some stir amongst the dominant library culture, and I now briefly consider responses from some male librarians.

## **Section Two : Male librarians speak out for, and against, feminism**

This chapter is concerned with the creation of second wave feminist responses within librarianship, so views from the dominant library culture that both contributed to the reasons for discontent and that commented on these new forms of challenges and expressions by library women are extremely important. In this brief section, commentary from American male librarians will be discussed as it became public via the library press at the onset of the second wave feminist movement and responded to the types of issues that women were beginning to raise.

### ***Hai karate ! - the fear of the bra-burning librarian***

Many writers in the male-dominated library press were unable to hide their feelings about the new feminist ideas perceived to be influencing women librarians. For example, Hathaway (1970) characterised, perhaps correctly, the women's movement as promoting everything

from 'bra burning and karate lessons to attacks on rigid abortion laws and the job status of women' (963). He claimed that women library managers (clearly unusual at the time, and likely to have experienced misogyny and sex discrimination) dehumanized and exploited their staff :

In the traditional role of sustainer, she fails to express her individuality, create, or even act in a decisive manner. Even in crisis situations, she is anxious for everyone to get back to work, Acting passively, she will attempt to establish her identity through others and to express her purpose in relationships. The forced courtesies are only an example of how shallow these relationships are. When offended, it is she who will attempt to sever even a professional relationship.

(Hathaway, 1970, 965).

Whilst promoting such narrow and critical stereotypes of female behaviours and suggesting therefore that only men could be library managers, Hathaway (1970) regarded nonetheless that librarians felt undervalued and underpaid. But in commenting that 'librarians, like Women, are seeking democratic change by organizing into groups and caucuses to analyze problems and find solutions' (965) he clearly regarded 'librarians' and 'Women', presumably feminists, as mutually exclusive groups. Librarians were men and the norm, and women, especially those with challenging political views, were clearly the outsiders or the Other. However Hathaway (1970) agreed that libraries transmitted conventional perspectives, and surprisingly suggested that libraries needed to recognise women as having particular needs, therefore 'the image of women in all media including juvenile materials must be questioned; and women must be given information and freedom in their options for the future within and without the institution' (965).

A year later, an article by another American male librarian disagreed with linking the women's movement to librarianship. In a section titled '*Repression of Female Librarians - Humbug !*', Carey (1971) argued against the existence of sex discrimination, claiming that women earned less than male counterparts because of supply and demand, as 'the job market for male librarians is simply tighter' (593), and women's careers inevitably suffered through maternity leave. Although he acknowledged that married women's careers were sometimes restricted, this could not be blamed 'on the profession or on prejudice' (594). Carey did not find it possible that male librarians might control their female colleagues, and any differentials were because 'women are more passive and less keenly professional than men' (594). The suggestion that women are less naturally professional than men and therefore reduce professional status, especially in occupations in which they numerically dominate, has already been discussed regarding the semi-professions as Etzioni (1969) defined.

An earlier article by a male librarian had however attempted to debunk negative images of the female librarian and to present librarianship in a more gendered context, although with some confusing arguments. Sable (1969) argued that both sexes had accepted and internalised historical negative librarian stereotypes. To disassociate themselves from the stereotypes of all librarians, generated by negative views about women, male librarians - according to Sable - had therefore become more aggressive and less interested in the public, and this had to be challenged. Sable also suggested that the following natural characteristics indicated why women and men librarians behaved differently :

<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
aggressiveness	retiring disposition
aloof	maternal
commanding	relinquishing authority
bureaucratic	personal
extrovert	introvert
man of action	delays decisions
impersonal	sensitive

(Sable, 1969, 749).

Sable continued that these attributes needed to be preserved and acknowledged within librarianship, as he went on :

Housekeeping is for women. The stories of female librarians saving things are legion. Local history collections have been built up by female librarians. Men, tending towards sweeping, panoramic views of life, are not savers. Traditionally they are not concerned about details. They only make decisions.  
(Sable, 1969, 750).

Such statements indicate again the gendered basis of librarianship, where women perform a role and duties associated with cleanliness, detail and servitude, whereas men concentrate on directing and positioning the library service in the external world, within a construction that states that these behaviours are natural and inevitable. This summary of the views of some American male librarians at the start of the second wave feminist movement shows that the vocalisation by many female librarians of their new found feminist beliefs caused a minor crisis amongst some men that questioned both the established roles of male and female librarians and librarianship's professionalism. One element of librarianship, indicated by Detlefsen and Schuman as significant in providing positive images or excluding women's knowledge and open to feminist influence, is stock selection. I will now detail the role of women in the public library in selecting stock and indicate where resistance informed by

feminism might be possible. I will then describe second wave feminist responses to the gendered nature of the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme and other major schemes, and discuss classificatory alternatives informed by feminism.

### **Section Three : Women in the public library and stock selection**

I have no doubt that girls sometimes get wrong notions from reading such novels as are to be found in our libraries, and are led to do in consequence very silly or bad things; but I fear that such persons are so weak that if they do not need novels they would become without the occupation of reading a prey to much worse pursuits. (Green, 1879, 349).

Victorian library patriarchs like Green (1879) highlighted the potential danger of library books to impressionable girls, and reflected on the seductive attractions of 'sensational reading'. Public librarians could therefore reduce the possibility of corruption through selecting appropriate material, and women were ideally suited to do this. S. R. Ranganathan's First Law of Library Science positioned stock selection as 'one of the most important techniques with which librarianship is concerned' (Landau, 1958, 63) with the classic librarianship view that stock provides libraries with character and identity, beyond that of staff, the building or the environment. Choosing and buying stock is still considered a core librarianship competency, yet is embedded in a set of external and internal processes. In this section, I will consider the outcomes of decisions concerning the construction of public librarianship that Chapter Six analysed, concerning the role of women in the library and their relationship to stock. I will review briefly the origins of these notions and their linkages to gendered notions of women's values, then consider the influence of second wave feminism on stock selection which can be argued to be of major strategic importance to those interested in a convergence between feminism and librarianship.

#### ***Introducing women's values into stock***

The central view of the American fathers of librarianship that the public library could enforce morality, protect public order, promote social cohesion and sobriety through creating a calming and homely environment, as described in Chapter Six, meant that library stock should not threaten 'the hierarchy of the family, the domesticity of women, and the sanctity of monogamous lifelong marriage' (Garrison, 1979, 35). It was the job of women to reinforce and promote these gendered messages through their sensible and informed book choices, particularly within fiction, children's books and other domestic areas. As Chapter One stated, librarianship's professional aspirations has been undermined partly through its

reliance on the expert knowledge of others, and as Chapter Six set out, much through the structures set in place by Dewey.

If public libraries transmitted messages about conformity and the acceptance of gender inequalities through their physicality, organisation and staffing, they also did this through stock. Victorian American women library staff were encouraged to introduce genteel and pious morals into these new public spaces (*Garrison, 1979; Van Slyck, 2002; Watson, 1994*), although others suggest that this stereotypes women and implies that they acted censoriously (*Jenkins, 1996*). For Maack (*1996*), the new first wave women librarians wished to encourage the 'intellectual nurturing of children and adults who otherwise lacked access to print culture' (no pagination). Green (*1879*), for example, praised the Boston Ladies Commission's work - 'women of high culture and good judgement' (351) - in assessing children's books, prior to the widespread onset of the Dewey-inspired American public library. American clubwomen in general appeared to accept this role as, besides having an interest 'in the selection of books for traveling libraries . . . they also had ideas about what belonged on the shelves of public libraries' (*Watson, 1994, 261*).

For Victorian British women, opportunities to influence library stock, such as they were, were more limited. The public library system, as discussed within the last chapter, had a different trajectory, and developed through the self-help subscription and trade libraries, 'an alternative to the pub' (*Greenhalgh et al 1995, 31*), as has been described. In these settings, women often had little input, and depended on the arrival of the public library movement to eventually begin to gain influence. The early female British and American librarians were therefore limited in their abilities to resist their role in transmitting powerful gendered messages, but women working in the public library at a later stage may have had slightly more opportunities. However, stock that women select clearly will differ, depending on their preferences, beliefs and value systems. In the next section, I will review the potential outcomes of the involvement of so many women in the public library and begin to question whether the application of stereotyped female values have feminised the public library.

### ***Feminising the public library - has it happened through stock ?***

It's run by this terrible woman called Madge, awfully narrow-minded, makes Mary Whitehouse look like a topless waitress. Never mind Salman Rushdie - she'd have the Swan Vestas to a Catherine Cookson given half the chance. She thinks book-burning is a sensible alternative to oil-fired central heating.  
(Wood, 1990, 149).

The public library, like other libraries, is intended to be a place where stock meets user need, without bias or political interference. If the public library was deliberately feminised through the actions of Dewey and others, and a feminine influence prevailed, then the archetypal behaviour, stereotyped by Victoria Wood above, of the spinsterly, non-sexual female librarian might be the outcome. For Cram (1992), women's role in stock selection had a detrimental effect as it was not typically undertaken with any feminist awareness. If the public library is closely linked to nineteenth century notions of the home as female, books selected by women, including texts for men covering the 'so-called weekend pursuits of home carpentry' (Cram, 1992) are therefore highly gendered, and a bias towards women's interests in the traditional sense is created :

Cookbook collections in public libraries are usually enormous and highly specialised. Because it is "female" technology, we don't see this as too specialised for a public library. We are so comfortable with the exotic technology of cookery that we don't even identify it as technical. Yet we can assert with straight faces we don't keep technical books when what is required is books devoted to "male" technology like aeronautics, electricity and mechanics.

(Cram, 1992, no pagination).

For Cram (1992), the public library was reinforced as a place for women and its use by men reduced, by presenting material chosen by women, often with women in mind, as neutral. She therefore suggests that public libraries represent unrealistic and stereotypical views of femininity and women's interests, and in doing so 'have feminised the library in a way that preserves male power' (Cram, 1992, no pagination). It therefore may be the case that the increasing number of women librarians and readers has affected library stock and associated the public library indelibly with women, the virtual opposite to perhaps some of the original reasons for Dewey and others of involving women in librarianship. As Hornsey's comments (2002) have already suggested, this may have also resulted in a heterosexually-oriented public library service.

Whether women and men have divergent needs and use the public library differently is sometimes discussed in librarianship literature, but often to confirm the prevailing view that women borrow fiction and men non-fiction, with little consideration of how such a potentially gendered situation arose. One of my interviewees who had been a public librarian confirmed the female nature of library stock and identified that books on women's issues within public libraries are there because '*women are the main users and the main people that are buying the stock*' (Beth, library association officer, Scotland, 2001). However, as nearly 60 % of library users are women, with just over 40 % being men (LISU, 2002), there are perhaps apocryphal elements to this interpretation, but Public Lending Right figures do seem to confirm that the most popular types of stock have gendered origins.

Of the top 100 most borrowed authors in public libraries for 2001, the most - 41 - were targeted towards women, including Catherine Cookson, Danielle Steel, Maeve Binchy and Barbara Taylor Bradford, with only 12 aimed towards the obvious male reader including Jack Higgins, Bernard Cornwell and Ken Follett. The second largest group are children-oriented, including Roald Dahl, Jacqueline Wilson and Eric Hill, forming thirty-three of the overall 100, with the remaining 14 authors mainly crime writers, including Ian Rankin and Agatha Christie, that can be arguably considered to appeal to both men and women. Of course, it is not the case that all library readers comply with such gendered reading habits, and many men doubtless read Danielle Steel and many women Ken Follett, but it does indicate a broad correlation between gender of author and genre preference.

Other views have been suggested against this trend. Kaufman (1969) aimed to discover the accuracy of the assertion that women read library fiction, and traced its origins back to British private subscription libraries in the late eighteenth century when women were seen as those that read 'the sentimental and sensational novel' (225). In other words, the very women that Green (1879) wished to prevent from gaining access to such inflammatory materials. Kaufman's analysis of membership and circulation records revealed little factual base to this concept, leading him to conclude that it appears to derive from historical misogyny, with 'the imposition of the burden of responsibility upon women . . . an irresponsible and essentially arrogant male slander' (225). This important area of the feminisation of library stock was raised in my fieldwork interviews, as I was keen to discover whether it was viewed as a potential area for making positive changes from a more informed perspective, or one over which my informants felt they had little control. Some of their responses follow.

### *Contemporary understandings of stock selection*

The awareness of some of the early library feminists appears to confirm that public library stock partly contained gendered notions about the sexes and their respective behaviours and interests, and that much of that came through the activities of female staff from the late nineteenth century onwards. Feminist librarians may therefore need to utilise stock selection to promote more positive materials about women as Detlefsen and Schuman (1971) suggested, ensuring that library stock challenges the status quo. This promotes the inclusion of women's knowledge to compensate for earlier deficits, a view common in radical feminism as Chapter Two described. Detlefsen and Schuman (1971) concluded that women librarians are well placed to promote women's liberation, as librarianship 'is the one agency for the transmission of information and knowledge that should be most deeply involved in and committed to the basic theses and tenets of women's liberation' (982). However, not all women librarians hold such feminist views, or wish to apply them within the workplace.

Jackie however, one of the public librarians I interviewed, commented on stock purchasing in her local authority library, and regarded the influence of feminism as having been strong :

There's always been a commitment to buying stock of feminist interest, of lesbian and gay interest. There is a commitment, and maybe there'd be like displays, there'd always be something for Women's Week. There's reading groups . . . I think certainly there is a feminist input and there are a lot of gay men, and there's gay input, so I do think that would never have happened without feminism.

(Jackie, public librarian, Stockport, 2001).

Jackie's view that feminism has affected the stock in some public libraries is borne out by other evidence from British women public librarians who described attempts to introduce feminist materials to combat sexist and negative materials and to present new knowledge and ideas. One London public librarian (*Allen, 1981*) attempted to establish a feminist collection (initially a display about the women's movement) in her branch in the late 1970s, when although the librarians did not consider it controversial, some library users did. However she considered that the display communicated 'the ideas behind the women's movement was communicated to a wider audience' (9). The interest generated, alongside criticism about the library's lack of feminist fiction (perhaps confirming Cram's point) led to a new 'Women's Studies' section that brought together 'sociology, health, literature, fiction, poetry, sexuality, biography, and self defence for women, and pamphlets on the law for battered women, CR (*consciousness-raising*) groups, equal rights, maternity rights etc' (9). Another British librarian active in second wave feminist politics (*Little, 1981*) argued for the need to achieve 'a positive stock' (6) that fully represented women, included non-sexist children's books, and excluded all forms of misogynist imagery, presumably to counteract the historical feminine bias that Cram outlined.

An aim of such women-centred action was to reach women not linked in an organised way to feminism, and finding library material relevant to their own experiences, aided some women's journeys towards feminism. As one *Spare Rib* reader wrote, finding Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in her local public library was 'a bombshell that blew up my complacency' (*Bruce, 1981, 4*). This writer was however concerned that local authority funding cuts to public libraries (a topical issue of the time, and since) could 'conspire to prevent this happy meeting of minds' (4) and prevent other women from similar experiences. The Feminist Library Worker Group (as discussed later in this chapter) replied to this letter and described their attempts to expand public library stock, by challenging various structural and professional barriers affected by gender, as 'in some library systems (as in other male-dominated hierarchies) women have little or no say in which books are chosen for stock or what information is displayed' (*Little et al, 1981, 5*). In a similar mode to Bruce, but with the

ability to perhaps make wider change, an academic librarian (*Wade, 1981*) wrote that after discovering books on women's issues in her public library, she had now purchased a range of feminist materials to 'help the Feminist Cause' (5).

The possibilities, and importance, of buying feminist and alternative books was occasionally raised in the library press in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and the United Kingdom (*Danky and Shore, 1982; Detlefsen and Schuman, 1971*). For example, *Assistant Librarian* carried an article on an arrangement between Manchester public libraries and a local radical bookshop (*Walker, 1981*). The piece encouraged other public libraries to patronise such shops, rather than conventional library suppliers, suggesting that otherwise important stock could be missed :

How many anti-nuclear books (as opposed to books on war and weapons) do you stock ? How many books with a positive image of women as opposed to 'bodice rippers' ? Do you carry books or pamphlets that give the view of those opposed to British imperialism in Northern Ireland ?  
(Walker, 1981, 34).

Presumably not all library authorities took up the challenge, but there does appear to have been success from a second wave feminist standpoint in addressing women's equality and empowerment through stock in some public library settings, especially within urban areas. It is of interest to now briefly reflect on current stock selection issues, and how this has affected the possibility of feminist influence.

### ***Stock challenges, issues and experiences***

For contemporary public libraries that wish to promote broader stock choices including women's issues, external and internal barriers may conspire to make this difficult. The increased centralisation of 'professional' tasks and purchasing arrangements with library suppliers, who provide most stock for public and academic libraries, has potentially made it seemingly more difficult to introduce alternative or feminist material. This is seen by many librarians as a negative shift from a time when there was wider autonomy to choose stock, and 'it was accepted that librarians should take part in book selection - it was regarded as part of their professional duty' (*Davis, 2000, 443*). Moreover, library suppliers - as commercial operations - do not carry complete publishers' lists and tend to select the most marketable titles, and so filtering exists at numerous levels before librarians even get to choose. Marginal titles, and those considered risky, are less attractive than well-known and safe titles, and an earlier comment that such processes inevitably result in the 'bland, boring, conservative, middle-class and so on' (*Little, 1984, 18*) being available in public libraries may still be a

reasonable assessment. Most public libraries, mindful of Best Value and the outcomes of public spending, now proactively relate lending patterns directly to stock selection, so the popularity, or lack of it, of each book affects purchasing decisions. This then inhibits the ability of librarians to choose more unusual stock, or to defend sections and items that are less borrowed but regarded as ideologically or socially important.

Many libraries have to then decide between high-turnover, popular titles with limited literary or educational merit, and more esoteric, specialist - or radical - materials that may be thought important but are unlikely to have wide appeal. Murison (1955) commented, nearly fifty years ago, on the inevitable compromise in public libraries between 'the limitations of finance and the diversity of aims' (130) and ongoing concerns were expressed by many of the librarians whom I interviewed. One public library manager in Scotland commented that stock likely to be most borrowed was purchased, namely *'family sagas and Catherine Cookson because you know the stock's going to go out'*, whereas 'worthy' titles were excluded (Frances, public librarian, Ayr, 2001). The pressure on issues may inhibit the ability of librarians with a feminist approach to ensure more comprehensive stock selection as Jackie again commented, and the borrowing figures already cited in this section appear to prove :

Issues are everything. So it forces you almost into a conservative position that you think 'Oh, yes', you know, 'that lesbian novel will only get ten issues'. You're so issue focused. Because you've got to prove that you're keeping your issues up, it forces you to be more mainstream and conservative.

(Jackie, public librarian, Stockport, 2001).

Public libraries are increasingly providing materials in a range of formats, which introduces other dilemmas for feminists. Many have video and audio collections, usually borrowed via a small fee, and as Chapter One commented, criticised by some contemporary librarians as introducing commercial practices into the free public library. Such services can increase the library's entertainment function, generate library funds, expand the user base (with younger readers often a target) and hopefully encourage books to also be borrowed. Murison (1955) described the historical role of the public library in promoting useful home entertainment and preventing social unrest when noting the reduced influence of the governing class, but the civilising role of the library :

In a community of social equals it becomes even more than ever necessary to provide liberal education through libraries, which can so well supply the great diversity of cultural channels in earlier times maintained by the cosmopolitan interests of the aristocracy and upper classes.

(Murison, 1955, 108).

However, feminist and other librarians may have ambivalent feelings about such stock. They may see it as less professionally-oriented than working with books, and may feel compromised by populist materials, especially those with an adult, violent or even anti-women content. Jackie, for example, described her previous experience of working in a library in an inner-city setting near Manchester :

It was like a normal video shop. So half the films were like slasher films but that's what they all want. And the woman who orders them says 'I hate to get this, but we're told to get this because we're told we have to generate x amount of income'. And this is where it comes from. And you get a copy of *Il Postino* and its like three people take it out. So you know, you are led by market forces to a great extent and dumbing-down culture.

(Jackie, public librarian, Stockport, 2001).

Some of the librarians interviewed however talked positively about ensuring that women's issues were represented in stock, and that the support and social roles of the public library remained. One considered that her library wanted to provide information to the public '*to empower them and enable them to do things, and sometimes it's the only avenue open for people*' (Frances, public librarian, Ayr, 2001). Beth's comment below, returns perhaps to the bibliographies selected by Dewey's keen women students as Chapter Six described, as she outlined a new service to identify and support the preferred reading of library users :

More libraries are looking at what they are buying and making sure that, for instance, to give a classic example - if someone is a high borrower of self-help, women's issues, all the rest of it, a lot of them now are looking to say '*Yes, okay, how can we make sure that that person knows when new stock comes in ?*'. So, they're mailing them a book list and marking off what their past reading habits have been.

(Beth, library association official, Scotland, 2001).

There is also current proactive work to widen those involved in stock selection to ensure greater public participation in the library. Some public librarians are involving local people in stock selection in a way that incorporates arguably many feminist principles as well as tackling social inclusion, and achieves positive outcomes for the library and those that participate (*Murray et al, 2000*). Such initiatives may go some way to counterposing the changing environment for influencing and selecting stock, possibly the long-term results of having so many (non-feminist) women involved in choosing and promoting stock, and are positive moves to better engage communities in their libraries.

In this section, I have explored the outcomes of having a female-dominated library staff in the public library service through stock selection and the values and principles that underpin it. It has been argued that there has been a tangible feminisation of the public library because of these and other factors, and that stock and its use appears to have been affected. The public library may have become a women's space, a room of one's own, in a specific non-gender aware way. The work of second wave feminists to reverse some of these trends and to ensure a more comprehensive and liberating stock has been set out, but recent and ongoing structural issues may restrict or inhibit these activities. It is of interest to later discover whether any cohesive feminist action within British public libraries was attempted during the second wave movement, and also how stock is considered within women's libraries that may have completely different opinions. Another key librarianship issue that cuts across all settings is library classification. Stock within all libraries is organised by some form of classification scheme, and these have attracted some attention from librarians influenced by second wave feminism, as I will now explore.

#### **Section Four : Library classification and second wave feminist critiques**

Library classification schemes, typified in Dewey's Decimal Classification scheme as discussed, are an archetypal part of librarianship. Classification schemes determine the placing and retrieval of items of recorded knowledge and can be viewed as a key underpinning of librarianship and as part of its knowledge base. They can also be regarded as the backbone of the library itself. It could be imagined that library classification is one area to which second wave feminist and possibly other critical theories from within librarianship have been applied. Some feminist librarians have commented on the early development of library classification, especially the role of Dewey (*Garrison, 1979*) but key bibliographies and reviews of library literature influenced by feminism and women's issues (*Baum, 1992; Goetsch and Watstein, 1993; Heim and Weibel, 1984*) reveal few publications overall. In this section, classification will be discussed concerning feminist awareness about its origins and shortcomings for organising both general and feminist material, as well as reviewing contemporary challenges within librarianship concerning the role of classification, the staff that undertake cataloguing, and those that use it within the library.

#### ***Second wave feminist awareness about classifying general materials***

In this section I wish to discuss second wave feminist understandings about using classification schemes within a general, for example public, library, that will reveal an overall low awareness from mainstream librarians about schemes and their meanings, even during the second wave period. Garrison (*1979*) viewed the Dewey Decimal Classification as an 'attempt at resolving inner conflicts . . . (that) . . . stamped our library system, and hence our

lives' (108). Her argument, as the last chapter perhaps partially confirmed, was that the scheme represented Dewey's personal demons and desires - about women's motherly and patient, yet sexual and available, persona - that has forever labelled female librarians with polarised stereotypes. It appears that Dewey's impact on the history of librarianship has often prevented wider discussion beyond himself as the subject, and has inhibited second wave feminist discussions from librarianship about classification. This then leaves gaps in analysis of many related areas of librarianship practice. For example, Cram (1992) alluded to problems with classification when discussing the feminisation of public libraries, but seemed unfamiliar with arguments on this subject :

Do the practices the profession take for granted in organising catalogues, collections and databases favour one gender over the other, and if so, what is the effect on public library usage ?

(Cram, 1992, no pagination).

Some commentators from librarianship have however critiqued library classification schemes. From the late 1960s, some radical librarians began to challenge the inequalities, biases, prejudices and omissions found in the major classification schemes. These include Sanford Berman, an American librarian, who has waged a long campaign against the sexism, racism and homophobia of Library of Congress scheme (Berman, 1993; 1994), and later, lesbian and gay librarians who have challenged implicit homophobia in cataloguing and classification (Schneider and Cockerham, 2000). Besides observations about the messages and meanings contained within library classification schemes that could be made from a feminist perspective, if feminist book-buying was successful, then the need accurately to place the resulting books would undoubtedly find classification schemes wanting. As Schuman and Detlefsen (1971) pointed out, placing women's books within individual subject sections can be problematic as 'the oppression of women is so interrelated to the ills of society as a whole' (2589) and grouping women's books together may be more effective. West (1982) suggested the same :

Have the courage of your feminist convictions, and set up a women's browsing collection in the library . . . Break through all the Dewey and LC (*Library of Congress*) hardening of the categories and shelve the best women's material in all the subjects together. Use a color-coded dot on the books, and catalog cards to flag their whereabouts in a special section.

(West, 1982, 109).

### *Classification and women's books*

Graves (1984) considered that some librarians may find difficulties in deciding how to classify, as they are 'unfamiliar with the scope and current progress of Women's Studies' (3), women's materials and classification, and that 'existing subject and classification schemes, being variously archaic, male-slanted, imprecise and incomplete, do not permit such access, instead they commonly inhibit it' (45). One area in which classification and feminism have come together, or perhaps diverged, has been in the in/ability of library schemes to accommodate women's materials. During the 1970s and 1980s, in the public library, where the stock selection policies of second wave feminists was bearing some fruit, and in the academic library, where women's studies was leading to the establishment of new subject sections for which there was no adequate accommodation, the inadequacies of library classification schemes were being exposed.

Ursula, an academic librarian in the 1970s and interested in women's issues, commented that *'historically they were developed by men and I think that's true in all cases, and so subjects which had a specific gender interest wouldn't have been catered for because they probably wouldn't have existed then at that time'* (Ursula, educationalist, Stirling, 2000). Sheila, a specialist on classification and a feminist since the second wave, suggested that classification schemes were designed *'very often from a very traditional stand-point and often the most commonly used schemes are the ones that are the most traditional in that respect'*. As she went on to say, *'they display all sorts of bias and convey a very personal vision'* (Sheila, lecturer in library and information studies, Aberdeen, 2000).

As Carter and Ritchie (1990) commented, the concept of women's studies as a cross-cutting subject, linking all academic disciplines in which women are excluded or misrepresented and creating new ones, posed challenges for librarians :

The bibliographic control of women's studies literature presents particular problems . . . its intrinsically interdisciplinary character means that the indexing net has to be flung wide to provide a useful coverage.

(Carter and Ritchie, 1990, 3).

Gill, an academic librarian from Stirling and feminist, described the difficulties in deciding where to place books on women's issues, whether in the discipline that they originated from and were perhaps critiquing, or within a separate women's studies section. She said that *'I find that a tricky area sometimes, deciding on a book whether it should be with all the stuff on women and feminism or whether really it belongs with the subject that its about'* (Gill, academic librarian, Stirling, 2000). One way of solving the problem in public libraries was to have a separate women's section, as described above, but this was not always appropriate or

able to meet the challenges generated by women's studies publications. The resulting invisibility of materials about women's lives could lead to much wasted time for women interested in women's issues, including those writing some of the feminist books themselves. American second wave radical feminist writer Susan Brownmiller reflected on the barriers raised by classification schemes and catalogues, as the items that she wished to find, whilst writing a ground-breaking book on rape and sexual violence against women, had no official classification :

I spent the next four years writing *Against Our Will* in the New York Public Library, where the card catalogues had more entries for rapeseed than for rape, but the stacks held treasures that could be retrieved if I followed a dim trail of footnotes and trusted my instincts.

(Brownmiller, 2000, 204).

Within the Dewey scheme, rape now appears within the 300 main class, Social Sciences, at two points - 362.883 is the class mark for 'Rape victim' and rape as an act sits in the 364 Criminology sequence, from which the following has been extracted :

364	Criminology
364.1	Pirates
364.152	Homicide
364.153	Rape

This appearance of rape in the Dewey system is likely to be an outcome of raised public and social awareness, partly through the efforts of second wave feminism.

### ***Second wave feminist responses to classification - amending existing schemes***

The need to identify appropriate classification schemes for organising and making accessible women's material or material that contains information about women has been an ongoing feminist challenge. Using a scheme like the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme or the Library of Congress has advantages as it provides a ready-made structure that can be adapted, is familiar to library users, but as one American feminist librarian commented, classification schemes were developed when women had less equality and there was little meaningful material about them to classify in main schemes. As she goes on to say :

Disciplines and fields of study that emerged later are awkwardly squeezed in. For example, in the LC system, Computer Science is a subclass under Mathematics, and Women's Studies, under Family, Marriage, Women.

(Lee, 1995, 185).

Lee (1995) also points out that notation HQ within the Library of Congress scheme now includes women's studies so theoretically all books which fit that term should be classified there (183). This to an extent resolves the earlier situation in which 'women's studies books are scattered throughout the Library of Congress classification scheme, making browsing unproductive' (Searing, 1986, 153). However, as a recent third wave library feminist zine pointed out, this placing aligns feminism and women's studies with sexual life, erotica, the family, marriage and home - including child study, eugenics, desertion, adultery, divorce, polygamy and the aged (Pete, 2002) so is perhaps not ideal. To avoid this, some libraries have customised traditional schemes to make them more appropriate to the subject area being covered or used feminist thesauri to expand access. As the introduction to *A Women's Thesaurus* (Capek, 1989), one of the few such examples, states :

The language of standard indexing and classification systems . . . does not offer vocabulary consistently, or sufficiently detailed and up-to-date . . . Existing classifications frequently overlook emerging topics of special concern to women. As a result, important information is lumped under "women", or is inaccessible. Prefixes and suffixes attached to terminology ostensibly gender-neutral reflect implicit male norms and define women in terms of their relationships to men (labels like "nontraditional employment" or "unwed mothers").  
(Capek, 1989, viii).

However, the use of such feminist tools is rare within mainstream library settings and more common within women's libraries, staffed by feminist activists, not necessarily with librarianship qualifications, as later chapters address. Women's archives and women's libraries responding to the second wave period needed ways of organising information and materials to both reclaim knowledge and to inform and support women. Although their work will be discussed later it is important to note some attempts to influence classification schemes with feminist understandings. For some women's libraries creating their own feminist thesaurus and index terms has been the answer to the non-accommodation of traditional schemes.

One group of Italian women extracted keywords from feminist books and documents and developed specialized feminist search terms, which did not exist in 'male-oriented cataloging systems' (Tufani, 1995, 212). They felt that not only were they making their information accessible to users, but by using a feminist thesaurus, they were also inserting into everyday language 'the words and phrases that have emerged from the women's movement and that reflect its history and contributions to many fields of knowledge' (211). For example, instead of 'housewife' and 'domestic labour', which suggests invisibility and an accepted state for women, they used 'double labor' and 'double presence' which they felt designated women's

work more truthfully. This very interesting approach, using women's words and terms to create the most fitting scheme, manifests many aspects of second wave feminism.

Besides such approaches, some women have created classification schemes to represent women's interests. In the 1970s, the Women's Resource and Research Centre in London, as I will describe in Chapter Ten, developed a new classification system that embodied a feminist world-view, and could accommodate most materials in women's libraries as will be discussed later. Within this scheme, the term 'rape' that Brownmiller sought for, would be classified within Class 11 : Crimes Against Women, in the following sequence :

LP	Rape	SA Violence (same as)
LPC	Individual rape	
LPE	Group rape	
LPF	Planned rape	
LPH	Discriminatory legalisation	
LPL	Rape of children	
LPN	Sexual abuse of children	

Such an explicit feminist classification process would ensure that the shelf order of books would convey the linkages between these subjects, and their inclusion within a class that names them as violence against women is clearly significant. Besides such experiences that potentially can affect all women, there are other issues relating the heterogeneity of women (and obviously men) that were excluded from the social context and milieus that generated the schemes, as the last chapter analysed. For example, when the Indian Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies tried to decide how to catalogue and classify their resources (*Lakshmi, 1995*), they found that as well as traditional schemes poorly reflecting women's perspectives or interests, their world view excluded many issues particularly pertinent to Indian women. Anveshi instead employed *A Woman's Thesaurus* as a basis, adding descriptors on local and national issues, and developed a new scheme, based on an alphanumeric system that could be expanded to include new material.

Another original feminist scheme, the Women's Health classification scheme, aimed to classify books and other items, based on a gendered social model of health, for the Women's Health and Information Centre in London (later Women's Health) (*Ilett, 1998, 2002; Saffron, 1989*). The variety of anticipated use and the need to accommodate a wide range of subjects led its author to construct a new system, as nothing else was suitable. She considered Dewey, but felt that 'we needed a more integrated approach encompassing women's lives in their entirety, as seen by women themselves' (*Saffron, 1996*). The Women's Health scheme, covering a very specific field of knowledge from a feminist perspective, is highly unusual. Its

development by one person inevitably means it is highly subjective and represents one particular view, but nevertheless one previously unseen in traditional library classification (Ilett, 1997, 1998, 2002).

### ***Contemporary issues about classification***

Some women librarians that I interviewed were concerned with classification and saw its totemic qualities as significant. Noreen, a cataloguing and indexing consultant, said that she considered the terminology used in such processes to be '*extremely important socially . . . as the labels we place on things affect our perception of them*' (Noreen, cataloguing / indexing consultant, Isle of Wight, 2001). This view was both confirmed and disputed by another interviewee, Julie, a long standing feminist, who felt that although classification embodied misogynist messages, women's devaluation in librarianship was more important :

Most women in libraries aren't very high up or they're not getting paid very well. Or the reason that the profession is so underpaid is because it's women. It's a women's profession, and it doesn't have the same status. And I think those things are more important than cataloguing schemes.

(Julie, information services manager, national charity, London, 2000).

This may indicate that, for some women in libraries with feminist beliefs, concerns about classification schemes may be less important than wider gender inequalities. Cataloguing and classification may also have received little feminist attention because it is traditionally associated with those in librarianship who are concerned with detail and conforming to systems, but also conversely as it is often associated with women, especially women who perhaps attract some of the most negative gendered stereotypes. For example, one of my interviewees commented that cataloguers, typically women, were '*the ones who seemed to be into textile crafts or the worst sort of stereotype of middle-aged women*' (Doreen, information systems manager, museum sector, Edinburgh, 2001).

Classification is now less a requirement of general librarianship work. There is little classification carried out within individual libraries, as much is done centrally and most large publishers print classification from the main library schemes, such as Dewey or Library of Congress, in their publications. A decreased need for learning classification and cataloguing as part of librarianship training then follows, as 'only one person in a library authority is permitted to describe themselves as a cataloguer' (Davis, 2000, 443). Such changes reflect the operating environment, but also remove core skills from the librarian's repertoire and prevent full understandings of, or challenges to, the origins of highly gendered aspects of the library. For Harris (1992) such changes indicate a move away from areas in which women

librarians often dominated, and can be seen as being a further erosion of women's part in librarianship.

Most of the librarians that I spoke to, whatever their feminist politics or views on whether classification was a valid feminist issue or not, agreed that the outcomes of its male origins are unavoidable. One NHS librarian drew attention to the male aspects of classification schemes, and their particular rationality and precision. However, in her view women's lack of numeracy, rather than their exclusion from the validation of knowledge organisation, explained their lack of involvement in constructing the schemes :

The great figures of cataloguing and classification have been male. I think a lot to do with that is the numerical skills. Cataloguing and classification are very precise, very perfectionist and very numerically oriented. Personally, I'm crap at numbers and I think a lot of women are not confident with numbers and not confident with that type of logic, whereas we are much happier with the communication logic than the numerical logic.

(Jean, NHS librarian, Glasgow, 2001).

This interpretation makes binary assumptions about rationality and objectivity and presumed sex differences in modes of communication, and interestingly unknowingly reflects Guy and Slade's (1973) suggestion that 'number blindness' is higher amongst librarians than the general population. Both of these insights ignore the impact of gender, but Jean's view importantly raises the centrality of the classification scheme and its underlying meanings for undertaking librarianship, and the identity and world-view of the female librarian. For those who do not share the same view as the classification schemes with which they work or, who find their gender, race, class or sexual orientation excluded or devalued, difficulties or inner conflicts may arise, as may the ability to organise and represent library materials appropriately.

The construction of librarianship as a new profession, as Chapter Six investigated, also required the establishment of organisational structures. Professional associations, a central part of the nineteenth century professionalisation project of librarianship, were one part of that development. In the next section, I consider these agencies as ones that initially attracted first wave feminist challenges, due to the continued maintenance of a masculine power base and then move onto analyse events generated through second wave feminist consciousness.

## Section Five : Professional library associations

As earlier chapters explained, library associations were established by Dewey and elite, male librarians to structure the profession, to ensure cohesion and to pursue professionhood. They provided peer support and a bureaucratic framework to pursue a new form of professional librarianship; as Maidment (1975) suggested, ‘a librarian’s own ideas can be expressed most freely to the colleagues he meets through professional associations’ (78). For women librarians, politicised during the second wave, the associations did not promote their needs, but reinforced their exclusion. Their responses to this situation will be recounted, after considering the earlier efforts of women in the first wave period to gain equity and representation within the associations.

### *First wave women and gaining entry to the library associations*

Professional library associations in the United States and the United Kingdom, like other such bodies, reflected the aspirations of the Victorian male, middle-classes. Although invited to become librarianship practitioners at the end of the nineteenth century, women were not encouraged to participate in the higher echelons of the associations until much later in their history, in parallel with discrimination experienced within the profession itself. A few women librarians did nonetheless become involved early on in the British Library Association. For example, Miss Minnie Stewart Rhodes James (1845 - 1903), librarian at the East London People’s Palace, helped establish library summer schools and other training (Kerlake, 1999), was ‘a zealous supporter of the employment of women in librarianship’ (Minto, 1932, 321) and gave papers at some of the first Library Association conferences at the end of the nineteenth century. Miss James visited Dewey’s Library Bureau in Boston in 1894, established a London branch and returned to Boston where she later died (Minto, 1932). Such women involved themselves in activities and developments, but gaining access to office to further engage women’s agendas into the library associations took longer.

As more women entered librarianship as men went off to the First World War, the few women chief librarians became concerned that their less senior female colleagues showed little interest in the profession or its structure, and that this confirmed male views that women were less ambitious and unable to assume strategic and professional responsibility. It was decided that various women-only structures should be set up within library associations to promote women’s participation (Baggs, 2000). The first Women’s Committee of the Library Assistant’s Association became established in 1913, and began to promote the work of women in libraries, especially the lack of women within senior posts, alongside the aim to gain office for women within regional branches of the Library Association.

A concerted effort to elect a woman to senior office within the Library Association followed, engineered through the letters' pages of the library press, and through librarian women's networks. Public librarian, Miss Kate E. Pierce, became the Association's first female Councillor in 1915, an achievement described as 'a landmark event in the history of British women's librarianship' (*Baggs, 2000, 41*). Munford's (1976) comment below indicates the tokenism that has arguably surrounded the involvement of women in the Library Association, but refers to the organised campaign to get Pierce elected :

Miss Pierce's success followed discussion between women members and the sensible decision, taken in good time, to nominate one woman only. The Council has subsequently had few women members; Miss Pierce was the exceptionally popular pioneer.

(Munford, 1976, 129).

Much debate surrounds this campaign, and many attempted to disassociate themselves, partly to avoid being seen as too confrontational especially during wartime (*Baggs, 2000*).

However, the overall strategy was not popular with all women librarians. Olive Clarke, a senior librarian, active in the Library Assistant's Women's sub-committee, argued that instead of advocating militancy and anti-male propaganda, women in libraries should be cheerful, work long hours, attend meetings and produce learned papers to ensure that librarianship and libraries continued when men returned from the First World War (*Baggs, 2000*), presumably to regain their jobs and seniority from the women librarians who had kept the services, and the library fires, going in their absence.

The Library Association was nearly 90 years old before it elected its first women President - Lorna Paulin, the County Librarian of Hertfordshire, in 1975. Munford (1976) portrayed this as an individual achievement, with no real insight into gender dynamics in the Association and the difficulties women had in gaining recognition :

Women have played a significant, if always minority part in Council affairs since Miss Paulin's election to it in 1975. Miss Paulin's Presidency may certainly be regarded as symbolic of that contribution. It was much more important, nevertheless, as overdue recognition of the service to the 'profession of one of the outstanding librarians of the twentieth century'.

(Munford, 1976, 312).

As Munford suggested, women for many years held very few senior positions within the British library associations, with many women feeling disenfranchised. Although Ethel Gerard from Worthing Public Libraries became the first woman president of the Library

Assistant's Association in 1918; of over 1000 women library assistants at that time, only 161 joined their association. It is also the case, as Chapter One described, that women do not always have the time or commitment to spend their free time in professional associations, especially if they work part-time and have family commitments. The activities of some British women librarians to promote their needs within the male-dominated library associations as described at the beginning of the twentieth century were not necessarily informed by a knowing allegiance to an organised feminism. In the next section I will consider the developments in the 1980s within British librarianship of two women's groups that took more explicit feminist positions, and that attempted to address the gendered experience that they perceived. Their tactics and strategies were different, and their feminist politics divergent, but both tried to challenge the library associations, as I now recount.

### **Section Six : Second wave responses to the professional associations**

The second wave feminist movement in Britain inspired the creation of two library women's groups during the 1980s. The Library Association Women's Group was short lived, whilst Women in Libraries made inroads from 1981 until 1991. In this section, I will describe their activities, their critiques of the professional associations and their successes. Both groups were motivated to improve the status of women in librarianship and to understand the role of librarianship in promoting women's equality, but took very different approaches. This section will draw on original material from the period, later published commentary, and information from some interviewees who participated in, or observed, the events that I now discuss.

#### ***Starting Women in Libraries - a radical response***

We weren't isolated freaks - there were many women who felt that women's role as portrayed by typical library material was limiting and wrong and who were unhappy at the position which women, as a majority of the profession, had achieved and the way in which women's issues as a whole were seen as unimportant, trivial and irrelevant to what libraries do and offer.

(Rolph, 1984, 58).

At the start of the 1980s, Avril Rolph, a public librarian, and Sherry Jespersen, a college librarian, convened a group initially to organise a 'Feminism and Library Work' conference, within the ideological framework set out above. Both identified as 'feminist librarians' (Rolph, 1984, 46) and recognised that women in libraries experienced direct and indirect discrimination (Jespersen, 1981, 3). Rolph (1984) later reflected on feeling isolated as a feminist in librarianship, with 'the overwhelming preponderance of men in positions of

authority and the effect this has on women both as workers and as readers' (46). Those who came to the first meeting of what later became Women in Libraries cited typical second wave feminist concerns, including the lack of child-care, job-share, part-time posts, refresher courses after career breaks, and the need to counteract gender stereotypes in library stock. The group highlighted the status of women librarians and the problems experienced by 'women who do not subscribe to the so-called male values' (*Jespersen, 1981, 3*) and felt that the planned conference should focus on women library workers' role 'as choosers and users of books from a generally male-biased publishing output' (*Rolph, 1984, 47*), reflecting the theme of one of the earlier sections in this chapter.

Nearly 200 women attended the first conference in February 1981, one recalled that 'you knew that you were in on the beginning of something that was going to have an impact' (*Ritchie, 2000, no pagination*). Participants agreed that the group should be women-only, but not called 'Feminist Library Workers Group', as proposed by the founders, as this might alienate potential members and librarianship overall. Although the planning group disagreed, and one reflected later that it was 'perhaps a measure of the inherent conservatism of the profession' (*Rolph, 2000, 198*), the name 'Women in Libraries' was chosen. An early strategic decision for the group concerned its relationship to the Library Association.

### ***The onset of the Library Association Women's Group***

Being an official Library Association group would bring funding and influence, but the conference's view that Women in Libraries should stay separate remained its long-term position. The group saw itself as 'a radical alternative to the establishment rather than a part of the wider professional network' (*Fraser, 1996, 397*), so there was 'no reason to be associated with the Library Association' (*Rolph, 2000, 198*). Besides, a Library Association group at that time could only comprise Association members and be open to both sexes. *Ritchie (2000)* later commented that considering that 80 % of membership of the Library Association was women, its attitude towards this potential group was unhelpful. Influencing the Library Association was important and Women in Libraries members were encouraged 'to make the male-dominated monolith of the Association recognise the existence and importance of its women members' (*Rolph, 1984, 49*). The lack of official engagement with the Library Association partly kick-started the inception of the Library Association Women's Group (L.A.W.G.) which felt more aligned to the Library Association and came from a liberal, reforming position, as later comments will address.

Later recollections present mixed views about this approach and modus operandi. *Ritchie (2000)* commented that Women in Libraries wished to become an Library Association group but its women-only status and its perceived 'political, rather than professional' aims

prevented this. Another, a founder of L.A.W.G., described the relationships between these two groups and the Library Association in the *Library Association Record* at the time :

There was dissent about whether or not an approach was to be made to LA Council to ratify WIL as an LA group. Eventually, the original organizers, arguing that this would be unfair to non-LA members, decided to form an independent, radical group. Additionally, it was decided by those who wished to work within the LA to improve the position of women in librarianship that a further group be formed, which *would* seek LA ratification . . . an approach to Council is now underway, and we hope that in 1982 Women in Libraries will have the status of an official Library Association Group.

(Shuter, 1981, 172).

This presents the choices faced by groups and individuals - 'whether to separate or integrate' (*Watkins, 1990, 16*) - but implies that Women in Libraries could, or in fact wanted to, operate these two parallel strategies itself. Women in Libraries developed its infrastructure after the conference, with a newsletter (later called WILPower); 'a significant CR (consciousness-raising) publication' (*Burrington, 1987, 13*) starting in Spring 1981, and by the end of 1981 there were regional groups throughout England and Wales. Women in Libraries members also edited and wrote an issue of the *Librarians for Social Change* journal - *Women in Libraries : A Special Issue* - discussing stock selection and censorship; feminism in the public library; feminist book stock; the status of library assistants; women in management; job-sharing; and 'automation' and women (*Librarians for Social Change, 1981*). The *Library Association Record* commented, when reviewing this edition, that although 'propagandist', many articles were 'pertinent to all women working in libraries, not just "feminists"' (*Buckley, 1981, 585*).

Although Women in Libraries remained outside the Association, the Library Association Women's Group attempted to integrate, and in September 1981 organised an event - Not the LA Conference - linked to the Library Association's Annual Conference. The Library Association Women's Group wanted to improve opportunities for both men and women through providing advice, information, education and mutual support to assist members to reach their full potential, and encourage participation in the Library Association and were keen not to be perceived as anti-men. One Women in Libraries' founder however felt that the Library Association Women's Group intended 'to put pressure on the LA from the outside' (*Rolph, 1984, 49*). The next brief sections summarise their activities.

*Attempting to influence from within the LAWG and the continuation of Women in Libraries*

The Library Association Women's Group's more liberal feminist perspective, demonstrated by a desire to work within, and influence, male-dominated structures, mirrors the approach of the Equal Opportunities Commission and organisations like the Fawcett Library (the latter forming the subject of Chapter Eight). Both of these were linked to the Library Association Women's Group through members like Pat Darter and Rita Pankhurst who worked in these organisations. Their wish to collaborate with the Association confirms observations that women in feminised professions may adapt collectivist strategies via the established professional organisations or trade unions to challenge wider patriarchal structures and be prepared to work with men (*Colgan and Ledwith, 1996*). The group therefore wished 'to win over the 'grey suits'' (*Ritchie, 2000, no pagination*) of the Association, rather than hold 'another consciousness-raising event' (*Ritchie, 2000, no pagination*) to promote their mission.

This indicates a deliberate distancing from the more radical feminist politics associated with Women in Libraries and their presumed methods, and perhaps also implies that women librarians had no need to reflect on their experiences or to raise their consciousness. Some delegates to the Library Association Conference visited the L.A.W.G. event in September 1981, but only 'the more open-minded' according to one founder member (*Ritchie, 2000*), although the L.A. President attended. The event was described in the *Library Association Record* (under the title 'Down with men at the top') as 'a meeting of the Women's Group of the Library Association' (*Library Association, 1981*) although this status had not in fact been achieved. After this event, the L.A.W.G.'s efforts to become a women's group linked to the Library Association continued. The required constitution and support from Association members and councillors were obtained, but an unexpected financial crisis at the Association caused the campaign for a Library Association Women's Group to deliberately quieten down. After this, less women remained in the Library Association Women's Group to progress their plans, and the group ceased, although members continued to write in WILPower and contribute to librarianship, informed by liberal feminist principles.

Whilst the Library Association Women's Group ended, Women in Libraries continued, and from then until 1991, it organised annual conferences, training courses, networking events and some publications. It was felt that its function as 'a supportive community of women in the background' (*Watkins, 1990, 30*) could help women progress into library management, whilst some of its innovative activities led to important second wave feminist developments around literature and publishing. For example, the third Women in Libraries conference in 1983 at Central London Polytechnic included the 'first Feminist Book Fair' with feminist,

mainstream and alternative publishers and booksellers, was considered a good example of 'co-operation between feminists in the book trades and professions' (Watkins, 1990, 32), and continued for a number of years after the demise of Women in Libraries. Women in Libraries however was beginning to experience difficulties in gaining 'the same success in the narrower field of librarianship, and achieving professional visibility' (Watkins, 1990, 32), partly because of the lack of women becoming involved.

Women in Libraries had few active members and continually struggled to undertake conference planning and progress other aspects of their programme. A meeting to organise the 1984 conference, for example, left the original group despondent about engaging new members and being responsive to grassroots concerns, 'without recourse to a typically male "committee structure"' (Rolph, 1984, 56). Although some original members remained, the energies of others shifted, and some joined a new group called, 'with a certain lack of originality but undoubted logic' (Rolph, 2000, 200), Lesbians in Libraries. Against this backdrop, *Library Association Record's* August 1985 issue (mentioned earlier in this chapter) was devoted to women in librarianship and included a piece on Women in Libraries and a review of a collection on women and librarianship which contained an article on the group (Darter, 1985; Jaywardene, 1985i). The reviewer commented that the group was important, but its continued 'soul-searching' had prevented its impact as being anything more than limited (Darter, 1985). She also suggested that, although having attended Women in Libraries conferences and being involved in the group, that 'these papers did not represent any advance in thinking' (Darter, 1985, 307).

Besides this negative feedback, for the first time in 1985 the annual Women in Libraries Conference took place outside London - in Birmingham. Membership was however decreasing, and stood at 300 members, a decrease of 100 in a year. The conference debated whether changing male opinion was a priority and whether to involve men, the appropriateness of the group's open structure and focus, and the problems in building a UK-wide organisation. The conference also strongly felt that Women in Libraries could inform the Library Association, as it had 'a certain amount of expertise on women's issues' (Shuter, 1985), but some wondered whether the Association accepted that was 'a specifically women's point of view?' (Shuter, 1985 – *emphasis in original*). Even though Women in Libraries had legitimate reason to avoid the Library Association as a group, women members should participate, and a review of the conference in the *Library Association Record* ended by summarising the position of Women in Libraries and the status of women librarians :

After five years the membership now stands at nearly 300, which is only a tiny fraction of the number of women working in libraries which it seeks to represent. However positive results are beginning to be seen in that women's issues are being discussed in the library press and practical initiatives like the increasing number of libraries offering job-sharing posts are encouraging. However, there is still a very long way to go in terms of achieving both equality of opportunity for women library staff and in reflecting a more positive image of women on the library shelves. (Jaywardene, 1985i, 299).

The structure and objectives of Women in Libraries became of central concern in 1988, and although not then known, its last conference had already taken place. Members were informed that if no one volunteered to organise the next conference, it would not happen. It was suggested that members 'in Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol or even Scotland' (*Women in Libraries, 1988, 1*) could take it on. However, not enough women came forward and no 1988 conference took place. Women in Libraries survived until 1991 when it wound up, due to a 'lack of active involvement' by the membership (*Feminist Library, 1991, 2*), with its archives deposited at the Feminist Library in London (the focus of Chapter Nine).

### ***The impact of Women in Libraries and the Library Association Women's Group***

Assessing the impact of Women in Libraries is difficult because of its low membership and fairly short-term existence. In order to make some form of assessment, I will firstly analyse its relationship with the Library Association, secondly its success in providing a supportive network for isolated women librarians, thirdly its ability to develop a UK-wide structure. Women in Libraries attempted to empower women to positively enter formal structures, and to understand 'the *informal* structures which have been occasionally noted as the most serious bar to women, and which have tended to escape rational analysis' (*Watkins, 1990, 6 – italics in original*), but worked outside the Association. Members then needed to influence the Association from the outside, and to also generate women-centred actions. At the peak of its success, Women in Libraries had just over 400 members, with Library Association membership at the same time standing at 23,000 - the majority being women.

As well as few women librarians joining Women in Libraries, those active in the group, who might use their energies to influence the Library Association, were also paradoxically less likely to do so, as their commitment to a more radical feminist position may have inhibited that. Watkins (1990) pointed out that 'actively campaigning women, particularly feminists, find it very difficult to identify with the 'establishment' image of the LA' (46). Women in Libraries members that I interviewed differed in their perceptions of its success in influencing the Association. Joan, now a NHS librarian in Glasgow, felt that it probably had affected the

Association, although did not elucidate exactly where (Joan, NHS librarian, Glasgow, 2001). Another felt that Women in Libraries stance outside official structures had been its downfall, as it had inevitably remained marginalised, saying that *'it would have attracted more interest because you would have got more librarianship students into it'* (Julie, library services manager, national charity, London, 2000). Julie went on to suggest that other approaches might have been effective, including trying to influence men within librarianship :

Maybe we didn't try and engage with men in any way, We just tried to recruit other women. And that's partly because there are so few men and the ones that there were were obviously much higher up generally. So they were seen as something we were pushing against. We weren't trying to get male library students who were young and at the start of their careers and get them to start addressing the gender imbalance in libraries.

(Julie, library services manager, national charity, London, 2000).

Watkins' (1990) survey of Women in Libraries members found mixed views about the relationship with the Association, but some acknowledgement of improvements in its 'sensitivity to women's issues' (47) since Women in Libraries. Julie felt that Women in Libraries could have reached more widely by having *'a regular page in the LAR or something'* (Julie, library services manager, national charity, London, 2000). It has to be concluded that influences achieved by Women in Libraries over the Association appear to be somewhat muted, so I will now reflect on the group's role in providing a network and peer group for feminist librarians.

A core aim of Women in Libraries was to provide a support network and an opportunity for ideas to develop. One founder felt that it achieved this, and gave 'individual members the impetus to change things' (Rolph, 1984, 52). For two students at library school in London in the late 1980s, Women in Libraries helped link feminism to librarianship. Julie set up the Women in Libraries group at library school, saying that *'it was quite pioneering at the time, it was very nice to have a ready-made sort of group'* (Julie, library services manager, national charity, London, 2000). She went on to say that *'I was quite a strong feminist by that point and I'd been involved in women's things . . . so it was like you come into this new profession and there's this ready-made group'* (Julie, library services manager, national charity, London, 2000). Fellow student, Jane, stated her need for the group :

I had been involved in women's groups and campaigns ever since I had been at university. Not to do with work, but things like the National Abortion Campaign. So this was all part of my life, I had to be in some sort of women's group. I would have joined it anyway, but I thought it was particularly necessary because we needed something to counteract. I'm sure that's partly how it functioned. It was a sort of support group for women who were in the minority as feminists.

(Jane, academic library manager, London, 2001).

For these two women, Women in Libraries was an important part of being a library student in a college which appeared to take little cognisance of gender. One commented on feeling different within '*such a conservative profession*' (Julie, library services manager, national charity, London, 2000) where clearly women dominated, but one in which gendered understandings were not explicit. However, many did not join Women in Libraries, as they were not feminists or did not wish to be in a group associated with feminism. This view was demonstrated by some interviewees in my study who felt that Women in Libraries was either of no personal interest to them, or had not heard of it. One commented that '*it probably wasn't in my area, I don't think I was particularly aware of it*' (Emma, academic librarian, Glasgow, 2001). Watkins (1990) felt that Women in Libraries also failed to engage widely partly because of its lack of publicity. One of my interviewees who attended some of the early meetings in London felt that there were limits to who could be reached :

I felt that it was great because you could go and talk to people that thought and were doing the same things. But it didn't - I didn't really feel that it was going to have any effect outside that. A wee bit that the people that weren't there weren't actually going to hear about it.

(Joan, NHS librarian, Glasgow, 2001).

A third area concerns geographical issues. Women in Libraries' annual conference determined its forward plans and activities, with the membership then effectively implementing those plans and decisions. The lack of active women, especially outside London, made this virtually impossible, as one founder member said 'it is difficult to overcome whilst the majority of organising is done by women who live in London' (Rolph, 2000, 51). Women in Libraries' regional groups were vital to a pan-UK approach, but never became viable and few were long lasting. Some groups in universities and colleges with librarianship courses sustained a fairly long existence, including those at the Polytechnic of North London and the College of Librarianship Wales, Aberystwyth which could draw on regular inputs of motivated and politicised students. Groups linked to London public libraries like Westminster, Barnet and Brent also maintained solid membership, as did a group within the Inner London Education Authority. The progressive agenda of these bodies can be

presumed to have supported the appointments of women who were likely to become involved in groups like Women in Libraries, coupled with the London feminist factor.

This London bias clearly inhibited Women in Libraries' influence and impact moving beyond a limited circle. Some interviewees highlighted this - Joan viewed it as '*very much a London thing. It didn't really move out of that, or the South-East*' (Joan, NHS librarian, Glasgow) whilst Jackie, a feminist public librarian in North-West England, said '*it was mainly London-based . . . it was more about doing research, showing that librarians - women - are x-percent of the library workforce and managers are all men . . . it was really people doing research and writing articles. I don't think there was any direct action*' (Jackie, public librarian, Cheshire, 2001). Watkins (1990) commented that WIL regional groups had problems in organising where potential members were more scattered, and there was 'an under-estimation of the sheer size of the task of the consciousness-raising among fellow library workers' (29) required to interest and involve women. For some women outside London, Women in Libraries did not seem to have a genuine purpose, as Louise, then a NHS librarian in Glasgow, remembered :

In Glasgow, in libraries, we didn't have a Women in Libraries group because Glasgow librarians *were* women . . . we as a group just assumed that we could do it. We knew that we could do it, and therefore when working on anything we started from that assumption. And if there were barriers - as a group we'd say that barrier has to come down.

(Louise, ex-NHS librarian, now politician, Glasgow, 2001).

To ascertain whether Women in Libraries was truly London focused, I analysed membership for the year 1988 / 1989. This is the last real year of WIL's activities, and may be therefore unrepresentative, but it does indicate a mature organisation with a fairly solid membership consistent with figures throughout its history. As the table shows over half the members were based in London, and over three-quarters in London and the South-East of England.

Home location	Number of members	Percentage of members
London	106	53 %
South and S. E. England	47	23 %
Midlands	18	9 %
North England	25	12 %
Wales	1	.5 %
Scotland	2	1 %
Japan	1	.5 %

(Table derived from *Women in Libraries Membership Directory, 1988 / 89*).

The London-centric nature of Women in Libraries clearly impeded its chances to have a UK-wide impact, indicating that there is no evidence that a country-wide network was achieved, apart from in some areas, although linkages between some members still remain.

Second wave activist critiques of the Library Association, through the activities of the Library Association Women's Group and Women in Libraries, failed to achieve adequate engagement with women in librarianship. Women in Libraries particularly failed because of its inability to gain much oxygen through the official library press, but there appears to have been little attempt by both groups to develop thinking that brought together feminism and librarianship. Women in Libraries particularly could have been expected to be visible within the then feminist media. Although conferences and events were routinely listed in *Spare Rib*, there appears never to have been a report or feature on the group, or a discussion of feminism and librarianship, bar one article about women's libraries (Davies and Walbe, 1982). A letter about feminist materials in public libraries, as mentioned earlier (Little et al, 1981, 4), did not highlight the first Women in Libraries conference or link feminism with librarianship, even though it was written by women active in the organisation. One of my interviewees, Jane, felt that Women in Libraries had drawn her attention to the gender bias within classification schemes, that she had not seen discussed anywhere else, but that thinking had not transferred into feminism or librarianship :

Of all the people I've ever come across who really questioned classification schemes, and that wasn't done very widely, was women in WIL who wrote about it, and basically said that classification schemes are patriarchal and Anglo-Saxon. They perpetuate values that if we spelled them out, no-one working in librarianship would say they could subscribe to, but we perpetuate them to make our collections available. (Jane, academic library manager, London, 2001).

The overall impact of Women in Libraries on librarianship was questioned by many of those interviewed, including those who were involved. Julie reflected on the personal benefits for members, *'for women who are in their careers now, women in their late 30s and 40s, women of our generation, I thought it was quite a good stepping-stone'* (Julie, library services manager, national charity, London, 2000). However, she questioned its overall impact :

In terms of achievement, I'm not sure that it actually, on the wider sense, achieved anything . . . because in a way it was preaching to the converted. (Julie, library services manager, national charity, London, 2000).

The success of the Library Association Women's Group is thus hard to assess because of its extremely short-term existence, but it could be argued that the image of the Association (now C.I.L.I.P.) is more contemporary and inclusive of women and there is currently a female President. Since Women in Libraries and the Library Association Women's Group there has been no other concerted attempts to organise a feminist grouping related to the professional library associations in the United Kingdom, although an isolated effort was made in 1996 to highlight the need for such a group again. A senior figure in British librarianship suggested that although the Association had a better understanding of institutionalised sex discrimination than in the 1980s, a continuing need had been raised by various women Association members for a group (*Fraser, 1996*), but it does not appear that a group ever re-formed. The lack of a clear route to discuss women's issues, and the impact of gender, within librarianship is still viewed as concerning for women that I interviewed. I will return to address this outstanding issue in the final conclusion of my investigation.

## Conclusion

The chapter has reviewed outcomes of the actions of Victorian patriarchs like Melvil Dewey and Andrew Carnegie for librarianship and considered responses, particularly from the 1960s onwards. Such actions have come from mainstream librarians working independently and within organised women's groups, and from women working in women-oriented library settings outside the structures of 'professional' librarianship. I have discussed the impact of the second wave feminist movement on female librarians' awareness of their gendered

position within librarianship and reactions to this by male librarians, some threatened by challenges to the status quo and the historical inheritance. Stock selection has been shown to be an area in which women's involvement in librarianship may have had feminised the library, yet later became the focus of second wave feminist scrutiny.

Classification schemes, including that of Dewey, have been interrogated as sites that incorporate gendered archetypes and assumptions, that have shaped librarianship and attracted some second wave feminist concern. It has been important to identify where women working outside mainstream librarianship have begun to develop alternative approaches to cataloguing and classification that reverse some of the implicit problems that they provide for librarianship, as will be considered in Part Three. The role of the library associations in promoting librarianship as a professional activity has been described, as have the activities of women inspired by second wave feminism to challenge its lack of integration of gender issues. Women in Libraries, the more radical of the two groups discussed, had a longer life-span and a limited profile in the mainstream. Its ambitions were limited by the number of women librarians attracted to it, clearly reducing its impact. The Library Association Women's Group took a more liberal perspective, yet loyalty to the Library Association perhaps inhibited its opportunity to influence the association. Critiquing the main professional library associations and the model of librarianship that they promote and embody from a gendered position, through organised groups, has been shown not to have been especially successful during the second wave period, apart from developing long-standing connections for some women involved.

Actions by women within the library profession to make sense of their own situation during the second wave period were inspired by both radical and liberal feminism. It is important to chart what still remains to understand about librarianship, as although insights have been obtained through using mainly second wave approaches, highlighting other theoretical possibilities has already been seen to be helpful. Women within mainstream librarianship appear to have struggled to work and to be recognised as legitimate professionals, even within an occupation created with them in mind. To discover where other theoretical space may be available to look at librarianship, it is important to move both out of the mainstream library and beyond second wave feminism. If the library was constructed as a space for women, but has excluded, marginalised or mis-represented women's involvement and influence, what is the potential outcome if women have the opportunity and power to determine roles, input and space? Are counter-sites able to develop that can be considered gendertopias? Can that be where librarianship is done differently? In the next Part, the situation within British women's libraries will be explored to establish what it can offer in understanding librarianship, and the ability of ideologies such as feminisms to influence and work alongside it.

## **Part Three : How do feminism and librarianship engage outside the mainstream?**

### **Introduction**

In Part Two I described the construction of modern librarianship and how it positioned women, and reflected on where some women librarians, inspired by the second wave movement, made challenges. Challenging or negotiating organisational and structural barriers and inequalities often left little time to develop a systematic critique of wider aspects from a feminist perspective or further to consider what could be done differently if feminisms were more integrated or more explicit. Part Three will advance this thesis by utilising insights from the post second wave period to reflect on some new sites of investigation, British women's libraries, as I now briefly consider. Chapter Five established the individual libraries that would form the subject of the last three chapters – The Women's Library, London, the Feminist Library, London and Glasgow Women's Library – and positioned them as emerging from three distinctive periods of feminist development, the first wave, the second wave and post-second wave.

### ***Moving into third wave sites of investigation***

As Parts One and Two indicated, some female librarians during the second wave feminist movement were concerned with librarianships' continuation of stereotyped views of women and its ability to recognise some of its gendered underpinnings. As Part Two indicated, moving beyond second wave feminism provides another option to interrogate librarianship, its construction, and theory and practice further. In the final Part of this thesis, I will investigate these three British women's libraries through the framework of five third wave feminist concepts – trajectories, space, identities, feminisms, and classification and librarianship.

Trajectories will be positioned first and will cover journeys, histories, influences and origins of libraries in question. It will be important to incorporate the various strands that have affected each library to assess their outcomes and influences. Depending on the library under consideration, some of these strands are historical and information about them derives from published sources, whilst in other cases the interviews undertaken with key informants provide the evidence.

As the physical nature of the women's libraries and their internal and external environments are significant, space in relation to libraries then follows. Space will be analysed in terms of the impact that it has on the individual using the library and the purposes that the library sets out to meet, and will be reviewed using other levels of insight, including concepts of multiple space, the environmental space in which the libraries are situated and the abilities that they have to control and shape their own internal and external spaces. I will consider the impact and consequences of these spaces on those that work in and use them and examine their presentation of a range of facets including inclusion and empowerment, and their manifestation of feminisms.

The notion of identities will next be discussed to reveal the ability of women's library spaces to encourage and support self-identification of staff and users. I will review the identities that each library manifests or champions, dependent on the sets of individual circumstances that prevail, and will locate them as significant to their potential transformative capacity. These identities are often predicated on the particular context of the library, its ability to control its own work and surroundings, and its individual inheritances and trajectories, including those that have emerged through librarianship and aspects of feminism.

The fourth aspect to be considered will be feminisms and their articulation within the three libraries with which I am concerned. I am interested to identify which feminism have been interpreted and played out in these settings, and their effects and significance. The women's libraries that I have chosen developed through different feminist stages, so their histories and engagements with feminisms differ. It will be important to assess the outcomes of these varying articulations with women using the library spaces at the start of the twenty-first century and the opportunities that the libraries are able to offer.

My final step will be to build on these parts to consider manifestations of librarianship in these sites of investigation, especially concerning classification and its cultural and ideological underpinnings. Examples will be given of attempts to both critique and provide alternatives to historical classification schemes, like the Dewey Decimal scheme, using second wave and post-second wave feminist understandings and of the engagements knowingly undertaken by women's libraries with mainstream librarianship practices and librarians interested in feminism. It will be important to question whether women's libraries provide spaces of liberation, learning or leisure, and I will conclude each chapter through the application of a theoretical concept that I have called gendertopia. I suggest that this can help bring together and synthesise the

five elements that I have analysed in detail, namely trajectories, identities, space feminisms and librarianship, in thinking about the transformative possibilities of spaces like women's libraries that are seemingly grounded in ideological, political, collective and personal change.

These final three chapters end this investigation in which I have explored the crisis of contemporary librarianship through a gender-aware lens and a post-second wave sensibility. I will then respond to the findings overall within a final conclusion summarising and further interpreting my findings, with then an indicative end-note that reveals further contemporary sites of contention and crossings of time and space with which librarianship and third wave feminism could be concerned.

## **The Women's Library, London, September 2002**

### **Dear Diary**

My connection to the Library seems difficult. I thought I'd succeeded earlier this year when I contacted them to try to meet Antonia Byatt. They told me she was unavailable when I could go, but someone else would see me. When I turned up, the Library was shut, and there was no information on the door or answer machine about when it was open. I used my mobile to leave a rather disappointed message along with my contact numbers - and they never got back to me.

I was not feeling that kindly disposed when I went there today, and as I entered the building - AB came out the door. After that, I had a series of strange experiences. The Library foyer feels like a gallery or almost a hotel. There is nothing to tell you that this is a space about women, apart from displays about the Library itself. There is no literature or posters about women's activities or events. No-one asked if I would like to know about the Library, if I needed help, if I had been there before or knew what I was looking for. Most of the interactions with staff were about rules :

*... You have to leave some ID at reception before you can go to the Reading Room. . .  
... You can't take your bag into the Reading Room. You'll have to leave it in the  
Cloakroom. . . .*

The Women's Library feels as if feminism is all over. It's not postfeminist, almost beyond feminism. Apart from the materials, there's nothing to indicate that this is anything to do with women's ongoing struggles. I would like staff to welcome visitors and connect with them in a way that is not just about being gate-keepers. I would like to know that The Women's Library is part of a women's community, not something that ended when women got the vote.

**Yours - in exasperation !**

## Chapter Nine : The Women's Library : the incorporation of the second wave ?

- Introduction
- Section One : Trajectory and inheritance - from Pankhurst to Madonna
  - Protecting the history of the first wave
  - Services and collections
  - Collecting the second wave
  - Acquisitions and archives
- Section Two : Space - from washerwomen to locker-rooms
  - Queen Victoria's legacy to the East End
  - Eating in the Library
  - Moving up from the basement
  - The Library as borderland
  - Using the Library as a reader
- Section Three : Identities - from suffragettes to national collection
  - The Library as an academic library
  - Women's studies and the second wave
  - The Women's Library - is it a 'women's library' ?
  - Exhibiting women - The Women's Library as museum
  - The national question - is The Women's Library the national library ?
- Section Four : Articulating engagements with feminisms - love and money
  - Financing first wave women's history into the twenty-first century
  - Friends in high places and twenty-first century feminism
  - Links with other women's libraries - developing forms of feminist librarianship ?
  - Engaging with users
- Section Five : Classification and other matters of librarianship
  - Issues of classification
  - Links to librarianship
- Conclusion - how gendertopic is The Women's Library ?

## Introduction

As the Introduction to Part Three suggested, in this and the following two chapters, I am going to investigate three British women's libraries. My aim throughout this work has been to develop a discussion that has engaged second and third wave feminist perspectives with the construction and maintenance of librarianship, as derived from the late nineteenth century, partly to understand conditions of crisis within librarianship's theory and practice, especially concerning the engagement with gender. Activities and outcomes of these processes within women's libraries are of some interest.

The first library to be considered is The Women's Library in London, once the Fawcett Library. This has become the most prominent British women's library since receiving a substantial amount of funding at the end of the 1990s from sources including the National Lottery. The Library has made a unique journey from its origins in first wave feminism. First wave feminism, as a movement to gain legal, financial and political rights for women, achieved some obvious successes, but for second wave feminist historians like Dale Spender (1982) its energy and theories were invisible and hidden to feminists of the 1960s and 1970s. For her, the Fawcett Library amplified these forgotten voices for second wave feminists, as she stated in the introduction to one of her historical accounts of feminism :

To the Fawcett Library, where so many of their works are housed and for which so many women have worked so arduously to preserve them I give my greatest thanks. To David Doughan and Catherine Ireland, the librarians, who have treated the words of women past with so much care and concern, who have given me so much assistance, and who have ensured a warm and welcome reception to all who seek to 'dig', I want to express my gratitude and my deep admiration.  
(Spender, 1982, ix).

Preserving the writings and ephemera of the first wave women's movement for rediscovery but also as a guiding framework for potential new change, was the initial driving force of the Fawcett Library as I will now begin to describe. As the introduction to Part Three set out, the first section of this chapter will describe the journey of the Library, then consider space within the Library and its utilisation and meaning, the third section will review the exposition of identities that the Library contains or implies, the fourth section will investigate the engagement that the Library has with feminisms, and the fifth and final section will discuss the relationships that the Library has with theoretical and practical aspects of librarianship. The conclusion of the chapter will review these facets and assess how they influence the potential gendertopic nature of the Library. If the library can be seen to be a heterotopia, a

women's library by its intention would be expected to integrate other understandings that can be used to critique and understand wider society, and it is important to consider this.

### **Section One : Trajectory and inheritance : from Pankhurst to Madonna**

An eminent academic dines out on the story of her arrival at the Women's Library launch party. As her taxi driver rounded the corner into dingy Old Castle Street in Aldgate . . . a minute later he gazed amazed as he drew up outside a floodlit building and pavement lined with paparazzi.

(Byatt, 2002i, 44).

The Women's Library opened in Spring 2002 with a glittering media launch, described above by its Director, attended by famous faces from politics, literature and the media including Cherie Blair, Stella Rimington, Edwina Currie, Kate Adie and Maureen Lipman. At the 2001 Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Fawcett Library that I attended, Madonna was even mooted as a possible attendee, indicating perhaps the social connections that the Library hoped to draw upon and the types of contemporary female icons that it felt to be relevant. This celebration marked the culmination of intensive fund-raising that ensured that the ex-Fawcett Library could establish a new building, increase staff and provide a wider range of work and services than possible before.

#### ***Protecting the history of the first wave***

The Library originated in the first wave liberal women's suffrage movement of the early twentieth century, initially to support the London and National Society for Women's Service led by Millicent Fawcett that later became the Fawcett Society. Fawcett later became the President of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, and the Library assumed a quasi-national function. Although the National Society was a campaigning body, its developing collection of pamphlets, leaflets and ephemeral materials that gave women '*the opportunity to find out what their rights were*' (Joan, elected officer, Friends of the Women's Library, London, 2003) grew into a library. From 1926, when the Library was formally established, after the Society's 'sixty-year campaign to enfranchise women and its involvement with women's employment' (*Greening and Perkins, 1995, 195*) until 1966, librarian Vera Douie transformed this specialist library into 'a major research resource with an international reputation' (*London Guildhall University, 2000*).

The National Society became the Fawcett Society in 1953, with the Library renamed the Fawcett Library, but by 1977 the Society could no longer maintain the Library's increasing

size and use, and offered it to academic institutions. (The Society still exists as an equality organisation, called just Fawcett, advocating for women's representation and constitutional reform). London University's Westfield College, the University of East Anglia and the London School of Economics (L.S.E.) were all interested - and the L.S.E. considered most suitable as a London base was preferred - but could not keep the collection intact, as '*there were bits they did not want*' (Joan, elected officer, Friends of the Women's Library, London, 2003). This fragmentation and cherry picking was felt to undermine the Library, and besides, the library cataloguing and classification systems used within the L.S.E. might make 'some of the more obscure references to book chapters of interest to feminism, impossible to find' (*Women's Report, 1976i, 1*). This offer was the only solution until the City of London Polytechnic (later London Guildhall University) offered space, a commitment to maintain the collection's integrity, and an intention to 'try to interest local women in its activities' (*Women's Report, 1976i, 1*). In 2003, London Guildhall University became London Metropolitan University through merging with the University of North London.

Rita Pankhurst, then Head of Library Services at the Polytechnic, and Cynthia White, then Head of Sociology, were highly instrumental in facilitating this arrangement. Pankhurst (the daughter-in-law of Sylvia Pankhurst, and member of the short-lived Library Association Women's Group, as the last chapter stated) and White were active Fawcett Society members, and a heated Society meeting discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the respective proposals. Older first wave feminists and younger second wave feminists converged to support the City of London bid, with 'women in their 80s and perhaps 90s speaking of their and their mother's likely reaction to the possibility that the collection could be dismembered' (*Hanmer, 1996, 547*) generating 'a lot of warmth between the old feminists and the new' (*Women's Report, 1976, 1*). However, the *Women's Report* observed 'the apparent deference shown by the chairwoman (or chairman as she is known in the Fawcett) to men and to the upper classes' (1) and commented that :

When the meeting was opened to the floor a host of women's hands flew up, only for one of the few men in the room (who hadn't raised his hand at all) to be asked to speak. Likewise, the meeting was almost brought to a premature close "because Lady Seear has a dinner engagement".

(*Women's Report, 1976, 1*)

The class and gender dimensions referred to here, as well as the role of classification in deciding the home of the Library, will be elaborated on later. The Fawcett Library's emphasis traditionally was on preserving documentation about women's struggles and achievements. Its Mission Statement of the 1990s, by when the Library had become a library consolidated in academia as will be later described, was :

To document the changing role of women in society, in the past, now and in the future. It seeks to collect materials relating to the changing role of women in society and to make these available to personal visitors and to remote users, however they may make contact. It maintains links with other women-centred libraries in an informal world-wide network.

(Fawcett Library, 1998, no pagination).

The Fawcett Library, as The Women's Library now, aims to expand its remit and constituency and to be 'no longer an exclusive academic enclave' (Cunningham, 2002, 11) although is still publicised as 'Britain's main research library on all aspects of women in society' (London Metropolitan University, 2003, 51). The new Library is attempting to link more dynamically to the local community, holds exhibitions derived from its collections, runs courses, academic seminars and classes, and encourages school-children to engage with primary materials. The latter was impossible before because of age restrictions on who could use the Fawcett Library, but changed in the agreement with London Metropolitan University on the new building. I will now discuss the Library's services, its collection and archives.

### ***Services and collections***

The Fawcett Library attracted historians and students, and those comfortable in accessing an academic-based collection. Its specialist material of 'books, documents and memorabilia ranging from fashion to feminism; politics to prostitution' (Cunningham, 2002, 11) are now available to a wider audience, and a writing fellow, Kate Pullinger, employed to develop new collections of oral histories and living history projects with women. The collection that moved into The Women's Library comprised over 60,000 books and pamphlets, over 2,000 different journal titles, and the archives and records of over 400 women's pressure groups and organisations. These historical materials, emphasising first wave feminist struggles for women's suffrage have always been The Fawcett Library's strength, and Viner (2002) called them 'a revelation' (23). The current Library Director when interviewed, described the collection as :

'About women's campaigning as individuals and as organisations for equal rights in work . . . but we have all sorts of lifestyle material : little 18th-century books you might keep in your apron pocket about how to cure cancer, or how to boil a pig whole. We've got fashion magazine with some of the first examples of agony aunts, who were in fact agony uncles, and, more recently, we've a lot of campaigning magazines that came out of the Greater London Council's women's committee'.  
(Cunningham, 2002, 11).

The collection has grown considerably over the last few decades. In 1989, it comprised 20,000 books, 20,000 pamphlets, over 700 periodical titles, newspaper cuttings, photographs, ephemera and memorabilia mainly from the first wave period that included 'diaries, letters, posters, leaflets, clothes, badges, banners, personal papers - even tea cups, soaps, motoring scarves, sashes and aprons' (Renshaw, 1989, 80). In 1994, it contained 26,000 books and over 30,000 pamphlets (Greening and Perkins, 1995). The banners, for example, are an important part of the collection, and for the opening exhibition, *Cooks and Campaigners*, a selection was made for display by 'commentators from Marina Warner to Carol Vorderman', according to the BBC website (2002). The Library Director suggested that although women achieved major gains through first wave feminist labours, there was still work to be done, as "We might not need to go up and down the country like the suffragettes did, but there are things for men and women to talk about - their roles in society. We want to relate the library to what's going on now" (Cunningham, 2002, 11). At the 2003 Annual General Meeting of the Friends' of The Women's Library (whose work and composition will be described later) the following new additions to the archives collection were announced :

*National Federation of Women's Institutes (1975 - 1992)*

*Miss Great Britain (1950s - 1980s)*

*Women Against Pit Closures (1980s)*

*Women's Lacrosse Association (1913 - 1993)*

*Girl's Friendly Society (1875 - 1985)*

These new archives indicate a fairly eclectic approach to collecting. They include archives of middle-class women's groups like women's institutes, lacrosse and friendly societies, alongside collections relating to beauty competitions - the focus of second wave feminist action, although perhaps not in librarianship, as Chapter Seven indicated - and those of more radical women involved in the 1984 - 1985 Miner's Strike, many linked to communist and organised left politics. In this next section, I consider whether this trend mirrors previous acquisitions of the Library and the aims of its new mission.

### ***Collecting the second wave***

The variable financial situation of the Fawcett Library caused some collecting omissions. According to Renshaw (1989) second wave 1970s feminism was a major gap, as 'during the seventies and the revival of feminist activism, the Library had few funds for purchase and recognised that it was unable to collect material from the modern period comprehensively' (81). For Viner (2002) the opposite was true, as 'the second-wave of feminism, the Women's Liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s which, among other things led to the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act, is also well represented in the library' (18). Muir (2001), in

an article at the time of the Library launch, was also keen to suggest the presence of ‘not merely the suffragette literature which made up the core of the previous Fawcett Library’ (7) but also of 1970s iconic publications like ‘Shirley Conran’s *Superwoman*, and the early *Jackie, Just Seventeen* and *Spare Rib*’ (7) - although her additional comment that the Library is staffed by ‘splendid women in Star Trek-style boots’ (7) seems little borne out in reality.

For British and American women’s libraries that developed or lived through the second wave feminist movement, various strategies were taken to collecting this period. For the American Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College in Cambridge (that begun in 1945) documenting the 1970s were seen as a priority and a challenge, ‘of how to capture the history of women during a revolutionary period’ (Knowles, 2000). This appears not to have been the experience of The Women’s Library, and although there are some attempts to rectify this through retrospective acquisitions, there seems to be less emphasis on the grassroots women’s movement of the 1970s than on the inclusion of records of middle-class women’s activities. Questions asked by the Schlesinger Library may be useful to hold in mind, as I now consider the historical collections of the Library and their origins in first wave feminism :

As we look to the future, we ask, how much is enough ? Should we stop collecting the records of, for instance, twentieth-century, middle-class women’s clubs ? Do we have too many collections on white upper-class families ?  
(Knowles, 2000, no pagination).

### *Acquisitions and archives*

Many of the items contained in the original Women’s Service Library and the later Fawcett Library reflected activities of early feminist pioneers, as their personal papers and collections were gifted by their descendants, friends and relatives. As Joan from the Friends of the Women’s Library (to be discussed in Section Four) told me, many of these collections were donated in the 1930s and changed the existing nature of the Library, that had previously been to ‘*inform, to assist and to help*’ women (Joan, elected officer, Friends of the Women’s Library, London, 2003). These archives stamped the Library with a set of cultural and social understandings, inevitably focused much of its work on protecting and preserving historical documents, as Greening and Perkins describe (1995), and encouraged the need for ongoing fund-raising and philanthropy to maintain, develop and promote the collections. The main Fawcett Library collections that transferred to the City of London Polytechnic in 1977 were :

*The Women's Service Library 1924 - 1957*

*The Fawcett Library 1957 - 1979*

*The Josephine Butler Society Library - concerned mainly with early twentieth century prostitution and sexuality*

*The Sadd Brown Library - concerned with women in the Commonwealth*

*The Cavendish-Bentick collection - mainly antiquarian, 17th and 18th century, books*

*The Edward Wright Library*

A new collection of donated items begun before The Women's Library opened continued to promote the achievements of high-profile establishment women, some with known liberal feminist views. These included 'the dress that Emma Thompson wore to collect her Oscar, Darcey Bussell's ballet shoes, Cherie Blair's junior barrister's gown' (*Fawcett Library, 2000*). Barbara Castle, Kate Adie and others selected items from the Library's collections for special consideration, and then annotated the resulting displays which achieved national media coverage (*Ward, 2002, 8*). The Association of Women Barristers, of which Cherie Blair is a member, is one of the well-connected professional women's organisations that have met and held events at the Library since its opening (*Association of Women Barristers, 2003*).

The Women's Library is located in a quasi-academic setting that is attempting to provide educational experiences concerning women's history. The middle-class origins of the first wave suffrage movement shaped the Fawcett Library's, and hence after The Women's Library, location, setting and collection, and this legacy will be discussed in Section Four. Donations of personal libraries, papers from prominent feminists and liberal women's organisations have been numerous, supported by purchased acquisitions but those from more radical, grassroots organisations and individuals have been less forthcoming or apparently less sought after. It will be important later to discuss implications of the collections' balance for the Library's role and significance. Whatever its contents, The Women's Library now occupies a building that provides a completely different experience from its earlier incarnation as the Fawcett Library, when it was known for having inaccessible and unsuitable accommodation. I will now turn to the concept of space and how the Library presents itself through a number of key domains and areas.

## **Section Two : Space - from washerwomen to locker-rooms**

In this section I reflect on the spatiality of The Women's Library and its physical location to consider its intentions and engagements in relation both to feminism and as a library. The Library has moved many times in its history, including to Oxford during the London blitz, after which it was kept by Westminster Public Library until 1957 when it returned to the

Fawcett Society. It was part of a multi-purpose centre in the 1930s when the National Society for Women's Service building also included a cafe, theatre and lecture space, and was frequented by women writers of the time including Vera Brittain and Virginia Woolf. The siting now of the Library in a refurbished wash-house in multicultural area East End of London is of immediate interest. Although the Library is not a women-only space or has a stated desire to become a women's centre, there are clearly expectations that women are welcome, encouraged to visit and to use its resources. It would be reasonable to expect that the space would therefore be designed with some awareness of gender issues and that its functions and purposes would be considered in relation to space and its meaning.

### *Queen Victoria's legacy to the East End*

The Women's Library moved into the refurbished former public wash-house on its seventy-fifth anniversary. The building's architects, Wright and Wright, won the Best UK Building of 2002 in the RIBA Journal and Best Public Building in the BDA Brick Awards 2002 (*C.I.L.I.P.*, 2003; *Wright and Wright*, 2003) and its construction even attracted comment in a daily free newspaper. A letter writer had noticed a 'National Library for Women' being built, 'but I haven't seen any women building it. Maybe there are, but if not, there should be' (*Gold*, 2000, 15). The Library's location is adjacent to its original home, within a cultural, racial and ethnic borderland between the financial district of the City of London and the East End of Whitechapel and Hackney.

The East End means a lot to me. My father's family originated there, and an ancestor of mine, Amelia Ilett, a pauper and an ex-fish cutter in her 80s according to the 1891 Census, died in the Bethnal Green Pauper's Workhouse. I lived in Bow and Hackney in my 20s when I worked in anarchist and community bookshops, and was active in feminist and peace politics. I know about the East End's Huguenot and Jewish past, and have seen its gentrification over the decades to become a popular part of fashionable London, yet still threaded through with poverty. The area is in a constant state of flux as commuters come daily in waves and Bangladeshi and Jewish residents rub shoulders with Britart icons and local residents like Gilbert and George and Tracey Emin.

Much coverage about the Library's opening referred to the gendered history of the refurbished building that had been built in 1846, partly through philanthropic funding from Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to improve the area's dire public health, and where 'generations of East End women did the weekly wash and families took their weekly bath' (*Cunningham*, 2002, 11). Another commentator saw the building's new usage as partly reclaiming its female inheritance, although perhaps underplaying the conditions experienced by the washerwomen of the past :

It would have been here that countless poor women, living in overcrowded homes, took heavy bundles of clothes and bedlinen for washing, perhaps accompanied by their children, especially girls. It is comforting to think that a building once used primarily by women will now be devoted to the celebration of their contribution to history, in all its diversity.

(Purvis, 1998, no pagination).

The functions and practice of the wash house also informed one of the Library's opening exhibitions - *Dirty Linen : The History of Women and their Laundry* - that ran from September to December 2002 and portrayed and discussed women, cleanliness, order and purity in the home. A series of study days and evening talks took place (at £ 5 each or £3 concessions) including *The Great Stink of London : Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the Cleansing of the Victorian Metropolis* by Dr Stephen Halliday; *Cleaning and Cleansing for Jewish Women* by Rachel Lichtenstein, and *Matter Out of Place : The Meaning of Cleanliness and Dirt in Historical Context* by Professor Leonore Davidoff (whose role in establishing London's Feminist Library will be described in the next chapter). These were undoubtedly aimed at an educated, academically literate audience, with a one-day multi-disciplinary symposium advertised specifically for researchers (*The Women's Library, 2002*).

### *Eating in the Library*

This earlier purpose of the Library building is also evoked through the name of its restaurant, The Wash Houses. This space is as an open, attractive cafe that also serves alcohol, and from which a bill of fare from summer 2002 follows.

<i>Muffins</i>	: £1.40
<i>Pastries</i>	: £1.20
<i>Cakes</i>	: £1.40
<i>Hot panini and salad</i>	: £3.50
<i>Sandwiches and salad</i>	: £2.95
Today's soup	: <i>Summer vegetable</i>

The food, a fusion of snacks of English, American and Italian origin, symbolises the white-collar, middle-class nature of certain aspects of the area but ignores traditional Cockney specialities like cockles, winkles, whelks, cod's head stuffed with suet, pig's fry, jellied eels and pie, mash and liquor, or food favoured by later incomers like the Shabba Soup, beigels, salted beef or salt cucumber of the Jewish diaspora or the lentil dahl, chapatis, chicken

masala or rogan josh of the Indian subcontinent (*Rennie, 2002*). The Wash Houses serves staples for the lunch time and tea-break trade, but excludes from its menu culinary references to the multicultural heritage of its setting that could provide familiar, if only Proustian, eating experiences for some Library visitors. Having a restaurant, whatever its content, is an advance compared to the Fawcett Library's previous space as I shall now reflect.

### ***Moving up from the basement***

The Women's Library is adjacent to the Fawcett Library's previous university home variously described as 'a dusty vault in an east London basement' (*Viner, 2002, 16*), 'a windowless basement' (*Purvis, 1998*), or 'the kind of bleak chill-hole where you had to wear your coat in April and remember to take your sandwiches' (*Hughes, 2002, 18*). After moving to the City of London Polytechnic in 1977, the Library's new subterranean home was hard to find, quite intimidating to enter, virtually inaccessible for anyone with any form of visual or mobility impairment, and forced to close through flooding on various occasions. For some, the basement location externalised negative messages about the collection and its contents. One feminist historian's comment that 'it has been a national disgrace that for so long that the heritage of one half of humanity has been kept where it is' (*Purvis, 1998, no pagination*) was echoed by a Fawcett Library worker when showing a group of librarians, myself included, around the collection just before the Library moved :

This is a basement. It's not ideal. And we moved here in the 1970 , which illustrates how people felt about female history and academic study in the 1970 - they shoved it all in a basement.

(Fawcett Library, 2000).

The basement location also channelled much staff time in preventing and dealing with flooding, including on some occasions the intrusion of sewage. The new space is light and airy and on four floors, three of which are open to the public. I now wish to discuss the experience of this space and other aspects of the library.

### ***The library as borderland***

As Chapter One discussed, the contemporary British public library is changing, and where new-builds have been possible in the last decade, shifts have taken place away from the hierarchical, sanctified feel of the sandstone Carnegie libraries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as described in Chapter Six, into new spaces that convey feelings of openness and inclusion. As Greenhalgh, Worpole and Landry (*1995*) suggested, when summarising the views of librarians about libraries :

The ideal library should be as open as possible, and the interiors clearly visible from the outside. Glass and transparency reveal the universal and democratic ideals bound up in the idea of a public library. The desire for openness also reflects a wish to reduce any barriers to entry.

(Greenhalgh, Worpole and Landry, 1995, 60).

The Women's Library is not a public library, as it is not funded by a local authority to provide universal access, but can be viewed as an academic library with a specialist collection and a wish for increased public access. It therefore may not conform to the same architectural parameters as modern public libraries, but academic libraries have also changed. A recent example is the Norman Foster-designed library at the London School of Economics that opened in 2001. This structure has an open spiral ramp staircase linking all seven floors that are visible at all times, lit by large windows and a ceiling atrium, and according to the L.S.E. student association website (perhaps promoting a more sexual interpretation of libraries than is usually the case) is 'where LSE's most gorgeous guys and gals hang out' (*London School of Economics, 2000*). It would be assumed that such approaches of access and visibility would also be appropriate at The Women's Library.

The Library is indeed an open and light building with exposed brickwork, light wood and restful colours. The existing internal structure of the previous wash-house did not however, allow it to function as a unified, open space like the L.S.E. Library. Each floor is experienced as a separate entity, accessed by lift or stairs. The visitor enters the building into an open-plan space with an exhibition area to the left, and a reception desk to the right. Partly because of the restrictions of space, this area evokes the foyer of a contemporary hotel. The reception desk, where postcards are sold and information about the Library is kept, acts as a signpost to other floors. The staff at the desk, all women when I have accessed the Library, inevitably act in a gatekeeping role as moving beyond the entrance is impossible without their approval. The entrance space's sole function is as a boundary or intermediate zone between the outside world and the controlled, inner spaces of the Library and does not feel like a public space. It is important therefore to move beyond this area to fully experience the Library.

### *Using the Library as a reader*

The Library Reading Room is on the first floor of the building and is a contemporary space with flat tables, library catalogues, microfiches, book stacks to one side, and a reception desk when a reader first enters, staffed by library workers. The space is quiet and when I visited, occupied by women working through manuscript boxes and making notes. There was not easily noticeable information about how to use the Library, how to access the catalogue or to request the books which are not visible. I was not asked if I needed help, or whether I had

been before and knew what I was looking for. Being fairly confident about using libraries, I was able to find material on the exposed stacks, but was surprised at how little engagement there appeared to be by staff with Library users.

As my diary entry introducing this Chapter suggested, the role of staff appears to be to ensure that visitors conform to Library rules and that their intentions and documentation are appropriate. Their demeanour is not stern or unhelpful, but rather aloof and slightly excluding and offers little in the way of personal interface or a welcome. The Women's Library space is attractive and pleasant, but demonstrates problems in supporting some of the activities it promotes and the attitudes it aims to propagate. Its design and structure generate zones and areas that need protection and policing, and that replicate and intensify traditional physical and ideological library spaces. Staff appear concerned with ensuring the safety of these spaces and their contents, rather than engaging with Library users and encouraging their interactions with materials and exhibits. This does not suggest that the Library views itself as an agent of transformation or any form of heterotopia that operates as a counter-balance to wider society. I will now delve further into identities contained in the Library, some manifested through particular usage of space and others which link more closely to various feminisms. This will help further assess shortcomings in some of the intentions of the Library and to understand more about its representative and gendertopic potential.

### **Section Three : Identities - from suffragettes to national collection**

As discussed above, The Women's Library as a resource and a series of spaces has changed over time, and been open to a range of external identities and influences. As mentioned earlier, the Library had previous experience of being a multi-purpose space in the 1930s when it was based alongside a cafe, theatre and lecture space, and in its previous location was clearly grounded and embedded within academia. In this section, I will cover both positive and negative identities and aim to build a link between the encounters with space within the Library as just described, and the articulations of feminism that will form the content within the following section. My overall concern is to discover more about the Library's various identities and the messages they reveal about the Library's intentions and meanings. I am going to consider how the Library engages with, and manifests, the following identities - as an academic institution, as a women's studies library, as a women's library, as a museum and exhibition space, and as a national collection.

### *The Library as an academic library*

The Fawcett Library in its post-1977 setting was effectively an academic library in its staffing, location, space and usage. Being part of a larger, funded academic structure and sector gave it status and authority, provided links to course development, and publicity, operational and strategic support that allowed Library staff to concentrate on the work of the Library. Being within an academic institution inevitably influenced the Library's perspective and operating environment, and staff and Friends published in academic and women's studies journals, and spoke at academic conferences on the Library's work. One of the key outcomes of this identity concerned the sex of staff and users.

The Fawcett Library as an academic library did not, or could not, advocate to be a women-only space, so having a male Head Librarian was understandable. The last Head Librarian, David Doughan, maintained a high profile in women's history scholarship in his tenure from 1988 until 2000 (with 23 years service in the Library overall) and received an MBE for services to women's studies. He has published books on women's issues (*Doughan and Gordon, 2001*) and now spends his retirement lecturing to local history societies on women's history and suffragettes, and to national audiences on J. R. R. Tolkien and Dorothy L. Sayers. His recollections of an event in 1978 marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Equal Franchise Act perhaps indicate his own views on second wave feminism, and those of the Library :

So there was I, on a grey-but-not-quite-wet summer's morning, in the company of a few hundred others, including some members of the Townswomen's Guilds, the Women's Institutes, a very chic-looking delegation from the Sappho collective, a group from Women in Media, some members of the *Spare Rib* collective (I think), some resolutely un-chic revolutionary radical feminists bearing placards asserting that "All Men Are Rapists" . . .

*(Doughan, 1998, no pagination).*

Davies and Walbe (1982) commented that male staff working in British women's libraries was unlikely to suit all users or potential users, and it can be assumed that many radical feminists and lesbian feminists at the height of the second wave movement would not have identified or felt comfortable with the situation in the Fawcett Library. This may explain the lack of donations and papers from those feminist areas or any clear association with these ideologies. Renshaw (1989) noted, rightly, that it was mainly within institutionally located women's libraries that male librarians were employed. The implicit message presented through this identity was that it was preferable for men to access and work with historical materials about women, than to provide women-only access to contemporary second wave feminist materials. The academic base of the Fawcett clearly dominated any feminist

aspirations to integrate theory into practice. Although The Women's Library has changed, it is still open to both women and men, and located within the management and funding structure of an academic institution. It does however appear to employ only female staff.

### *Women's studies and the second wave*

The Women's Library inherited from the Fawcett Library a substantial contribution to the content and development of women's studies in the United Kingdom, partly through supporting research and building the collection, as well as some incorporation of women's studies into librarianship through BiblioFem (*Pritchard, 1978*). More recently this has been through the Genesis Project, aimed at developing access to women's history sources in the United Kingdom via a unified web portal, to support women's studies. This funded project is led by The Women's Library and involves university collections, national collections and specialist libraries (including the Feminist Archive in Bristol, the Women's Archive of Wales and the Women's Arts Library). The Feminist Library in London and Glasgow Women's Library, subjects of the next two chapters, are also contributing agencies.

Women's studies as discussed in Chapter Two, is regarded by some radical feminists as a sanitised version of feminism that puts activism at arms length, as 'a substitute for (the) Women's Movement' (*Smyth, 1996, 174*). Other earlier second-wave feminists viewed it as part of 'the current feminist movement but . . . also dependent upon the work of earlier feminist writers' (*Bristol Women's Studies Group, 1979, 4*) and on resources like those available within the Fawcett Library. The mission of women's studies to provide access to the ideas and 'experience left out of the official literary canon' (*Russ, 1984, 123*) was clearly shared by the Fawcett Library. However, the association with women's studies inevitably determined the Fawcett Library's relationship with second wave feminism, particularly the more radical aspects of it and, through the changing fortunes experienced by women's studies as an academic discipline, its ability to promote its messages within wider academic circles.

### *The Women's Library - is it a 'women's library'?*

The Library's origins in the suffrage movement and the involvement of privileged women as Friends and supporters has shaped its relationship with feminism and its identification with women's experience and struggles. Pankhurst (*1987*) suggested that the Library's interest in second wave feminism was genuine, as its 1970 / 1971 Annual Report commented that 'women's liberation has been of interest to a lot of readers' (*230*). Vera Douie, the first Fawcett librarian, apparently also believed that the Fawcett was feminist because it promoted women, and she (Pankhurst) agreed that this tradition continued :

The present mission of the Library continues this tradition of being propagandist only in its dedication to uncovering and preserving women's heritage, and in facilitating research about women. The library does not take up a particular feminist position other than the one implicit in an open-access policy to men as well as to women. This means that by honouring women-only restrictions the library is unable to stock certain publications such as WIRES, a women's liberation resources current awareness service.

(Pankhurst, 1987, 232).

This statement however perhaps indicates that the Fawcett Library was a repository and observer of feminism, but did not view itself as an active participant in its progression or promotion. It also implies that it did not have a particular feminist perspective, but adopting its host's conventions of accessibility to both sexes, and aligning itself to specific collecting and acquisition policies meant taking a liberal feminist position. The Women's Library is now developing activities in a space with potential to be a multi-purpose centre with a lending library and reference service at its core, besides exhibition space, a restaurant and rooms for meetings and cultural events, whereas the Fawcett Library supplied only reference services. According to Barbara, one of the staff, the Library is '*a hybrid organisation, we're a library, we're partly an archive, we're partly a museum, we also have exhibitions - we're peculiar*' (Barbara, paid worker, The Women's Library, London, 2003). It is possible that this may indicate a more fluid approach to feminism and cultural and social change that could be viewed as potentially third wave, as I will return to later.

### ***Exhibiting women - The Women's Library as museum***

The funding success of The Women's Library may well be linked to its adoption of an approach to history and gender that appears more aligned to that of a museum, and the Library is currently applying for museum status. But it is important to also note tensions between representation and reality, the educational and reforming role of a collection about women, the desire to attract audiences and markets, and how that affects how artefacts and literary texts - and the themes contained within them - are chosen, displayed, contextualised and marketed. As Porter described, in relation to representing women within museums :

A tension exists for museums between looking at 'real life' on the one hand, and looking for visual and material richness and diversity in objects and displays, fun and entertainment for the visitors on the other. Where museums look at 'real life' they concentrate on those parts which have changed, and which thus offer contrast and fascination. Much of women's historical experience lies in areas where 'change' measured by objects and technologies is slow, and where women are seen as secondary, operators and consumers, rather than inventors of producers. (Porter, 1988, 121)

Porter's warning of concentrating on women's achievements at the cost of side-lining women's oppression and gendered experience is important. Hall's (2001) description of the 'post-museum' as a radical transformation of what has been typically understood as a museum or gallery is also helpful in this discussion, as are his contextual definitions of post-history, and his identification of a postmodern 'cultural turn' from history to culture. The latter concept moves collecting away from being underpinned by only historical notions into one where 'its cultural conditions of existence' (16) are embraced. This may perhaps indicate that other contexts, perhaps those of most discomfort, like sexism and racism, become objectified and regarded as powerful signifiers of the past, and not part of an ongoing present and future, still threaded through with inequality and exclusion.

It is also true that museums (and art galleries as well) although part of mass culture are not necessarily accessed by the wider population, especially those who feel socially excluded or marginalised. Art galleries tend to be frequented by the most privileged, by more women than men, whilst the infrequent museum visitor is more likely to visit general or non-specialist collections. All recent research in Europe and North America confirms that museum visitors are not a representative cross-section of the public, but are much more educated and middle-class (Hooper-Greenhill, 1988). By going down the museum road, The Women's Library may be further narrowing its potential audiences, and become increasingly attractive to middle-class, educated women, very much like those that drove the activities of the first wave women's movement. Experiences of the Women's Museum that opened in Texas in 2000 to promote women's history may also be useful in ensuring The Library's relevance to feminism and to all groups of women, and identifying potential pitfalls. The Museum's Content Director described her experience as she became disillusioned with the framework that was being revealed :

As a feminist I hoped it would be a museum that reflected feminist ideals. But the tension between a "lite" museum representing women's achievements and an edgy museum representing feminist struggles would play itself out . . . (Michals, 2001, 61).

Conflicts between being an accessible public resource and being one that encompassed overtly feminist messages led to decisions that Michals found unacceptable. References to male behaviour such as gender-based violence - a key issue for second wave feminism in understanding gender inequality and patriarchy - were excluded to not alienate male visitors, and prospective exhibits were reviewed by 'friends and boyfriends of board members to determine if men would feel welcome' (*Michals, 2001, 66*). Another second wave feminist touchstone - the personal is political - also proved problematic. Displays about famous women that included their disclosures of experiences such as abortion and lesbianism were sanitised and, according to Michals, perhaps lost to the future as 'in deeming them invisible now, do we make them invisible later?' (67). This is reminiscent of Spender's remark that began this chapter, about first wave feminism being lost to the second wave, and certainly links to earlier comments in this work about the lack of knowledge of many younger women about feminist struggles and the existence of gender inequality. Like the Women's Museum in Dallas, The Women's Library felt that its work was of wide significance, and its refurbishment and re-launch has been funded and based on that notion as I will now describe.

***The national question - is The Women's Library the National Library ?***

Less than twenty years ago, Pankhurst (1987) wrote that 'the absence of any institutional affiliation, its precarious funding base and the loss of professional staffing' (233) raised worrying questions about the Fawcett Library's future. It would have been impossible then to anticipate today's hugely different circumstances. Before its funding appeal, the vision of the new Women's Library was set out :

The National Library of Women will serve as a meeting place, a unique exhibition / conference venue and a forum where debate can take place on issues which affect women's lives. For the first time, school children will have ready access to the collections. The National Library for Women will be a major tourist attraction, providing a living chronicle of women from the past, from the present and from the future. There will also be a Friend's room, shop, cafe, conference room, reading room and environmentally controlled storage for the Library's precious collections. (*Fawcett Library, 1998*).

The substantial funding to facilitate this dream was achieved through a bid that promoted expansion into the first British 'National Library for Women' with a projected huge increase in visitor numbers. Becoming a national archive and library for women had been a long-standing desire of the Fawcett Library, with hopes for this potential status beginning in 1987 (*Renshaw, 1989*). From the middle 1990s onwards, publicity and fund-raising campaigns positioned the library this way, for example, a May 2000 leaflet stated that 'with its enhanced

profile, the Fawcett Library will continue to develop as the UK's National Library of Women' (*London Guildhall Library, 2000*). Such assertions attracted some disquiet from other women's libraries who felt that they had not been consulted, or regarded as relevant players. In post-devolution Britain, concepts of nation and national have complex and contested meanings, and the Fawcett Library's unilateral adoption of the national label with no clarity about its definition was felt by some to be exclusionary and undermining feminist principles. Glasgow Women's Library for example, had parallel plans to provide a Scotland-wide service that required them to establish their own definition and scope, yet this was difficult without clarity about the Fawcett Library's plans or the meaning of 'national' that funders had accepted. A worker from Glasgow Women's Library reflected on their deliberations :

In one early Cataloguing meeting somebody said Women's Library of Scotland. That sounded nice because it said 'women's library' whatever, so I like this idea of a consortium or a discussion about what 'national' means.

(Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

It became clear after funding was achieved, that the concept of the 'National Library for Women' had no legal or constitutional basis. The name was quietly dropped, and 'The Women's Library' quickly substituted. At the Friends Annual General Meeting in 2001 which I attended, there was profound shock about this failure or oversight which the Director announced, but the change and its implications have never to my knowledge been publicly discussed or acknowledged, with a seamless move into the name and identity of 'The Women's Library'. Whatever the truth, The Women's Library has gone from being a neglected academic enclave and repository of middle-class first wave feminism's 'earlier struggle for suffrage' (*WLM Bibliography, 2002*) with little real connection or affinity with grassroots second wave feminism, into repositioning itself as the national resource for women's history, albeit not in name with an expanded and well-funded remit.

In this section, I have reviewed five separate, but linked, identities observed within The Women's Library - namely, academic library, women's studies library, women's library, museum and national library. I have considered the Library as an academic library, rather than a public space or public library, and suggested that although financial security has been obtained, this restricts its inability to be a women-only or even women-oriented space and the overall image and atmosphere that it can convey. Considering The Library as a women's space and specialising in women's studies has revealed that it is associated with the study of feminism, rather than active engagement, and that this continues its previous history as the Fawcett Library.

As a women's library, The Women's Library's emphasis, funding and power do not appear to ensure that it is regarded as a feminist library by other women's libraries that have a more activist approach and also much less involvement with powerful media, literary and celebrity culture. The desire of the Library to adopt museum status can be seen to be an advantage in expanding its audience and in attracting new forms of funding, but there are warnings of a seemingly inevitable narrowing of its potential audience, and the likelihood of the objectification of women becoming even stronger. The Library's adoption of a national remit has been found to be highly contested, and one that may well be problematic in the long-term in attracting the range and numbers of users that were predicated in the bids, and the expectations that were raised internally and externally. Many of the identities set out in this section appear to be not fully engaged with one another, or demonstrate internal critiques or uncertainties.

#### **Section Four : Articulating engagements with feminisms - love and money**

I now consider engagement with, and commitments to, feminisms that are articulated and manifested in the Library. The main areas under discussion relate to the academic nature of the library and its implications for feminism, the work of the Friends of The Women's Library, changing relationships with feminisms, links with other women's libraries and engagement with, and by, Library users. I will identify the feminist approaches with which the Library appears comfortable, and question how they relate to its funding success and public profile. The Library's fund-raising achievements, facilitated by the London Guildhall University, considerably changed its previous experiences. As this is entwined with its interpretation of, and engagement with, feminism, I will begin by describing its funding history, beginning with recent events.

#### ***Financing first wave women's history into the twenty-first century***

To address their unsuitable premises and for further expansion, the London Guildhall University fundraised in the 1990s for a new project - the National Library for Women - that promoted a revamped version of the Fawcett Library as a national resource within the new building. Approximately £ 9 million was obtained by 2000, including over £ 4 million National Lottery money, with other funders including English Partnerships, the Higher Education Funding Council, London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the Government's Regeneration Agency. The University itself gave over £ 300,000 and underwrote the project. Public figures associated with women's issues, from a liberal feminist stance, like Barbara Follett M.P., Betty Boothroyd M.P., Rabbi Julia Neuberger, Edwina Currie, Glenys Kinnock

M.E.P. and Virginia Bottomley M.P. backed the fund-raising campaign, in which key examples of the collection were highlighted :

The return ticket brought from Emily Wilding Davidson to Epsom, who died after she threw herself under the King's horse, private papers of the Pankhursts and Virginia Woolf, 'conduct' books from the 1600s and letters written on prison toilet paper by suffragettes to their children.

(Library Association, 1998i, 341).

Although the City of London Polytechnic provided security for the Fawcett Library, it was not well funded. Money from the Inner London Education Authority (£ 35,000 annually for a number of years) to the Polytechnic paid for librarians, with archivists, cataloguers and librarians employed through smaller grants and income from the Friends of the Fawcett Library Trust Fund. Volunteers made up the rest of the Library complement. In 1988, the Polytechnic was forced to reduce librarianship staff, and although the Fawcett Library was less affected than the main body, then Head Librarian, Catherine Ireland, took redundancy. David Doughan, then Deputy Librarian, assumed the Head Librarian role until 2000, when he retired before the move to the Women's Library, although is still an active member of the Friends and currently serving as Secretary.

Prior to this fund-raising triumph, even with its educational base and Inner London Education Authority grant, the Fawcett Library's long-term survival was credited to 'the equal devotion of Fawcett Society members, individual admirers of the Library and current Friends, many of whom have put in hours of voluntary labour working in the Library and raising funds' (*Renshaw, 1989, 78*). Membership fees to join the Friends generated funds, alongside legacies, donations, charitable funding, and income from readers who paid to access the collection. The Women's Library's greatly improved financial position means that there is no charge now to use its core resources. An earlier fund-raising attempt in 1986 to support the Library, described as 'the country's only national archive of suffrage material' (*Library Association, 1986, 165*), involved sponsoring women running the London Marathon, wearing green, white and violet sashes (representing the suffrage campaign 'Give Women Votes') and the name of a suffragette. The appeal raised £ 10,000 and as Joan, one of the Library's Friends recently recounted, 'You can't do a Lottery application without a professional, it's not something which a group of amateurs can do' (Joan, elected officer, Friends of The Women's Library, London, 2003).

The Library's 'persuasive, determined line in PR' (*Renshaw, 1989, 80*) through the efforts of consultants, Hobsbawm Macauley Communication - the successful PR company that includes Sarah Macauley, the wife of the Chancellor, Gordon Brown - achieved extensive media

coverage concerning the fund-raising efforts from 1998 onwards (*Byatt, 2002i; Byatt, 2002ii; Cunningham, 2002; Hughes, 2002; Muir, 2001; Travel Britain, 2002; Viner, 2002; Ward, 2002*). As Renshaw (1989) commented on the Library's earlier incarnation, its fund-raising success has been based not on 'its feminist history or presence' (80) but on its 'unique and valuable character as a resource for academic historical research, one containing "treasures" totally unavailable elsewhere' (80). The role of the Friends remains central to the Library's success and profile, as I will now describe.

### ***Friends in high places and twenty-first century feminism***

We have continued to make a significant contribution to the Library over the past year. We purchased archival material relating to Emily Faithful and Elizabeth Haweis (£ 3,100.00) and contributed £ 8,785.00 toward the purchase at auction of a Sylvia Pankhurst drawing, *In a Pot Bank* . . . Eva Ratz, who holds an annual Art Exhibition in Hampstead with proceeds going to a charity, chose the Friend's of the Women's Library last autumn and raised over £ 300.00. (Friends of The Women's Library, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, the first wave feminist movement was characterised by the involvement of many upper middle-class women. This was not surprising, as although gender inequalities affected all women, opportunities to challenge social and cultural mores were perhaps more readily available to women with 'the resources and time to be writers, activists, successful career women and document collectors' (*Renshaw, 1989, 82*) than their working-class sisters. For example, Emmeline Pankhurst, before she became involved in fighting for women's suffrage, ran a fancy goods shop, selling 'a variety of interior furnishings, prints, furniture and *objects d'arts*' (*Pugh, 2002, 45*) on London's Hampstead Road, and was married to a lawyer, later a Liberal M.P. who was extremely supportive of women's causes. The current Library Director also comes from a singular social and cultural background. Antonia Byatt, described as 'a 41-year-old mother of three young children' (*Cunningham, 2002, 11*) was an arts administrator before assuming the task of moving the Fawcett Library into The Women's Library. The daughter of the novelist A. S. Byatt and niece of the novelist Margaret Drabble, Byatt's social and literary connections have confused some commentators, with one describing her as 'the writer and critic, Antonia Byatt' (*Travel Britain, 2002*).

The Friends are a highly organised, well-connected charity and utilise personal networks to provide support through 'social occasions, including private views of treasures from the collections . . . (and) . . . regular monthly meetings where invited speakers discuss their research in the field of women's history and women's studies' (*Friends of the Fawcett Library, 1998*). Speakers at Friends events in the late 1990s included Dale Spender, Sheila

Rowbotham, Edwina Currie and Linda Perham MP, an ex-Fawcett Library cataloguer. The Friends are a tangible connection with the historical roots of the Library, many are personally linked to its collections or from families associated with the first wave women's movement. But although existing Friends are active and committed, there are relatively few. The 280 members of the Friends at the time of writing are generally elderly, and although an appeal in 2002 brought forward new members, the number overall only rose by 3 due to the number of deaths during the year. The age of many of the Friends would suggest that new members should be actively sought.

There are now attempts to encourage more people to donate to the Library, through a leaflet picturing the fund-raising efforts of first wave Edwardian well-to-do feminists, that conveys a history that may be unfamiliar or inappropriate to some of those who may be interested in the Library. A new category of supporters, Patrons, donate £ 30 annually to gain use of the Friends' Room, 'an ideal place to sit and relax in the comfy leather chairs whilst visiting the Library' (*The Women's Library, 2003ii*), discount at the Wash Houses Cafe, two private view invites for exhibitions and the Library's newsletter; whereas for £100 extra benefits include discounts on exhibition merchandise and an invitation for two to the new annual Patrons' lunch with the Library Director and Chair of the Friends, echoing McLean's (1997) comment that as far as museums are concerned, 'individual donors will benefit mainly from the satisfaction of having given to a worthy cause . . . (but) . . . other donors may expect some other exchanges, such as publicity, invitations to exhibition openings, and so on' (173).

Collecting and promoting historical materials about first wave feminism is arguably less threatening than those of more radical second wave feminism and has allowed the new Library to gain support from women who identify with the former, including the Friends. Their activities, as the Friends of the Fawcett Library, however have not always appeared welcoming to feminists from other generations. One librarian that I interviewed commented :

I tried to get on the committee, but it always meets in the afternoon . . . *'We always meet in the afternoon'* and I said *'I can't possibly ever come to these meetings because I work'*. She said *'We'd really like younger women'*. I would have been younger than them by about 20 years because they were all 60 or over. And I said *'I can't do that, I can only come if it's meetings that start about 6 in the evening'*. She said *'Our ladies don't like to be out late at night'*.

(Julie, information services manager, national charity, London, 2000).

First wave feminism remains centrally important to the Library, and is literally embodied in many of the Friends. If the Friends remain inflexible to potential new members, who may have more second wave or even third wave feminist perspectives, this may inhibit their

impact on the Library in the long run, and ensure that it remains within a first wave milieu. However, the association with the first wave movement has ebbed and flowed to some extent over time. The Library's tenure as part of the Fawcett Society, and its predecessor, the London and National Society for Women's Service, may be when there was most active engagement and identification with, then first wave, feminism. Before the split from the Fawcett Society in 1957, the Library was regarded as a 'valuable instrument' in expanding the Society's influence (*Pankhurst, 1987*) with the active promotion of women's rights part of that agenda. Once the move into academia occurred, there were clearly organisational and structural reasons why feminist activism could no longer remain the Fawcett Library's motivation, as it was obviously not that of its host organisation. Changing circumstances may however, provide new opportunities.

The desire to develop better links with the lives and experiences of contemporary women is stated clearly by its Director, but as effectively a public agency there are barriers and restrictions on the type of feminism that the Library could conceivably promote or embrace. The Women's Library may have a new opportunity to change how it positions itself in relation to contemporary feminism, as Barbara, one of the workers, suggested :

The Library has really moved since it separated from the Fawcett Society . . . what we say now is that it's a centre for debate. We don't affiliate ourselves with anyone or support a particular view or stance, but to provide a forum for debate, but to do that you have to make some suggestions for debate.

(Barbara, paid worker, The Women's Library, London, 2003).

This appears to move on from Pankhurst's earlier statement that suggested that the aim of the Fawcett Library was to provide solely the opportunities to research historical change without being involved and introduces a more proactive element, but at the moment the Library's feminist voice may not be defined. The extent to which it sees its role as critical or able to challenge is unclear. However, some work is being done to reflect the multiple experiences of local women, as the Library has recently undertaken a multi-media project to record the lives of older East End women from a wide range of cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Funded by the Wakefield Trust, this has created a new collection and exhibition, galvanised new links with the local community, increased the representation of older East End women in archival collections and taken the Library into more integrated areas of collection development and public participation. It could be argued that this might encroach into areas of museum activity that may have dangers for feminism, as discussed. The relationship that The Women's Library has with other women's libraries, that promote various forms of feminist engagement, is now vital to consider.

*Links with other women's libraries - developing forms of feminist librarianship ?*

As The Women's Library is arguably the premier women's library in the United Kingdom through the strength of its collection, its sustainability, its funding and profile, linkages would be anticipated with other British feminist collections and the Genesis Project has already been identified as one such product. In the past, the focus of the Fawcett Library on first wave feminist material encouraged a close affinity with the now defunct library of the Equal Opportunities Commission. Pankhurst (1987) suggested that the Equal Opportunities Commission library, staffed by Pat Darter (who has written widely on women in librarianship) was 'the only other general library devoted exclusively to women which is attached to an institution and is in the charge of a full-time professional librarian' (233).

When interviewing women working in, and linked to, other women's libraries, namely the Feminist Library in London and Glasgow Women's Library, I asked them about the Fawcett Library and The Women's Library. The location of both these libraries in twentieth and twenty-first century feminism will be discussed in the following two chapters, and Chapter Eleven on Glasgow Women's Library will consider the relationship between the Fawcett Library / The Women's Library and Glasgow Women's Library. However, volunteer staff within the Feminist Library perceived the Fawcett Library to have a more distant relationship with feminism than their own, which they perceived as more integrated. One volunteer worker commented that *'the general atmosphere was that it was more of a library documenting the Women's Movement, whereas this library is more part of the Women's Movement'* (Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2001). It was felt that the Fawcett Library's location in academia facilitated paid library staff, but the organisational culture may be a restriction :

They've got nice, lovely archives. But then they've got proper archiving staff . . . But at the same time they're constrained by the University paying their wages, they can't really do what they want. They can only really do things within those constraints, can't they ?

(Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, 2001).

Before the launch of The Women's Library, there had been contact between the new Director and the Feminist Library that led the latter to expect that future support would be forthcoming. One worker told me that *'Antonia Byatt is very interested in improving links with the Feminist Library and in involving the Feminist Library more with them. There's always been relations with them . . . they've got loads of money compared to us'* (Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, 2001). Another echoed these views, and considered that even financial support might be available :

If they could give us money, then yes, we would be very pleased with it. We're quite close. We have quite close links with them. They came down recently to tell us about what's happening with them and what they're planning to do, and we're going to be involved with them . . . hopefully, they'll tell their users about us and vice versa. (Jennifer, volunteer library worker, Feminist Library, London, 2001).

I will reflect on whether any of these hopes have been realised in the following chapter where I will also discuss a meeting at the Feminist Library in July 2003. Before this meeting, a volunteer from the Feminist Library of African descent talked to me about race issues and The Women's Library. She found the Library unwelcoming to Black women and felt that staff had made clear statements about the inevitable cultural and racial homogeneity of its collections. The relationship of much first wave feminisms to dynamics associated with the British Empire is undeniable, and some of the main archival collections in the Library, like the Sadd Brown archive, are grounded in historical colonial dynamics that are now outdated. This volunteer had interpreted this as unchanging and unlikely to be addressed.

This appears to be confirmed by reported comments made by the Library Director at the 2002 Annual General Meeting of the second wave feminist group Women in Publishing. At this meeting, she reflected that acquiring women's personal papers for the Library has to be considered in the contemporary context, and that as modern women now do what was once considered extraordinary, these need to be very special to qualify for inclusion. It is important to question to which women The Women's Library Director is referring – to a multi-racial grouping or white homogeneity? The Director also suggested that the collection needed to become broader, as it does not cover immigration or the experiences of 'foreign women' (*Women in Publishing, 2002*). I will reflect on these comments in my conclusion, and now consider the implications of becoming such a well-funded resource of historical feminism that may help explain the discomfort felt by the Feminist Library volunteer above.

### *Engaging with users*

The engagement that the Library has with feminism has implications for its users, its overall impact and interest in highlighting or affecting change. The Library's transformation into a multi-faceted centre may expand possibilities, but is of interest to observe how The Women's Library deals with these, and other, challenging issues. Much will depend on who accesses its services and their expectations and interests, as well as those of staff and management. The numbers of visitors attracted to the Library appears to be less than its funding applications appear suggested or hoped for. In the first year, in the midst of extensive publicity and media coverage, only 3,000 people accessed the Reading Room, only double the number that managed to previously find and use the inaccessible and restricted Fawcett Library each year,

and another 15,000 attended exhibitions and other events in the new space. Library records of reader's research suggest that 38 % visit for 'personal interest', with over 26 % classifying themselves as undergraduate students, with postgraduate students, at about 13 %, the next largest group (*The Women's Library, 2003i*).

There are clearly extensive efforts going on to expand the numbers and types of users and potential users of the Library, with exhibitions, seminars and other events seen as vehicles to interest people via subjects, and then link them into the archival and book collections. However, activities and their target groups are not wide or inclusive, and moving towards museumhood may reduce the multiplicity of potential users, rather than expand it. The funding of The Women's Library and its positive media coverage may well be because itself and its predecessor, the Fawcett Library, are not perceived as overtly feminist. The onset of the Fawcett Library in first wave feminism appears to have ensured that it has avoided becoming too involved in second wave, more radical, feminism. It is likely that staff at the Library, the academic context in which they worked, their adherence to women's studies as an over-riding context, their personal interests and identifications, and the role and influence of the Friends and their class background, ensured that the Fawcett Library was never seen as threatening or part of an progressive feminist agenda.

One interesting challenge will be whether a name that includes 'women' proves a barrier for the Library in the medium to long-term. Naming is an issue for other women's libraries (and women's organisations overall), and as one female librarian commented to me, before the announcement of the name 'The Women's Library', 'Fawcett Library' was perhaps useful as it did not project negative associations of being related to women :

Even years and years on, it still seems to be that view on '*Why do we need a women's library ?*' And I don't think that people have thought about the Fawcett Library in that way, because it doesn't have the word 'women' in the title.

(Julie, information services manager, national charity, London, 2000).

However, the term 'women' may be off-putting to some as it will seem too feminist, and can also be perceived as referring to a specialist collection, or one that is only open to women. As already stated, specialist collections and museums are less appealing to the public than what are perceived as general ones, even here where the collection refers to the majority of the population. However, other choices have been made about the organisation of the Library and its collections, that also reveal how the Library relates to women's issues and feminism, and to librarianship. As was discussed in Chapter Seven, classification schemes have significance for the construction and categorisation of concepts and discourse in specific ways, and are

open to feminist challenges. I will now consider how The Women's Library, a potential hybrid of the first wave and third wave, is addressing this aspect of librarianship practice.

### **Section Five : Classification and other matters of librarianship**

The purpose of women's libraries and archives is arguably to collect and disseminate material by, and about, women, in some cases for women users only, but in the case of The Women's Library, due to its academic location, for a mixed audience. There are opportunities then available to integrate aspects of feminism and librarianship, and to challenge certain aspects of the construction of librarianship to which much of this work has drawn attention. For The Women's Library, having qualified library staff and a long history may mean that components of library infrastructure, like classification schemes, have been considered along with other aspects of librarianship that may be linked to feminist concerns. In this section, I will consider the Library from a feminist and librarianship perspective to discover if and where change has arisen and its motivations. As the largest and longest established of the three British women's libraries under consideration, it might be hoped that some activity that could be deemed feminist librarianship may have taken place.

For all women's libraries, clarifying the scope of its collection is important, and ensuring complementary collecting across libraries is to be desired. This can provide an overall comprehensive coverage, but may inevitably mean that individual libraries feel limited in their own range and scope, as Pankhurst (1987) commented :

The difficulties about relinquishing the collection of materials which is the stuff of contemporary affairs today, but the source material of history tomorrow, are the precarious nature of the collecting bodies and the uncertainty as to what would happen to their collections if these could not be maintained. There may be also some difficulties in that the radical feminist libraries may not wish to collect materials across the whole political spectrum.

(Pankhurst, 1987, 234).

Pankhurst appears to imply that the Fawcett Library did not make choices in selecting or collecting materials, whereas other libraries, that she perceived as bring more radically feminist, did and then presented a more partial and biased collection. I will now reflect on other choices related to librarianship that the Library might have needed to make.

### *Issues of classification*

Classifying women-oriented and specifically feminist material has always been a challenge as Chapter Eight described, and various solutions have been tried within women's libraries and archives and some mainstream settings. The Women's Library continues to use the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme, previously used by the Fawcett Library from its incorporation in the City of London Polytechnic in 1977. Prior to that, Universal Decimal Classification, a similar scheme used worldwide, was employed. As noted earlier, it was felt important when the Fawcett Library entered academia that cataloguing and classification ensured cohesion and accessibility of the collection. Renshaw (1989) found that, even when there was much less stock and material in the Library than now, although Dewey was acknowledged to be imperfect, factors like 'the sheer amount of work in re-classifying and the loss of compatibility with other systems, including the shared cataloguing' (83) was likely to prevent wholesale transfer to another scheme. As a Fawcett Library worker told the group in 2000, that I was part of, *'That's the system we've all got used to. I don't see any chance of that ever changing. It would be an absolute mammoth task as the whole of the University is operated by Dewey as well'* (Fawcett Library, 2000).

The decision made about the location of the Fawcett in 1977 was predicated partly on positive views about the use of Dewey by the host organisation, and the resulting ease via academic library computer networks, like JANET, to facilitate inter-library loans. However, whilst accepting the almost impossible task that would be required to change to another scheme, continuing with Dewey may present increasing difficulties for The Women's Library. As Chapters Six and Seven indicated, the origins of the Dewey scheme as a chart of late Victorian male-defined knowledge does not make it amenable to feminist materials or attitudes. The gendered assumptions of the scheme are particularly reinforced through the emphasis of the Library's stock, much of which concerns challenges to women's gendered history, and raises issues regarding access to the collection and its ideological framework.

Dewey brings materials together in juxtapositions that reveal Victorian attitudes about women but that sit uneasily in a library about women. For example, on The Women's Library's open shelves in the Reading Room in 2002, I found books labelled prostitution, paedophilia, transexuality, bisexuality, lesbianism, sadomasochism, incest and marriage, adjacent to one another. These are grouped in such a way because of their categorisation within the Dewey main class, 300, Social Science. Their subjects would be construed as closely related in Victorian discourse, but from feminist perspectives, even first wave, would be understood in a different way - sexual behaviours like bisexuality and lesbianism would not be seen as synonymous with issues like prostitution, paedophilia and incest that from a second wave, radical feminist position were increasingly seen as violence against women and

children. It is not possible to derive the exact edition of Dewey that would have generated this collection, although it is likely to be an older version than the 21st edition in 1997 that revised extensively the class numbers within 300 - 309.

For browsers, without knowledge of the nature and structure of classification schemes such shelf order could convey dated notions of gender relations and female sexuality that the Library's ethos of reflecting first wave feminist challenges against patriarchy opposes. It is possible to argue that continuing with Dewey indicates a lack of engagement with librarianship thinking informed by feminism, albeit limited in the United Kingdom, which in certain cases has attempted to make changes and amendments to classification schemes, or with other women's libraries working in a more grassroots context that have tried to devise new, more acceptable solutions.

If it is accepted that this classification embodies historical notions of women's sexuality, then it is necessary to discover how some of the feminist inspired library classification schemes have considered these subjects and where they have placed them. The most appropriate comparison can be gained by using the scheme developed by the Feminist Library in London, that will be discussed in the next chapter. Prostitution is a subject well represented in the collections of The Women's Library as the focus of much first wave campaigning, so this will be used as an example. Within the Feminist Library scheme, prostitution is classified within Class L : Crimes Against Women as follows, that would also determine the shelf position of any books with these subjects :

*LDI Marriage (as oppression)*

*LDO Prostitution*

*LDOP Prostitution (enforced)*

*LDR Pornography*

*LG Discrimination*

*LGC Sexism*

*LGF Male chauvinism*

*LGI Sex stereotyping*

This example indicates that the discourse within the Feminist Library scheme derives from radical feminism, as prostitution is deemed to be a crime by men against women and part of a continuum that includes pornography and marriage as a form of oppression. Marriage however has also another number, HDJ, within Class H - Lifestyles, awarding it more than one classificatory and ideological possibility. The Dewey and Feminist Library schemes position prostitution differently, and are located within a convergent set of understandings and ideological beliefs. While granted that a full-scale change to another scheme would be

costly and problematic, The Women's Library does not presumably feel that the compromise and conflicts provided by the continued use of Dewey are worth drawing attention to or challenging. Considering further the relationship that the Library has to librarianship may indicate other aspects of engagement with these issues.

### *Links to librarianship*

During the 1980s, the Fawcett Library and the Equal Opportunities Library, as discussed earlier, worked together on the Bibliofem project, a monthly catalogue microfiche of the two libraries' holdings that was intended to expand to include other materials about women held in other collections. However, although the intention was that public libraries would subscribe to it (at £ 45 annually), as Davies and Walbe (1982) - from the Women's Research and Resource Centre, later the Feminist Library, the subject of the next chapter - described in a *Spare Rib* article about feminist libraries, 'it is very difficult to persuade your library to buy it when libraries everywhere are suffering so badly from cuts in public spending' (20). Because of this, Bibliofem was abandoned in 1985 but was regarded at the end of the 1980s as still able to provide a 'useful record of information published on women pre-1985' (Pritchard, 1978; Renshaw, 1989, 85).

There has been some coverage of the work of the Library in librarianship journals as discussed, much of it for publicity purposes rather than to progress discussions about library-related matters, although Ireland and Doughan (1985) suggested that *Library Association Record's* 1985 'women's issue' that Chapter Eight discussed, was something of an achievement to have not mentioned 'such library and archival services devoted to women and women's issues as the Feminist Library and the Feminist Archive, to say nothing of ourselves at the Fawcett Library' (412). Staff from the Fawcett Library appeared committed to their collections and their promotion to potential users and to librarianship, rather than by a desire to ponder on the significance of their work in terms of librarianship. Pankhurst, as already noted, contributed a number of articles in learned journals.

As already stated, The Women's Library has achieved coverage in the library press about its funding, the building and its refurbishment, and regular news piece appear about events, exhibitions and talks. Few of these appear to be concerned with a full engagement with librarianship or of challenging the mainstream in how it approaches women's materials or the inheritance of a gendered female-dominated occupation. Staffing arrangements, and their disciplines from which they are associated, may have an impact in this area. The Library's multi-disciplinary staff group includes 'museum, archival, library, arts and development professionals' (Byatt, 2002i, 45) although there were many staff changes in the first full year of the Library's operation. The Director's report to the Friend's Annual General Meeting in

summer 2003 outlined the resignations of the Head of Library Services; the Genesis Project Manager and Officer; the Development Director, the Development Executive and their Assistant, plus various administration staff, although some new appointments have been made, including a Head of Development who had previously worked at the New York Public Library (*Byatt, 2003*). The expanding remit and emphasis of the Library and these significant staff changes are unlikely in the near future to trigger a root and branch review of the librarianship aspects of the work and how it interacts with feminism. The conclusion will now review the work and intentions of The Women's Library as a potential gendertopia.

### **Conclusion : How gendertopic is The Women's Library ?**

In this chapter, I have reflected upon the activities and context of The Women's Library within five main sections - its trajectory and origins, its utilisation and interpretation of space, the identities that it projects and maintains, the engagement that it has with feminisms and the relationship that it has with classification and other aspects of librarianship. I have established opportunities to investigate The Women's Library as a potential gendertopia that are now addressed. Understanding whether this women's library, or others, appear to perform such a function, is important in assessing their role in the twenty-first century, when arguably the lack of an organised women's movement requires that such spaces maximise their potential in supporting changed thinking and the development of feminist insights. To consider the Library as a gendertopia, I will investigate my findings in each of the five sections, as set out in this chapter and in the following two chapters.

The first aspect covered was the trajectory of The Women's Library, and its history locates its origins firmly within the first wave feminist movement. The collections and services that it makes available appear still to be primarily concerned with promoting the history and study of women's experiences from this period. There are ongoing attempts to expand the collecting policy and scope of the Library but the academic setting and social milieu in which it operates, as well as providing great opportunities, may also contain constraints. The Fawcett Library had a documented role in influencing and generating gender equality, so it can be considered historically gendertopic as it questioned and interrogated the status quo, yet the possibility of this aspect continuing in such a vein is not clear. The mission of The Women's Library now, and its trajectory into possibly museum status, do not seem to provide gendertopic potential. Its work with local school children seems to be a profitable area reaching new users who may become politicised as a result, but this is unfortunately set against the other groups who may feel excluded or not see the Library as relevant.

Secondly, the Library as a physical space does not indicate that it is, or feels, part of a contemporary feminist movement that may facilitate its gendertopic potential. Space within the Library is rigorously controlled and although it contains treasures and opportunities for transformation, may feel restricting. The entrance to the Library, the boundary and borderland between the outside world and the world within of women's knowledge and culture, fails to transmit messages about women or women's issues, bar displays about the Library itself, or to offer any transformative experience. There are no notice-boards or information targeted at women. Whilst acknowledging that feminist community activism is no longer thriving, there are national and local groups and organisations that could be promoted - Women's Aid for example, or local women's health services. Instead the leaflets and flyers in the foyer when I visited in Summer 2002, except one for the Feminist Library in London (perhaps confirming that some support from The Women's Library to the less well-funded library is being offered) are for West End theatres and galleries, distributed by an arts publicity company. In 2003, on my next visit, there were additional leaflets about becoming a Friend of The Women's Library, as well as the undergraduate prospectus for the London Metropolitan University that includes information about the Library.

The Library's location in, and reclamation of, an old London East End wash-house marvellously uses existing space, but the very nature of this conversion may alienate or seem inappropriate to some. There is major poverty and deprivation in adjoining neighbourhoods, and although that is inevitable with any urban development worldwide, the subject and content of The Women's Library perhaps makes this more significant. The multiracial nature and diversity of the local area do not seem to be fully integrated into The Library and it maintains a sense of separation. The food and ambience of the Wash Houses Cafe may suit the Library's academic and professional visitors, but may not be inviting or affordable to local women, some of whom are the subjects of the Library's exhibitions.

The third facet that was reviewed was the identities encapsulated in the Library. The Women's Library incorporates a number of identities, and its funding success can be understood as an outcome of postfeminist, and perhaps third wave feminist, approaches utilised in relation to first and second wave feminism within an academic setting. This conclusion will concentrate on the Library as a possible museum and introducing contemporary debates about museums and their meanings is useful in relation to reviewing this aspect. The Library has been conceptualised as a repository of social and cultural history in publicity and fundraising attempts, but like libraries museums 'are social constructs that meet social needs' (*McLean, 1997, 23*). From a Foucauldian perspective, both museums and libraries are heterotopias, and in this case, possible gendertopias, but for The Women's Library there may be problems in expecting its museum identity to increase this potential. Jordanova's comment that 'the most common kind of knowledge claimed to derive from

museums is a sense of the past' (1989, 25) may need to be heeded to ensure that feminism is not seen as a historical event and process, or that feminist ambitions are achieved - and a postfeminist period of equality reached. Women, as the subject for curating, collecting and display, need to be considered within the wider feminist project that considers the social, political and economic context, as was argued in relation to the museum service :

From the cautious aim of 'putting back women' into history' has grown a stronger campaign which recognizes that women can't simply be slotted into the existing structure : we have to look at working practices across the whole range of museum activity.

(Porter, 1988, 106)

The Women's Library has perhaps moved itself into a position where debates about women in librarianship and women in museums, alongside representations and inclusion, are equally pertinent. Museums have legendary problems in being seen as living environments and spaces, where curating the past, rather than active engagement with the present, can become the over-riding pressure. Alongside that, The Women's Library's London setting and social context have allowed it to position successfully itself as a high-profile location, open to the clear London-centric bias of funders, supporters and the media. This is not to say that its London base is unimportant, as clearly this may allow it to become a tourist attraction, as well as a local and national resource, likely to pull in more visitors than perhaps regional locations could have done. Its attractive physical nature has also attracted some comment, interestingly differentiating it from the traditional library, being described as 'an architectural triumph in an era when the institution of the public library, once a pillar of British society, has been in decline' (Lynch, 2002).

Museums are intended to provide both educational and transformative experiences for the visitor, but where the subject is the oppression of women, difficulties inevitably arise. If the Women's Library is unable to challenge and question current political and social arrangements and administrations, because of its particular context, then this may be even more problematic. For The Women's Library, the knowingness of the present can sit uncomfortably with the past, and provide unfortunate juxtapositions through presumably irony which present insights into the Library discourse that may be anti-gendertopic. For example, for International Women's Day, 2003, the Library hosted a lecture - *Class, Gender and the Philanthropic Connections : Ladies in the London Slums 1860 - 1940* - by Professor Ellen Ross from Ramapo College Mahwah. As the first Leverhulme Lecture in the amazingly titled series *Adventures in the Slums*, this may well present an insightful view of the activities of zealous women first wave feminists in promoting public health and fighting

poverty in London, but termed and framed in such a way appears flippant. There is not yet evidence to suggest that the identities of The Women's Library, are gendertopic.

The fourth section within this chapter concerned The Women's Library's engagement with feminisms. This relationship to feminism is crucial and it has been suggested that there are difficulties in The Library's genuine identification with aspects of second wave feminism, especially radical feminism and feminist activism. There is little evidence of an integration of post-first wave feminism into the Library's structure, operations, organisation or services, as little appears different from a typical modern academic library, bar the subject of stock and collection. There is little reminder in The Women's Library that feminism is living and not just something to be studied within an academic setting, arguably the current home of second wave feminism, as earlier chapters considered. Its focus and identity appears not to be women-centred or visitor-centred but Library and building-centred. This limits its ability to provide gendertopic opportunities as it may be concerned more with attracting visitors to satisfy funding requirements, rather than desiring contemporary social change.

There are other considerations for The Women's Library. The contemporary cult of celebrity that prioritises fame, fortune and connections, and the background of the current Director, may mean that women like Cherie Booth, Edwina Currie and Carol Vorderman are presented to current and later generations using The Women's Library as prominent campaigners for women's rights and equality. The lack of a clear, more politicised feminist ethos within The Women's Library, and the possible influence of the contested notion of postfeminism, may make that possible. However Pankhurst (1987) indicated that Dale Spender and other second wave feminist Library supporters felt that the Fawcett, as then was, should maintain its concentration on the past, as it would eventually receive the papers of today's contemporary prominent feminists. In this case, the desire to prefer the work and experience of high-profile women appears problematic, especially in relation to defining contemporary feminists and feminisms.

The final consideration was the engagement that the Library has with classification and other matters of librarianship. It was suggested that the library functions were very traditional, and that the Dewey classification scheme, not one known for its accommodation of gender issues as discussed, continued to be used in The Women's Library without comment. The role of the library staff and the lay-out and operations of the main library spaces appeared to not have assumed any insights from feminist thinking about librarianship, or from the evolving nature of the librarian, as earlier chapters reviewed. Relying on users to request books or to find materials unaided, as in The Women's Library, does not encourage new users or those who feel intimidated by either a library or a women-oriented setting. Hornsey (2002) suggested, as Chapter Five discussed, that it is difficult to construe public libraries as heterotopias because

they exclude values and notions that are considered unacceptable, and it is difficult in the case of The Women's Library to consider its library purpose as gendertopic as it reinforces many components of the construction of late nineteenth century librarianship that this thesis has set out partly to contest. As a site that integrates aspects of academia, feminism and librarianship, there are opportunities that appear to be being missed or ignored.

If gendertopia as suggested is a temporary or permanent heterotopic space that operates as a counter-site and can have a transformative impact on the user concerning their gendered experience and identity in the world, then it is hard to suggest that The Women's Library is currently achieving this. Although Foucault suggested that all libraries are heterotopic, my definition of gendertopia requires that another level of contestation exists, that The Women's Library does not seem to generate. It seems possible that for some visitors who are unaware of the struggles of women in recent history then a powerful process might be undergone that could lead to other shifts in consciousness and awareness that may cause external and internal links to be made. For students accessing some of this material for the first time, personal changes may unfold as materials are sought, and unheard stories and revelations told. In that sense, a gendertopic process may emerge, but there are other barriers to this occurring in this site, because of the lack of engagement with class and other power relations.

The Library does not appear to have an integrated feminist identity or be concerned with contemporary engagements with challenging gender inequalities. For women who have been active in the second wave feminist movement, its outcomes partly seem invisible, as the first wave, and many of its class and colonial overtones, clearly predominate the collection and the context of many of its concerns. It does not appear from the evidence, that The Women's Library genuinely offers a gendertopic experience for visitors as it appears too incorporated into many aspects of political, cultural and social life that require constant interrogation, to make a meaningful critique and act as a counter-balance. In the following chapter, I will describe the activities of another women's library in London whose origins are in the second-wave feminist movement. The Feminist Library provides the possibility of investigating the work of a small feminist library in the twenty-first century that appears to have developed some library processes that have wider significance.

**Feminist Library, London, July 2000**

**Dear Diary**

I went to the Feminist Library today, and feel really depressed. There was some fantastic material for the PhD, the best collection of stuff by feminist librarians I've seen. They've even got their own feminist classification scheme. But, no-one visits, it is rarely open, there are few volunteers, and no paid staff. The stock is amazing, but feels neglected and no-one appears to be interested.

During my visit there, the phone did not ring and no other visitors came. The building overall did not feel particularly welcoming or women-friendly, felt unused and in the doldrums. It felt shabby and run on a shoestring. It was like something from twenty years ago in some sort of time warp. The women were brilliant, but there is little they can do without funding. I feel sad because the Library literally embodies second wave feminism, and for people like me is so familiar, but it feels more like a museum than a living library. I am not sure what sense it would make to women who didn't live through that period.

**Yours depressingly . . .**

## Chapter Nine : The Feminist Library, London - the death of second wave feminism ?

- Introduction
  
- Section One : Trajectory and inheritance - from women's studies and feminist activism to challenging times
  - Preserving the present for the future
  - Contributing to feminist knowledge
  - Location, location and location
  - The official 1980s backlash against feminism
  - Services and collections
  
- Section Two : Space - near Waterloo Station and the Imperial War Museum
  - Finding the Feminist Library
  
- Section Three : Exploring identities from feminist collective to women's studies
  - Being a volunteer feminist collective
  - A thriving women's network
  - The Feminist Library as a women's library
  - Women's studies collection - a continuing role ?
  
- Section Four : Articulating engagements - developing feminisms and being a feminist
  - Grey is the colour - the importance of second wave feminist ephemera
  - From radical feminism to . . . ?
  - Funding the Feminist Library
  - Providing a service for local women
  
- Section Five : Classification and other library matters
  - Developing a feminist classification scheme
  - Current engagements with librarianship
  - A deficit in librarianship skills
  - Class, professionalism and librarianship
  
- Conclusion : Considering the Feminist Library's future and gendertopic nature

## Introduction

In the last chapter, I investigated The Women's Library in London that appears to represent a continuing identification with first wave feminism and to adhere to the underpinnings of gendered librarianship, besides attempting to offer entry-points into women's history via a multi-purpose cultural centre. The trajectory of The Women's Library and its social context seems to ensure its ability to access a supportive academic environment, substantial funding and high profile support. I suggested that the lack of a knowing critique of many of its historical and current components perhaps indicate that The Women's' Library cannot be considered gendertopic in terms of the definition that I have suggested. The Women's Library however is unique in its history and affiliations, but women's libraries from other feminist periods may present fresh insights.

In this chapter, I will move across London to the Feminist Library that began during the second wave feminist era in which librarianship also began to a limited extent to reflect upon itself and its long accepted gender dynamics. I will utilise the same structure as the last chapter, through firstly considering the Library's trajectories and inheritance from the 1970s onwards. This will involve looking at the origins of the Library, the services and resources that are currently offered and their past and present shape. I will then consider the Library's physical materiality, its location and space. Identities located in and manifested by the Library will form the third section of this chapter, where I discuss identities that appear to be represented and their external reference points.

I will then look at how the Library positions itself in relation to contemporary and historical feminisms. This will involve considering the library's funding arrangements, and how it presents its mission and services to current, past and future funders and to service users. I will finally interrogate the Library in the context of librarianship, review its understandings and utilisation of library practice and process, and how these relate to feminisms. Classification schemes will again be presented as a useful example to test out the potential convergence of feminism and librarianship. In my conclusion, I will reflect on the potential nature of this women's library as a gendertopia and also analyse various events in 2003, the start of which is outlined below.

When I started this investigation, the Feminist Library in London seemed to be the remaining, independent feminist library of those established during the second wave period. During my research, its existence has become increasingly fragile. I carried out my interviews with Feminist Library volunteers in 2000, and found it invaluable for my own research. To keep in touch with the Library and to receive its newsletter, I became a member, paying a relatively small amount yearly to use its services, and extra to become a named

Friend. From March 2003, the Library began to enter a very uncertain period and was threatened with closure. However, at the end of May 2003, a new edition of the *Feminist Library Newsletter* reported that, contrary to rumours, the Library was not closing due to lack of funding, although was likely to be moving in the near future (*Guzzetta, 2003*). Instead of being an obituary for the Library, this chapter will now describe its history and services, ponder the significance of its current difficulties, the lessons for other libraries that collect and promote women's history and activism, and what significance there is for librarianship.

### **Section One : Trajectory and inheritance - from women's studies and feminist activism to challenging times**

There's women's libraries because women have said that they want them. There's a demand. It all comes from somewhere. It might be usually the case that it starts in somebody's bedroom and moves out once it's out the back of the house.

(Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000).

As the worker from Glasgow Women's Library (the subject of the next chapter) commented, women's libraries started because of a need and desire to share information about women's lives and experiences. This is inevitably always going to be a partial view of women, edited to fit the ideological and political perspective of those making decisions about its focus and resulting stock and collections, as other parts of this work have discussed. The Feminist Library, initially called the Women's Research and Resources Centre (W.R.R.C.), was established in 1975 at the start of the British second wave feminist movement to document and support this period. In this section I will explore its initial intentions and shifts, its services and those that have used them, the broad funding structure in which it has operated, and something about its physical locations. I will begin by expanding further on the Library's inception in the second wave feminist movement.

#### ***Preserving the present for the future***

To respond to the developing interest in women's studies through the second wave movement, Leonore Davidoff, a feminist historian, envisioned a new centre that could 'support and publicise new research into women's history and experiences' (*Renshaw, 1989, 111*) through providing access to collected materials and a physical space for research to take place and women to meet. As Davies and Walbe (*1982*) described :

If you want to read or write about feminism, find out who's already working on particular areas, see if there's a women's studies course near you, or if you just want to sit and relax or read in a congenial feminist atmosphere, then W.R.R.C. is the place to go !

(Davies and Walbe, 1982, 21).

Women's groups, feminist activists, academics and others helped formulate the Centre's initial aims - to catalogue and support research on women, to disseminate information through seminars and publications, and to develop 'a library of periodicals and ephemera of the Women's Movement, which are not to be found in established libraries' (*Renshaw, 1989, 111*). These publications and outputs, 'grey literature', were rarely collected by mainstream collections as they were circulated in small numbers through women-only publications, but as Hamner (*1996*) commented 'were major source materials and remain so for the future' (*547*). These materials are still highly valued by Feminist Library volunteers that I interviewed. Maimie felt that it was important '*to be able to have old stuff collected and accessible in one spot, rather than to have to go trekking round to find things*' (Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000) whilst Jennifer similarly commented that it was important '*for the women that wrote these pamphlets, who were involved in newsletters, that these documents are kept and looked after and preserved, so future researchers can read them*' (Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). As well as collecting the second wave, the Centre also wished to contribute more proactively.

### ***Contributing to feminist's information and knowledge base***

The Centre at its onset wished to add to the growing research and knowledge on women's history, and an autonomous, unpaid collective - W.R.R.C. Publications - was established of women with 'publishing or academic jobs' (*Cadman et al, 1981, 45*), namely Leonore Davidoff, Jalna Hamner, Diana Leonard and Dale Spender. This group generated around three titles per year from the mid-1970s onwards within four main areas - explorations in feminism, feminist reprints, critical debates in feminist thought and feminist sources - that were sold in women's and radical bookshops, to public libraries where possible and to women using the W.R.R.C. Subjects covered included sexism in education, sexuality and sociology, social construction of female sexuality, domestic labour in the nineteenth century and sexism in the criminal justice system, with authors including well known second wave feminist writers and theorists such as Ann Marie Wolpe, Christine Delphy and Stevi Jackson. As the aim was to disseminate new knowledge being created through women's studies in a feminist way, the group went through various processes to ensure its accessibility to the general reader, as Cadman and others (*1981*) described :

Firstly, they get the author to go through the work taking out the academic bits, i.e. those parts which prove that you have surveyed your field of literature and are able to say where your research fits in. Secondly, someone who knows little about the area goes through it and marks all the words she doesn't understand, and as far as possible these are translated into easier terms.

(Cadman et al, 1982, 46).

The development of this agenda, alongside the growing interest in the library and information function of the Centre shifted its emphasis and in 1976, within a year of its inception, library services became the Centre's priority (*Collieson and Follini, 1995*). In 1983 it re-named itself the Feminist Library to reflect a shift from a research orientation towards 'information and a library service for women' (*Setch, 1998, 8*). It saw its aims as promoting research and study into historical women's lives, but also encouraging information access by women as part of a second wave feminist agenda. The Feminist Library wanted to meet 'the demands of a general readership as well as those of academic researchers' (*Renshaw, 1989, 115*), to expand its user base and disseminate the feminist message.

One ex-volunteer described her attempts to promote the Library to students in the academic library setting in which she worked in the 1980s by displaying advertisements and by responding to enquiries about women's studies, 'I'd say 'Have you heard about the Feminist Library?'' (Julie, information services manager, national charity, London, 2000). As the Library was situated in London, it was well placed during the second wave period to attract researchers and students interested in women's studies but underwent a number of moves due to external pressures, that potentially affected its profile and constituency.

### ***Location, location, location***

The Feminist Library has had five London bases over twenty five years. After two years in a Bloomsbury basement in the mid-1970s, the Library moved to a Clerkenwell building occupied by other feminist and alternative organisations, including *Spare Rib* magazine. In 1979 it moved above the legendary, now defunct, second wave feminist bookshop Sisterwrite in Upper Street, Islington, and inhabited four rooms. This ensured, as two workers of the time wrote, that 'the noisy workers could use one as an office for typing and library loans and there could be quiet rooms as well' (*Davies and Walbe, 1982, 21*).

In 1983, premises provided by the Greater London Council (G.L.C.) in the London Women's Centre at Hungerford House on Victoria Embankment, by the River Thames, became available for a peppercorn rent of £1 (*Setch, 1998*). After the demise of the G.L.C. in 1986, and a threatened huge rent increase from the building's new landlords, Southwark Council,

eventually provided accommodation for the Library in 1989. This is within a building at Westminster Bridge Road near Waterloo Station alongside other voluntary projects, where it is still based at the time of writing, although with clearly the likelihood of another move. Although the funding arrangements of the Library are discussed more fully later, it is important to establish the main historical points.

### *The official 1980s backlash against feminism*

After the abolition of the G.L.C., the Library failed to maintain funding from the successor body, the London Borough Grant's Scheme, and in 1988, lost its annual grant of £39,000 as Liberal councillors voted against the Library's continued funding (*Setch, 1998*). Like the Fawcett Library's experience in 1977 that the last chapter recounted, women challenged this decision, but decided that instead of incorporation into an academic structure, as the Fawcett Library had done, it was preferable for the Feminist Library to remain independent. Even though the Polytechnic of North London (now the co-parent of The Women's Library, through the Polytechnic's metamorphosis into the University of North London, and then through converging with London Guildhall University into London Metropolitan University) was interested in taking the Library it was considered important 'to try to preserve the Library's autonomous and political nature and to continue offering the general information and referral service' (*Women in Libraries, 1988, 2*) by remaining a voluntary organisation. This important conjuncture for the Library determined much of its later fortunes, and as will be discussed later, funding difficulties are causing similar debates at the time of writing.

Women in Libraries encouraged readers to make donations, to volunteer in the Library, to protest to the London Borough Grants Scheme - to 'make them aware that they have made the wrong decision' (*Davies, 1988, 3*) - and to lobby Liberal politicians who were perceived as responsible for the grant decision. In response to this, and other requests to keep the Library open, volunteers came forward to help with administration, cataloguing, publicity, fundraising, campaigning, maintaining information files and to produce the library newsletter. A group of women later agreed to form a collective to oversee the Library's work.

As Renshaw (*1989*) pointed out, just after this period of huge uncertainty, even though little funding was available, 'as in so many women's libraries, considerable and sustained growth . . . occurred in an organisation which has seldom had more than insecure, subsistence funding, cramped and unsuitable premises, insufficient paid staff time and materials acquired primarily by donation' (*115*). Such a situation was however unsustainable in the long run, and the Library's prospects continued to depend on obtaining new funding, and maintaining the commitment of volunteers, supporters and collective members. At that time, Renshaw (*1989*) indicated that very few women knew about the Library, or those that did thought it

had closed. Despite this lack of awareness from its potential audience at various times, the Library has an extensive collection as will now be described, although one that is increasingly less accessible and available.

### *Services and collections*

The Feminist Library's collection consists of approximately 10,000 books, 1,500 journals, 9,000 pamphlets and ephemeral material, collected during and since feminist activism of the 1970s and 1980s, promoted as a service for those 'interested in the women's movement' (*Feminist Library, 2000*). It provides a volunteer-led part-time library and information service to personal callers who visit its space near Waterloo Station, and those who contact the Library by phone or letter. The Library has opened for 16 hours a week over three days and evenings, including Saturday afternoons, over the last few years, although as the next section will state, its opening hours are no longer certain. The Library has continued to publish a newsletter (although that has become very sporadic and brief), and to organise readings and events, including regular feminist discussion groups. Subjects covered in 2002 and 2003 included women and Islam, women and Christianity, women and goddess religions, women and the media, women and surveillance, pornography and the internet, gangsta rap and misogyny, prostitution and trafficking, paedophilia and childhood sexual abuse, depression and mental health, and women and alcohol.

A more extensive range of services was available in the past. In the 1970s, when the Library began, the floors above Sisterwrite Bookshop also included a women's cafe, Sisterbite. As Davies and Walbe (1982) said, this created a multi-purpose women's space, as 'the bookshop, somewhere to get a coffee, a reading room and library . . . (were) . . . all together in one place' (192). At that point, Sisterwrite was one of the main foci of London feminism, an extremely well used shop and entry-point into other women-oriented services and London's feminist community. Visitors could easily access various areas, including the Library, and discussion groups were held throughout the week, including Saturday mornings, with topics including 'housing, the work of the Rape Crisis Centre, design, women's theatre and so on' (*Davies and Walbe, 1982*).

Larger events to help build the second wave theoretical infrastructure were also generated. In 1979 W.R.R.C. organised an event billed as the first ever 'Feminist Summer School', to debate tensions between academic feminism (including women's studies) and grassroots activism, a central theme of second wave feminism, and to encourage 'those new to the movement to experience feminist ways of looking at the world, and for those of us active over years to discuss new strategies and acquire radicalising new facts' (*Spare Rib, 1979i, 16*). In 1981, a conference was held on 'The Women's Movement and Men', where

workshops including mothering sons, the men's movement, and heterosexuality and men, and in 1983, a second Feminist Summer School on women's history took place. Such activities and events indicate the role that the Feminist Library then had within the second wave feminist movement in London.

The Feminist Library developed during a fertile period of second wave British feminism and was well-positioned to develop as a library with materials that reflected its historical origins for study and research, but also as a location that provided a meeting-place and centre for feminists and other women in London. However, the financial position of the Library has fluctuated, and it has experienced unstable periods of change and physical re-location. The Library's current vulnerable situation, and difficulty in providing a wide range of services, has also been revealed. I will now describe the space that the Library currently inhabits in which it provides its services and stores its collections, and the messages, implications and the possibilities that it contains and offers to those that visit and that work within it.

## **Section Two : Space - near Waterloo Station and the Imperial War Museum**

Having dedicated feminist space was a key desire of the second wave movement as Chapter Two described and the Feminist Library has offered that in its various settings. The shifts in context, presentation and content of these spaces are crucial, and in this section, I will move through the layers that currently make up the external and internal space of the Feminist Library. Anyone attempting to find the Feminist Library now has to be fairly certain of its location, that it is open and feel confident in navigating an area that does not convey itself as a likely location of a women's library or even a feminist space. The Feminist Library is located in a building on a main thoroughfare behind the hinterlands of Waterloo Station, a major place of transitions for London commuters and for those travelling to and from France on the Eurostar. The area around the station, like many beside mass centres of transportation, is a hodge-podge of older buildings, working-class residential areas and services aimed at travellers like pubs and cheap cafes. Waterloo Station is near the River Thames and the Imperial War Museum, and one route to the Library building involves a walk down The Cut, an ancient lane-cum-road that provides a back-way from the Station to Westminster Bridge Road. Small shops, cafes and a street market line the way, providing a glimpse into an old London that is increasingly being squeezed out by gentrification.

### ***Finding the Feminist Library***

The Feminist Library rents rooms now in a multipurpose, fairly run down building, that requires visitors to speak into an entryphone and to sign in via a male security guard. Any

intended visitor should check before arrival, as the Library is unable now to guarantee its opening hours and does not control its own space, 'because of keyholder's other commitments, it is not always open on time' (*Feminist Library, 2003iii, 4*). Other organisations in the building support minority ethnic groups, but there does not appear to be any communal spaces or collective identity. Many of the adjoining offices appear vacant, and the building is not well maintained or freshly decorated. Although there is no direct access to the Library's space, once their small suite of rooms are reached there is a sense of entering something that is inclusive, although a space that feels neglected and unused.

The rooms on one level, are a series of offices with library shelving and books and materials in piles and boxes everywhere. Because of fire regulations, there are no posters or decorations in the Feminist Library area that inhibit its ability to reflect women's struggles or experiences. The second wave feminism movement came together and communicated often through personal information, with notice-boards in women's settings frequently the vehicle to advertise rooms for rent, women's discos, feminist events and activism, but there is no such material in the Library, possibly because of the lack of women accessing their space, the dearth of a contemporary feminist context in which such communiqués and their contents could flourish - as well as the fire issue.

### ***Second wave feminism for the Library users***

These changed circumstances are very different to those that the Library once experienced in the height of second wave feminism, when it was part of an active feminist micro-system and was well-used and staffed. The volunteers that continue to put their own time and effort into maintaining the space are extremely helpful, but have little opportunity to reveal the content of the collection to visitors, as there are so few. It can feel to the visitor as if the volunteers remain in the second wave period, protecting the relics of the time and politics to which they are personally committed. For those who make it, using the Library can feel quite intense and confusing as material that is still relevant and resonant appears to be of virtually no interest to anyone else bar the individual that has made the trip and the keen volunteers, and there is no opportunity to link into other researchers or to feel part of any research or women's community. Using the Feminist Library is almost like using an archetypal library where there are few visitors and where the library materials are archival. It appears clear that space is problematic for the Library, as it does not exist within a location that suits its purpose, and that perhaps discourages potential visitors. In this section, I have explained the barriers that exist to accessing the Feminist Library as it is now, and the possibilities that are then made available once access has been achieved. Many of these will be returned to later when I discuss the gendertopic nature of the Library but I will now further consider the identities that it makes apparent.

### **Section Three : Exploring the identities of the Feminist Library**

In this section I will discuss identities that have been, or are currently, present within the Feminist Library. Firstly, I will identify the Library as a feminist collective with strong roots in voluntary action. This volunteer tradition continues because of a lack of funding, and I will consider implications for volunteer staff and for the Library's ability to provide services and promote identities. Secondly, I will turn to the Library as a centre for women, investigate the strength of this identity, its expression and maintenance and the outcomes for those women that engage with the Library as users, volunteer workers and management members. As the last section outlined, there are space issues for the Library that may impede its ability to present fully some aspects of this identity, but it is important to consider the enactment of some elements via external events and meetings.

I will next review the Library both as a library and a women's library to consider how it views itself in relation to contemporary contexts of both feminism and librarianship. This will inform a later section that will discuss the Library's engagement with feminisms, and its commitments over time. As already discussed, the Feminist Library came into being as a store-house and research resource for women's studies during the second wave feminist period, and its collection of material from this era is significant. It is therefore of interest to reflect on the power of this identity, especially in the light of funding developments within The Women's Library as the last chapter discussed, which may have a deficit in its archival collections of second wave feminism.

#### ***Being a voluntary feminist collective***

At its start, the Library attempted to be a women's studies library allied to women's academia, literature, history and culture. This went along with an associated desire to encourage women to access material and connections and to act as a focal point for feminist networking and activism. As a second wave feminist organisation, the Library has always been committed to collective organising and avoiding hierarchical management structures. The Women's Research and Resources Centre begun as a voluntary collective with shared management and staffing roles, typical of many radical women's organisations of the 1970s. Although the Feminist Library received some funding from public agencies in the 1970s and 1980s as described, from 1988 all external funding ceased and from then on the collective relied on money and book donations, membership fees and volunteer labour to continue. Tasks like library finance, cataloguing materials, and producing publications and the newsletter were devolved to sub-groups of volunteers, but much of this has ceased in the last few years, so now the few remaining unpaid workers carry out all the tasks between them and many of them happen less often.

Feminist Library volunteers historically have other work and domestic commitments, with the time given to the Library squeezed alongside, 'a characteristic of many women's libraries' (*Renshaw, 1989, 113*) and other women's groups. Feminist Library volunteers who attended a women's library conference at Radcliffe College commented that 'anyone accustomed to working with women's collectives in this country will associate them with cramped accommodation, inadequate funding and reliance on volunteers' (*Collieson and Follini, 1994, 4*). This personal juggling, and dealing with restricted funds and resources, sometimes uncomfortable physical conditions and circumstances, and general high levels of frustration proved eventually unbearable for individual women volunteering in the Feminist Library. One volunteer who gave much spare time for eight years, alongside paid work as a librarian elsewhere, explained to me that she would volunteer there every other weekend and attend collective meetings :

I was also doing all this other stuff. You know when you've got people ringing you up, particularly in the fund-raising campaign. We'd have people like Greater London Radio ringing and saying '*Can you send someone to talk ?*' and I'd always do these things. So in the end it seemed to take up a lot of time . . . I just got a bit burnt out. (Julie, information services manager, national charity, London, 2000).

Depending on volunteers can prevent any organisation from fulfilling advertised opening times and services, from being able to maintain appropriate levels of quality and commitment, and has long-term implications. In some mainstream British and American public libraries local people contribute their spare time and as one text positively suggests, volunteers can 'ease the burden of your staff, lift your spirits with their support, speak out on the library's behalf when you need them, and bring to the library new and innovative ideas for services' (*Reed, 1994, 6*). For those with no option but to rely on unpaid staff, including themselves, the pressures can be immense. The turnover of volunteers, the constant need to recruit and train those with essential, desirable or potential skills can be time-consuming and frustrating, and prevent the progression of strategic or developmental work. A current volunteer talked about the Library's difficulty in providing a basic minimum of services :

We just about manage to keep the place open and ticking over. Occasionally we have little bursts of activity when someone madly does some cataloguing or, you know, the newsletter perhaps. We used to have a Newsletter Group once upon a time . . . people just left and no-one came to replace them. (Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

Volunteer Jennifer also acknowledged the difficulties in developing an overall direction or strategy for the Library when there is no future certainty and said that '*It would be nice to*

*have a worker, a part-time worker, because it's hard to do everything with volunteers. It sometimes feels a bit unfocused and a bit bitty'* (Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). The Library's current lack of volunteer workers or management collective members, compared to its heyday at the height of 1970s and 1980s feminism, is inevitably linked to the fortunes of second wave feminism with which the Library was closely associated. In the last decade the number of volunteers has steadily decreased, very different from even the 1990s when an advertisement in *The Guardian* attracted 40 women (*Feminist Library, 1994*). Jennifer indicated other reasons for this apparent ennui :

When I first came here you used to get a lot of people here. It seemed a lot busier for those first two years, there was a lot more volunteers . . . It's probably a combination of factors. There's a lot less women's studies courses, there's different volunteers. (Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

Although being a volunteer in challenging circumstances can be frustrating, working in women's libraries or women's organisations can provide positive affirmations. Jennifer, for instance, was attracted to volunteering at the Feminist Library after some difficult personal problems and felt that her involvement had been beneficial :

I needed a complete change and I wanted a more feminist environment. And I saw their advert and phoned up, and it was just the right place for me . . . it's given me a lot of confidence. It's given me a place to be. It's given me a start to rebuild my life. (Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

Maimie also considered that as well as her efforts being helpful to the Library, volunteering had also given her useful skills and experience : *'It's given me more confidence and more self-esteem. I'm doing things down here, I'm keeping it going, so it's not entirely altruistic'* (Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). Continued reliance on the input of volunteers, the practice of task-sharing, and the adherence to feminist principles of a flat management structure has ensured that the Feminist Library, unlike few organisations in the twenty-first century, still has a strong identity as a volunteer collective. However, the general decline in interest in this way of working and the decreased number of women wishing to participate, conveys a somewhat anachronistic situation that, although providing personal satisfaction for some involved, is not perhaps a viable model for current times as will be discussed in the final section.

### *A thriving women's network ?*

The Feminist Library, and the Women's Research and Resource Centre before it, intended to be a site for women to meet and to engage with feminism. This identity was strong especially when the Library was part of a women's multi-purpose building alongside Sisterwrite Bookshop. Networking possibilities through the Library's newsletter supported by fee-paying members, has also been intended to create an identity that promotes a thriving women's community linked to the Library. However, the user base of The Feminist Library has decreased over time in what can be perceived to be a clear relationship to the decline of a unified second wave women's movement. As much of the Library's income comes from membership fees this has huge implications. In 1982, the Library had over 1,000 subscribing members. In 1985, 10 years after it began, there were over 1,700 members - 181 from overseas, 970 from within London and 556 from the rest of UK. When Renshaw undertook her research four years later in 1989, this had decreased to 1,200. In 2000, I was told that there were '*about 95 individual members and . . . 10% of that would be people like volunteers and collective members*' (Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). In 2002, members - including myself who pay extra to be various types of friends - were listed in the Feminist Library newsletter as being of clearly special significance.

This low number of members and subscribers fails to provide adequate cash-flow, places impossible demands on Library volunteers, and does not realistically provide opportunity for dialogue or creating a women's network or linked community. One volunteer, Maimie worried about having money to meet the most basic expenses, '*like the phone bill, the photocopier bill, paying volunteer's travel expenses*' (Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). The income received by the Library from newsletter subscriptions would not '*cover our expenses at the moment*' (Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). It can be assumed that the income gained from the small number of members listed above is a few hundred pounds annually. Such limited resources inevitably restrict its activities, and although the Library continues to promote women's discussion groups with a programme for 2004 including second wave feminist topics like women and psychology, women and disability and women's experience of travel, it is unable to buy stock or to staff the Library. The Feminist Library is attempting to create and support a women's network but this is done outside the activities of the library and information services that appear to be of interest to very few women and which have little resources.

### *The Feminist Library as a women's library*

One outcome of the second wave women's movement was the development of a feminist infrastructure through informal and formal women's organisations and agencies. At its inception, the Feminist Library (the Women's Research and Resource Centre, as it was then)

made a substantial contribution to the development of second wave feminist theorising and women's studies. It has already been indicated that such an impact may have reduced over time, so it is useful to consider how the Feminist Library now relates to other women's libraries and information services, where coming together may be of benefit.

Renshaw (1989) was told by volunteers whilst undertaking her research that a longstanding relationship with the Fawcett Library, now The Women's Library, existed. She observed however, that there appeared to be little evidence of links with 'either women's libraries or mainstream libraries' (121), and that the strongest relationships were with feminist organisations like Sisterwrite Bookshop. This is perhaps unsurprising given that Sisterwrite and the Library were neighbours during a very fertile period for feminism, as well as having common concerns. It was of interest to establish the existence of, and perceptions of, the current links with other women's libraries. Because of the lack of paid staff, and the reduced services and opening times offered by the Library, it could be imagined that such links would not have been strong in recent times, and this was borne out by comments made by Jennifer when I asked about visits to the Library from feminist libraries or organisations. Her reply indicated that these were neither frequent nor recent :

We had a visit from the Fawcett Library . . . a visit from the Equal Opportunities Commission in Manchester, a couple of women from there. They came a few years ago.

(Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

The improved fortunes of The Women's Library as the last chapter recounted raised expectations for The Feminist Library and other women's libraries that its enhanced funding and resources may produce secondary gains. Both the Feminist Library volunteers that I interviewed hoped that synergy and shared benefits might result from the funding of The Women's Library. Maimie suggested that *'there's always been relations with them, but as they've got sort of into the University, they've got loads of money compared to us'* (Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). Jennifer reiterated a similar opinion :

If they could give us money, then yes, we would be very pleased with it. We're quite close. We have quite close links with them. They came down recently to tell us about what's happening with them and what they're planning to do, and we're going to be involved with them.

(Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

There seems little evidence that The Women's Library has an explicit or implicit role (funded or otherwise) to support smaller, less well-funded women's libraries, in any way other than

through joint projects as I will discuss later. Although there are linkages between women's libraries in the United Kingdom, the ability of the Feminist Library to play more than a peripheral role seems constrained, and not regarded as part of its remit or agenda.

### *Women's studies collection - a continuing role ?*

As has already been discussed, women's studies attracted and politicised many young women during the second-wave feminist period. The Feminist Library as the Women's Research and Resource Centre, was well placed to provide access to primary and secondary materials, linkages to research and researchers and to support women to investigate this new academic discipline, along with publishing new materials through the Centre. As long-standing volunteer, Julie, reflected :

Some of the women's studies students preferred to use the Feminist Library, not because it had stuff that they couldn't access elsewhere - because of the ambience and the collective history behind it.

(Julie, information services manager, national charity, London, 2000).

However, women's studies is no longer the dynamic force that it was at the height of the British second wave feminist movement, and this identity of the Feminist Library may be less timely or relevant. For example, 38 postgraduate courses beginning in autumn 2003 are classified under 'gender studies' (instead of women's studies, as once might have been) on the Education Guardian website, of which seven are women's studies and five are gender studies, and the rest include gender, culture and politics; women, development and administration; gender and women's studies; gender, literature and modernity; feminist cultural theory and practice; research training in women's studies; women's studies and English; gender and media studies, and gender studies, history and philosophy of science (*Guardian*, 2003). This demonstrates the reduction of women's studies as a stand-alone university subject, which inevitably inhibits those structures and support systems around it, like women's libraries. Although many of these courses could require an engagement with resources like the Feminist Library, the current divergence away from identifying with women's issues may make that less likely.

For Library volunteers at the time of my research, the decline in interest by women's studies students is apparent. Jennifer commented that :

You get lots of Women's Studies students, usually they're quite keen but sometimes take some persuading to come round here. They don't seem to want to travel outside their own university, I don't think.

(Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

The potential successor to women's studies, gender studies, has integrated second wave thinking about the social constructions of masculinity and femininity, and incorporated strands from the men's movement, queer theory and postmodernism. For some radical feminists, this may have taken women's studies away from its origins that were closely linked to personal transformation and political action and change, and position gender inequalities as less of a priority. The rise in the late 1980s and 1990s of men's studies as an academic subject may also be perceived as a distraction or deliberate diversion from feminist theorising and the desire for gender equity. The Feminist Library's historical identity as a second wave feminist women's studies library may be a weakness if there is no external interest in its contents or ideological adherence and if its radical feminist origins inhibit it from progressing. These, and other engagements with feminisms, will now be investigated.

#### **Section Four : Articulating engagements - developing feminisms and being a feminist**

It has a certain atmosphere. It's safe - it's a nurturing kind of place. A public library is a bit more public.

(Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

The supportive feminist nature of the Library and its provision of a safe space for women has remained a central influence on its volunteers, as the comment above from Jennifer shows. The Women's Research and Resource Centre was initiated by committed, well-educated feminists with fairly academic interests - typical of those in the forefront of some parts of the British second wave women's movement. The role of the Feminist Library as a repository and archive for feminist materials, effectively the national resource of 'the Women's Liberation Movement' (*Renshaw, 1989, 118*), reflected its time of inception. Collieson and Follini (*1995*) called it 'the largest contemporary feminist resource and information center in Great Britain' (*160*), excluding the Fawcett Library (now The Women's Library) and the Equal Opportunities Commission Library which were felt to specialise in women and gender, not feminist, materials. As the last section commented, the Feminist Library no longer maintains a foremost role in collecting and disseminating second wave feminist materials. This section will consider the types of materials that the Feminist Library inherited, the areas of feminism from which they arose, and reflect on the feminist affiliations of current volunteer workers.

#### ***Grey is the colour - the importance of second wave feminist ephemera***

'Grey literature' is an important function of specialist libraries like the Feminist Library that collect ephemeral information like publicity material, programmes from events, conference

agendas and papers, free newspapers and journals and such like. The origins of such items has excluded them from most mainstream collections, as they were difficult to source, not seen as valuable or collectable, produced in small numbers and reached a small group of people who did not necessarily preserve them, or regard them as of lasting value or interest. Jane, a longstanding feminist and librarian, said that the Feminist Library had collected :

... what we would call grey literature, and all that stuff from campaign groups and so on, as a deliberate archiving policy. I must say I think that's the important thing, because that's going to slip through other systems, especially with ephemera.  
(Jane, academic library manager, London, 2001).

Much of this material was donated by those involved in the activities that the literature reflected or advertised. Donations can be blessings for women's libraries, but also be problematic, as there is often little possibility of directing or influencing what is received. As Maimie commented, this could potentially affect the feminist aims of the Feminist Library and the content and ethos of its collection :

That was what it was set up to do ... collecting materials that related to women's liberation and the women's movement, that was in a way quite clearly defined. And then it moved to be more a library of women-focused things, but then that could end up being a library of books about women, which then there wasn't really any policy about - particularly around donations. You're very grateful to get donations. When people did donate stuff you didn't really want to say no to it. Even if you felt *'Well, actually it doesn't really go with what we've got already'*.  
(Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

Although donations are sometimes unwanted, the Feminist Library has increasingly relied on them. Much of its historical material emitted from radical feminism and organisations that operated outside the mainstream. The Library has a large number of journals, posters, flyers and articles that are unlikely to exist in few other settings but there is little opportunity currently for those to be promoted or to reach women. I now reflect on how feminist affiliations are affected by funding and the interests and allegiances of those involved in the Library.

### ***From radical feminism to . . . . ?***

The Library has had to make decisions about different feminisms during its existence. Although a direct offshoot of the women's movement and with radical feminist roots, it always agreed that it was not a campaigning organisation, but wished where possible to be

women-only. Depending on its location and funding at the time, this was not always achievable. In recent times, men have been able to use the Library during its opening times, although there is little evidence to suggest that this has often been the case. This then establishes a hybrid situation, as Maimie said, '*it's mainly women-only*' (Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). Renshaw (1989) observed that from starting as a second wave feminist organisation in the 1970s with strong principles and an active group of members and volunteers, the Feminist Library became less politically integrated by the end of the 1980s, reflecting 'the impact of increased feminist publishing of all types of materials, new collective members with new perspectives and new users attracted to the Library by its wider range of materials' (119). According to Collieson and Follini (1995) however, the Feminist Library became more explicitly feminist over time and it has clearly continued its collective, non-hierarchical management and decision-making structure grounded in radical feminist and socialist feminist principles.

For recent volunteers, being a feminist in a feminist Library was important, and shaped their interest in its work. Jennifer described her own feminist development :

I've thought of myself as a feminist since I was 16, probably before then as well, so about 12 years . . . sometimes you tend to feel a bit isolated in the mainstream world. People think you're a bit odd sometimes, you have to go to special places to meet other feminists and like-minded people.

(Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

Maimie reflected on the changing nature of feminism and postfeminism that had perhaps affected the numbers of women seeing the need for, or identifying with, the Library, although her own beliefs remain strong :

You mention feminist to a lot of people and they say 'We don't need it, we've got everything, its post-feminism'. That's not true. It seems like every few months they publish something that really shows there's no such thing as equal pay, women earn less or women get paid less, research still shows that women do the same amount of housework.

(Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

For these volunteers, the feminist identity of the Feminist Library is clearly important. From their perspective many goals of second wave feminism have not been achieved, regardless of media messages and other evidence to the contrary. The ability of the Feminist Library to affect feminist changes in a more public way is greatly restricted by its lack of resources, as will now be investigated in more detail.

### ***Funding the Feminist Library***

Finances have been a long-term concern and familiar experience for the Library as indicated. As one volunteer wrote, 'when the WRRC was funded, it had no money' (*Setch, 1998, 7*) and Zoe Fairbairns, the feminist novelist, the Library's first worker, fund-raised her own salary 'through subscriptions and donations' (*Davies and Walbe, 1982, 21*). From 1975 onwards the then Centre, through funding from the G.L.C., the Equal Opportunities Commission (E.O.C.) and other donations, employed part-time staff - usually 2 or 3 at a time - on short-term contracts, as part of 'a collective determination that workers would be paid' (*Setch, 1998, 7*). In 1982 there were three paid positions, rising to five in 1984. This allowed sustained periods of service development and consolidation, and less reliance on the insecurity and unpredictability of volunteer staff. Even so, the Feminist Library, as an overtly feminist organisation, was less able to attract funding than organisations that were perceived as more mainstream. The name of the Library makes a clear statement that could be easily rejected or stereotyped, and as Collieson and Follini (*1995*) suggested, its 'strong feminist profile and a commitment to remaining independent' (*160*) did not improve its chances of ongoing funding.

The wide-ranging funding support by the G.L.C. (and other local authorities) of women's organisations, an early form of capacity-building through 'the use of state apparatus to achieve social transformation' (*Cooper, 1994, 1*) ran to millions of pounds annually, and the abolition of the G.L.C. and the stereotyping of 'loony left' councils by the right-wing media left many women's organisations, including the Feminist Library, very vulnerable. As Coppock and others (*1995*) point out, many local authorities then attempted to increasingly disown anti-racist and anti-sexist policies, previously part of their expressed policy and fundraising framework. Such agendas were politically and publicly demonised, and councils began to adopt less radical equal opportunity policies. This had a negative impact on the Feminist Library, as has been discussed, and one of the main areas that funders are now prioritising is engagement with local women, as I shall now turn.

### ***Providing a service for local women***

The Feminist Library began in a central London setting, and due to the second wave milieu of the time had impact and patronage citywide. That is no longer the case, and the Library is located in a South London setting, not necessarily at the hub-bub of women's community activities, and receives little funding. Opportunities for obtaining increased funding through Southwark Council were considered by the Library, but were felt to involve too much compromise, as it would mean shaping their services to fit local women, whereas their resources had ended up by accident in Southwark. The use by local Southwark residents of

the Feminist Library has never been high, as demonstrated by monitoring figures. Between December 1996 and March 1998, the Library had 745 visitors (averaging 50 per month, or 600 per annum - clearly a very small amount overall) of whom only 15.7 % - of those who completed a form - came from Southwark (*Feminist Library, 1998*). The tension between not wishing to develop a local community-oriented resource and the requirement for grant purposes to encourage local use was highlighted by a comment from the Library in its newsletter at that time, of the need 'to do more outreach work to attract Southwark women' (*Feminist Library, 1998*), alongside ironically, information that two Library volunteers had been given awards by the Mayor of Southwark for their work at the Library. In 2001, when I undertook my interview, this pressure was paramount, as Jennifer commented :

They want us to take part in their services, the Council, that is. And that's quite an issue. They want us to be more involved with women in Southwark.

(Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

This reluctance to attract local authority funding has had long-term implications for the Feminist Library, but there are strong ideological reasons why this has not been regarded as desirable. Funding for feminist projects from both the G.L.C. and local authorities in the 1980s provided both a safety net for many women's organisations, alongside a validation of their work, as well as the opportunity for new projects to develop. This liberal funding climate did not continue as already mentioned, and for many feminist projects since then the increasing levels of accountability, monitoring and evaluation and perceived intrusion required by funders have been seen as unacceptable and not worth pursuing. For the Feminist Library however, there does seem to be some surprising ambivalence about assuming a community focus, or gearing activities to local women, when so few women from any area appear to know about, or to be attracted to their service. As the main focus of the Feminist Library was to create a women's library resource, it would be expected that this might be an area where librarianship theory and practice for the benefit of feminism might have been reviewed, as will be now explored.

## **Section Five : Classification and other library matters**

### Feminist Classification Scheme

For the past years a small collective at the WRRC have been working on a new feminist classification scheme for their library. They want more women to join their collective, and also want to hear from anyone who knows of other feminist classification schemes; so far they only know of three in the States.

(*Spare Rib, 1979ii, 24*).

### *Developing a feminist classification scheme*

Some feminists who were also librarians were involved in the Feminist Library in the 1970s and 1980s, including members of Women in Libraries, as London was home to the majority of this group as Chapter Seven showed. Through theirs, and others efforts, the Library considered library classification schemes and how they incorporated women and encompassed multi-disciplinary materials, as the above *Spare Rib* advertisement indicates. A feminist classification scheme, 'specially written for the centre' (Davies and Walbe, 1982, 22), introduced, but its creator is hard to identify. Wendy Davies and Ruth Harris, past workers at the Library, have both been mentioned as those responsible (Renshaw, 1989).

The Feminist Library scheme, like the Women's Health scheme described in Chapter Seven (its near contemporary) is a unique piece of what could be considered feminist librarianship. Its fifteen main classes position women as the central focus and 'encompass the ideals, politics and activities of the women's movement' (Lochhead, 1987, 17). As Renshaw (1989) pointed out, the system was not the easiest to understand, especially for volunteers who were not trained librarians, but is significant :

At the time it was devised, this was the first woman-based classification scheme in Britain and, as far as I can determine, is still the only fully worked-out, UK, feminist scheme . . . I feel strongly that the Feminist Library scheme deserves more time and attention - both to refine it for better use on women's libraries and to consider adopting some of its approaches in general classification schemes.  
(Renshaw, 1989, 116).

Renshaw's comment that the scheme should be more widely known and influence librarianship is important. As described in earlier chapters, the representation and exclusion of women within mainstream classification schemes has been more or less overlooked in the United Kingdom, bar some very limited debates. The Feminist Library scheme however was the only feminist classification scheme that one woman whom I interviewed, Jane, an academic library manager and feminist, was aware of. When asked why it had not impinged on the general knowledge base of librarianship, she suggested :

I don't know . . . (if) . . . anyone else at the Feminist Library, ever thought it was worth trying to get the recognition. Maybe because a project like the Feminist Library at that time had funding, it had an identity - it was successful without having to engage with the mainstream.  
(Jane, academic library manager, London, 2001).

For Jane, there appeared to be little reason for a second wave feminist library to concern itself with mainstream librarianship, and she also commented that women's libraries were often uninterested in *'mixed groups in the main, or in the establishment, whether it was the British Library or the Library Association'* (Jane, academic library manager, London, 2001). The priority of the Feminist Library, like many other second wave feminist organisations, was to disseminate information and knowledge by, and about, women to promote social change, not necessarily to influence or critique the sexist underpinnings of sectors in which they might operate, but with which they felt little affinity. Having a library was the medium, not the message, so devising alternatives to the gendered nature of librarianship and its construction as a women's profession, although of theoretical interest, would arguably not be a priority.

### ***Current engagements with librarianship***

It was of interest however to discover the levels of knowledge about classification and other librarianship issues amongst Feminist Library volunteers. Maimie for one had a good understanding of the principles of classification, the advantages and disadvantages of feminist schemes, including their own, and of bias within the Dewey Decimal scheme :

It's got some sort of monopoly . . . Everyone has just accepted it as standard. If things are standardised, it's easier to move from one to the other, cause you know they're using the same system and it's easier to find things . . . In the Dewey system, books about women, women's studies . . . they're 302 or something like that, 302.4 . . . whereas here, it's the other way round. Women are the prime classification and everything in the subjects is to do with women. Dewey has it the other way round, where subjects are all general and women just fit in to each.

(Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

This positioning of women at the centre of feminist classification schemes, rather than as an afterthought or add-on, is a feature of second wave feminist classification schemes and represents both an inversion of male-defined order and organisation, but as Chapter Seven outlined, also an explicit critique of Dewey and other schemes. Another Feminist Library volunteer, Jennifer, also aware of the nature and shortcomings of Dewey, commented that *'Dewey doesn't work very well for women's things. It's got long numbers so it's not really appropriate or easy to understand'* (Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). Even though there was no real appetite for informing the external world of librarianship about their feminist classification scheme, the Library wanted a scheme that could classify and organise books for visitors and staff, but could also challenge the classification schemes that excluded and misrepresented women. As one long-standing ex-volunteer commented :

For the Feminist Library I think it was very important to them . . . the point was partly a practical one about the collection to be able to reflect across the board everything stemming from women as a starting-point, and then you could branch off. But it was also more of a political statement as well, that nothing suits our framework, our way of thinking, we've got to make up our own.

(Julie, information services manager, national charity, London, 2000).

Acknowledging the inadequacies of existing classification scheme does indicate that the Feminist Library is, and has been, aware of the underpinnings of librarianship, so I will now consider how much value was put on librarianship training in the Library, and the challenges that can arise if its outcomes were absent.

### *A deficit in librarianship skills*

The Feminist Library classification scheme is still used in the Library but the lack of volunteers, especially those with librarianship training, including cataloguing and classification skills, means that there is an ongoing backlog of uncatalogued materials. The lack of womanpower available to carry out more than the most essential tasks means that there are major outstanding areas of work that are at the time of writing left abandoned, and rely on the arrival of volunteers with particular interests to be then progressed. For example, one Feminist Library collective member who undertook doctoral research at the Library had to reorganise the entire journal collection before being able to start, as the existing arbitrary order inhibited successfully finding items.

Although the aim of the Library was not to influence librarianship, there have been some opportunities to interact with other women's libraries and information services. For example, volunteers Jenny Collieson and Beth Follini gave a paper at the international Women, Information and the Future conference in the USA in 1994, attended by feminist librarians and women from feminist archives and libraries (*Collieson, 1994, 4; Collieson and Follini, 1995*). Some feminist librarians volunteering in the Library attempted to introduce elements of their librarianship training into its operations and work. However, this was not always acceptable to other Library staff, as Julie, a volunteer and trained librarian describes :

There was definitely a big class thing, about how librarianship is a very middle-class profession, and you're just being a typical middle-class sort of librarian trying to impose your views on them. And I would say '*No, I'm just trying to make sure that women find books when they come in here*'.

(Julie, information services manager, national charity, London, 2000).

The tension between grassroots activism and ‘professional’ feminists was a feature of the second wave movement as Chapter Two outlined, so it is not unusual that such issues arose in the Library. There may be other forces at work however, concerning the image of librarianship, those who undertake it and its perceived skills and content, as I now discuss.

### *Class, professionalism and librarianship*

Although feminism may understand that librarians may be negatively affected by misogynist stereotyping, class and privilege may still cause divisions between women. As Chapter Two commented, the second wave feminist movement was characterised by difficulties in incorporating multiple identities and their implications, including around class and status. This apparent clash manifested in the Feminist Library between the notion that librarian skills are easily learned because it is a women dominated profession as earlier chapters described, and the reality that other people, besides those qualified may be able to undertake librarianship (and perhaps even contribute new insights and thinking), is important to note. It may be the case that as Iris Marion Young suggested, that the desire to work together as women can sometimes inhibit diversity, or prevent its genuine incorporation.

For Jennifer, a later Library volunteer and not a trained librarian, the difference between those volunteers who had been trained in librarianship and those who had not was apparent. There were advantages for her of having trained staff, even library students :

It would be nice to have someone who wanted to concentrate on a particular thing like cataloguing and just do that work for a period of weeks. We’re thinking about getting an intern because we’ve had them before.

(Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

Recent Library volunteers, like those in the past, carried out library management tasks and functions, but none were trained as librarians. This, alongside the central feminist agenda of the Library, appeared to prevent any self-identification with the librarian role. When asked if she considered herself a librarian, Jennifer said that she did in a way, but that *‘the feminism part is more important’* (Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). The archival nature of the Library however was important to how she viewed herself, and she felt that *‘because we have a lot of archives . . . I see myself more as an archivist’* (Jennifer, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000). The other volunteer that I interviewed had always wanted to work in a library, but felt that only mainstream libraries could legitimately provide the setting for librarians and their work :

When I was at secondary school, this was a passing phase. I wanted to work in a library. I never pursued it - I should have done . . . I mean working in a library and being qualified as a librarian. But in the past one and a half years, I've been working as a Sunday shelving assistant in Cxxxx Library - and that's a proper library ! Even though I only do shelving, but I also see how, I would look at a book in their library and see how things are organised. They use the Dewey system for their books and their classifications and stuff - I'm learning the Dewey system just by putting books away.

(Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

Maimie appears to disregard the Feminist Library as either a library or as fulfilling her childhood dreams. Maimie did however perceive that the historical inclusion of women in librarianship was linked to gender roles, and affected the social value awarded to librarians and library tasks :

I am sure in the old days men used to be librarians, so I don't know when the change came about. It's probably like teachers you know, they've been degraded, devalued. There aren't that many male librarians around . . . mostly its women. It's not the kind of thing that men think '*Oh, yes, a career in librarianship, I shall do that*'. Maybe because being in a library is a bit of a service job, isn't it ?

(Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

This awareness of the secondary and devalued status of female librarians is important, yet there appears to be a resistance to assuming the role or perceiving it as one that deserves further feminist understandings. This resistance to accept the possibility of integrating identities limits the impact of the Feminist Library on staff, potential volunteers and restricts its overall impact and potential linkages. Recent volunteers expressed perceived differences between themselves and the staff within the Fawcett Library / The Women's Library, partly because of pay, but also because of training and library skills, values and principles, and respective settings and allegiances. Maimie suggested that working in an informal women's library meant that less librarianship skills were needed, whereas that would not be the case in The Women's Library, as '*It makes us very difficult from them, it is not an issue for us to worry about our skills*' (Maimie, volunteer worker, Feminist Library, London, 2000).

These comments again reinforce the notion that librarianship skills are easily learned, and that within women's organisations, professional skills even those pertinent to the setting itself, are less desirable than feminist commitment. As a product of second wave feminism, there does seem to have insurmountable challenges in synthesizing aspects of feminism and librarianship in a sustainable manner. Important outputs, like the Feminist Library

classification scheme, have not been prioritised or continued, to the potential detriment of the Library and its wider influence on mainstream librarianship. I now conclude this chapter by investigating the events in 2003 that encapsulate the problems of the Feminist Library at the start of the twenty-first century, and in doing so, consider the Library as a gendertopia.

### **Conclusion : Considering the Feminist Library's future and gendertopic nature**

To respond to its funding and accommodation crisis and to discuss possible options, the Feminist Library held a meeting for volunteer workers, the management collective and any interested women in June 2003. The Greater London Authority officer with responsibility for women's issues and the Library's link officer from Southwark Council attended the meeting. Two dramatic flyers were produced - 'Brainstorming Day - Save the Feminist Library' (*Feminist Library, 2003i*) and 'Crisis at the Feminist Library ! Your Support is Urgently Needed' (*Feminist Library, 2003ii*). The meeting was programmed for the afternoon with the morning set aside to display and photograph some of the Library's collection of second wave feminist posters, no longer possible on a permanent basis because of fire regulations.

I travelled from Glasgow to London, arrived at the advertised time, and waited until someone with the Library keys came. Volunteers and collective members drifted in during the morning, one even left unnoticed on the pretext of visiting a local shop. Myself and a very new volunteer were the only ones who helped to display the posters, which would remain unphotographed as no-one had remembered to bring a camera, rather undermining the advertised intention to deck the hall 'for a photo shoot' (*Feminist Library, 2003i*). It was overall a dis-spiriting and poignant experience. However, nearly 20 women took place in the afternoon's discussion. I will now summarise its outcomes and their implications, and then consider how this, along with other evidence as presented earlier, affects the Library's current or existing potential as a gendertopia.

It was agreed that to ensure security and a future for the Library's collection, maintaining it within an academic institution, with all the potential compromises that may emerge, was preferable to letting the collection dwindle and die. Since the meeting this is being progressed. Continuing to develop women-centred community activism linked to the Library was also seen as a way to reach women and to engage them with feminism and the real mission of the Library. After clear indications from the officers from both the London Mayor's office and Southwark Council that the name of the Library, and its collective structure, were not appropriate for gaining funding, both of these are being reviewed. A new Library website has also been developed to promote the Library further, and I wrote an article for Glasgow Women's Library newsletter about events (*Ilett, 2003*).

The Feminist Library is currently struggling to find a place where its resources, collection and historical allegiances are of interest and utility to contemporary women and funding agencies. The Feminist Library has been unable to sustain sufficient support in recent years to exploit its resources and capacity beyond meeting the needs of a small group of users, that has directly resulted in its current funding, accommodation and identity crisis. This is linked to the decline of the second wave feminist period, an associated lack of interest in the materials and knowledge generated at that time, and a reduction in women's studies courses. Its inability to attract many volunteer staff or management members, inevitably relates to a decreased awareness about the Library and its ideological and theoretical context.

Feminist magazines and newsletters - and the general feminist communication infrastructure which existed within the 1970s, 1980s and, to an extent, the 1990s - are no longer there to promote the Library and interest potential volunteers. Even within London, less women identify as feminists and activists. Committed feminists once involved in organisations like the Library have moved on in their lives and careers, and are unlikely to have time or a desire to volunteer as they once did. The changed concerns of contemporary young feminists, the lack of a thriving feminist movement and the decrease in women who actively identify with feminism - or the activities and objectives of the Feminist Library - has meant that these women have not been replaced. The range and scope of feminist-oriented jobs in London has also decreased through the demise of the Greater London Council and policy shifts towards social inclusion and diversity, rather than to women and other marginalised groups. As Chapters Two and Five discussed, second wave feminism now has much less perceived resonance and significance for many younger women, who may not identify with feminism at all. Second wave feminism can be seen as old-fashioned and irrelevant by younger feminists who may feel little connection with the struggles and concerns of feminists of the past, and have not interest in exploring or learning from their material and literary outputs.

The Feminist Library contains important archives, and represents an important era of feminism and is one of the few women's libraries that began to fully integrate feminism and librarianship, but through its lack of funding and particular perspective has been unable to pass on that learning beyond a few. The view that The Women's Library could offer financial support to the Feminist Library, as expressed to me during fieldwork interviews, was clearly never a valid option. The different feminisms and ideologies of the two libraries appear to have prevented a possible alliance forming that could have considered some form of integration or collaboration arising at the time of The Women's Library's inception. Power imbalances between the two libraries, and the Feminist Library's weakness in negotiating with large public agencies or making hard, management decisions, has perhaps lost an opportunity to broker an arrangement between these women's libraries, that represent the

collective struggles of British women in the twentieth-century, to reposition them as a force to face the twenty-first century in some form together.

There are obvious reasons why the collections of the Feminist Library would fill deficits in The Women's Library and be highly desirable, and the security that the latter could offer to the former could be attractive, but would undoubtedly mean sacrificing autonomy and independence. Having extensive second wave material within The Women's Library would also expand the knowledge bases of many users who may be less familiar with struggles of the second wave, and would also introduce a more rigorous class analysis than is perhaps presented by the first wave feminism that to an extent is still exemplified in The Women's Library's focus, staffing and composition and origins of the Friends. If the two libraries came together, there could also be possibilities for influencing the ways that feminism is constructed, contextualised and played out within The Women's Library in how it relates to women, how it positions itself as a women-oriented service, and how it undertakes librarianship. A gendertopia might then result as a space that encouraged critiques and counter-thinking might be possible. It is highly unlikely that such a liaison will happen, but it is of interest to imagine its potential outcomes.

For the Feminist Library, the last decade has been difficult and one in which its ability to provide any positive transformative experiences for women has been very limited. To consider it as a potential gendertopia seems unreasonable, as although its collection, materials and politics are potentially life changing and provide insights into the external world, the context and space in which they have been provided have been counter-productive and inaccessible. It may have to be considered as currently a genderdystopia. The effects on staff of the continued lack of funding has prevented them from developing services and attitudes that could engage many new women or in promoting feminism as something alive and attractive. Its location and physical space are off-putting and would not encourage women unfamiliar with such settings to become involved or to identify. It can only be hoped that the plans currently being progressed for the Feminist Library will allow it to recapture some of the dynamism that it once had when it clearly was part of a transformative period for many women, and to develop itself as an organisation that incorporates a wider range of feminisms than it has been able, and to become a gendertopia once again. In the next chapter, the fortunes of Glasgow Women's Library that developed after second wave feminism will be investigated and any similarities between these and those of the Feminist Library determined.

**Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, August 1992**

**Dear Diary**

I have only been in Glasgow since January, and have just found the most amazing place - a feminist library ! I had no idea it existed, because it's not near anywhere that I really know, or go to, especially as my job in the Council is right down near Central Station. I haven't really linked into women's things here yet, so wouldn't have come across it in that way either.

Gerry heard about it from one of the lecturers at the University who's a feminist, and I went to see them. Its in a poky place near the Art School, a bit like a squat, but the women who run it are full of enthusiasm, doing it on seemingly no money and building up a women's library, and loads of art and cultural activities. They're not librarians, I mean not qualified ones, more feminist activists, but are very keen on a library as being a way of connecting to women, and reflecting their creativity.

Its odd to be in a space that is full of women and promoting a women's community, reminds me a lot of when I was in London in the early 1980s, but somehow a bit more hard-edged as I wouldn't have thought that Glasgow as a city was particularly accommodating to women's issues, especially lesbian issues, where a lot of the library's energies are coming from.

Best of all they are not against librarians, see them as complementing what they are doing, and are keen that I get involved. Seems like a good opportunity to bring together all my interests and do something positive. I've even had a discussion about developing some women's booklists and bibliographies for them, so it will be a good place to go - to give something back, and also to feel connected to feminist activism again.

**Energisingly yours !**

## Chapter Ten : Glasgow Women's Library – third wave feminism in action ?

- Introduction
  
- Section One : The trajectory from Women in Profile
  - Opening at Hill Street
  - The inclusion of the Lesbian Archive and Information Centre
  - Developing the services and spreading the word
  - Management and staffing
  
- Section Two : Spaces - ancient city and modern diversity
  - Emotional space for women
  - Multiple spaces for women
  - Lesbian space
  - Women's knowledge and educational space
  - Feminist homes and gardens
  
- Section Three : Identities - structures, feminisms, lesbianism and libraries
  - Feminist collective or feminist hierarchies
  - Lesbian identities
  - Women's library
  
- Section Four : Articulating feminisms - from herstories to funding
  - Feminism - 'this impossible world ?'
  - Users and members
  - Funding and its effects
  
- Section Five : Classification and other aspects of librarianship
  - Doing librarianship and being a librarian
  - Relations with librarianship
  - Glasgow Women's Library as a resource for other libraries
  - Classification - the crux of the matter
  - Librarianship from a feminist perspective
  - Linking with other libraries especially The Women's Library
  
- Conclusion - Is Glasgow Women's Library a gendertopia ?

## Introduction

The last two chapters considered two women's libraries in London. The Women's Library originated in first wave feminist struggle and has become a well-funded and high-profile resource at the start of the twenty-first century; whilst the Feminist Library, grounded in the second wave women's movement, is experiencing ongoing pressures due through a lack of funding and little active public engagement with their work. The third site for investigation is Glasgow Women's Library in Glasgow, Scotland. This resource began in the early 1990s, after the first and second wave British feminist movements of the twentieth century, during a period in which feminist activism was less visible or publicly supported.

Having been involved with the Library for over a decade as the diary entry recalls, and as Chapter Three described, my commentary reflects close knowledge of its work. My connection with the Library led me to conceive many of the ideas that I present here, and much of the work that I have done to link aspects of feminism and librarianship derives from this association and the sparks that it set off. During 1999 and 2000 I was involved with the Library fairly intensively and indications will be made of the points at which my motivations, actions or ideas influenced or impacted upon change or developments within the Library. Although this chapter cannot be impersonal or fully detached, it will follow the same formats as the previous two, and aim to conclude by considering to what extent the Library can be described as a gendertopia.

Firstly, the chapter will describe the trajectory of the Library that shaped its journey to its current manifestation. Like the previous two chapters, this will describe key points of change and decision, and comment on the history of the Library in this case within the post-second wave and into the third wave feminist periods. The services and resources that it offers will be considered within this section. Secondly, I will turn to notions of identity within Glasgow Women's Library, significant in a setting that originated during a time when explicit feminist identities were less common or public. I will review identities that may exist for both the staff and service users, and consider whether they represent what might be expected of a women's library during the third wave period, or whether they reflect back to earlier feminist identities and concepts. The Library has a range of identities, some of which might be expected, like that of a research library and a space for women, but some less obvious. Implications of these identities, their maintenance and sustainability are subject to review.

Discussion will then follow regarding a third area, the concept of space, in this case, both internal and external. As will be revealed, the Library has created some unexpected types of space, especially outside its main location. This will be considered in relation to the uses made by staff and service users of aspects of Glasgow Women's Library and the meanings

encapsulated and represented in the spaces that it makes available. The fourth section will describe the relationship that Glasgow Women's Library has with feminisms, and what commitments or engagements are demonstrated and articulated. Finally, the engagement that the Library has with librarianship including librarians and other women's libraries will be explored. I will aim to assess whether aspects of the Library manifest a new form of feminist librarianship, contextualised within the third wave, and if so, what its implications might be. During my research, like the other women's libraries considered in the last two chapters, the fortunes of Glasgow Women's Library changed, and my formal interviews with paid Library staff, volunteers and other observers were carried out during a difficult period of introspection and uncertainty. I will indicate throughout the chapter where circumstances have shifted, but will begin by describing the Library's trajectory and development.

### **Section One : The trajectory from Women in Profile**

In the original rat-filled premises, with a now laughably slim volume of cuttings, a modest swathe of books and a kettle never permitted to go off the boil, Glasgow Women's Library was born.

(Crook, 1998, 6).

Glasgow Women's Library is now based in a large, warehouse-style building that houses a variety of art studios and organisations, accessed by a lane near Argyle Street, one of the main shopping streets in Glasgow city centre. As the comment above reveals, the Library's inception, after the active feminist periods of the first wave in the 1920s and 1930s and the second wave in the 1970s and 1980s, that saw the respective developments of London's Fawcett Library (The Women's Library) and Feminist Library, was rather different. In this section, I will analyse Glasgow Women's Library's genesis, its current and past locations and services, and its management and staffing arrangements.

Glasgow Women's Library developed via the feminist grassroots activism and cultural feminism of a Glasgow women's arts collective - Women in Profile - established in 1987. This group, described as a 'bunch of aggressive young women in scruffy clothes, determined to storm Glasgow city fathers' parapets to get female culture recognised' (*Coltart, 1997, 7*) was funded (during Glasgow's tenure as the 1990 European City of Culture) to carry out community art work by, and about, women and worked in many of Glasgow's peripheral communities and council housing schemes. To make and store their art-work, and that of other women with whom they worked, Women in Profile rented two adjacent premises near Glasgow School of Art (where some of the group members were part-time lecturers or students) in the vicinity of Glasgow's famous Sauchiehall Street. Women in Profile's archive

of flyers and publicity about its activities, along with art-work, supplemented by donated items, was the start of the Women's Library, as Myra, a Women in Profile member and one of the Library founders, described :

The materials came fairly organically from women bringing in things to do with Women in Profile events, and some of it was stuff that we generated - posters or the forerunner to the Women's Library newsletter, which we've got in here - but also things that women had brought in, like leaflets.

(Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

The feminist arts focus of Women in Profile, and the group of women itself, was the main catalyst for the Library's inception. Links and exchange visits made with a German women's art archive in the early 1990s also helped develop this perspective. Myra remembered '*being absolutely captivated by the notion of a women's library . . . it sort of described a process that I thought was happening anyway, it was almost like a crystallisation*' (Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000).

### ***Opening at Hill Street***

This desire to establish a women's library broader than an arts library or archive, and a space that was open to women, became the focus for Women in Profile after their funding and project work linked to Glasgow 1990 had ceased. As Myra recalled, '*the naive optimism and idealism of Women in Profile . . . transferred itself to the Library project*' (Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000) and a new phase of activity began that required new space. From 1991, what then became known as, Glasgow Women's Library developed in one of Women in Profile's two rented premises, a shopfront in Hill Street, with the other space used for exhibitions, readings, social nights and activities generated by the volunteer workers running the Library. In 1992 the group tried to secure the Queen's Rooms building in Glasgow's West End to establish a larger, multi-purpose and multi-agency women's arts and cultural centre (*Coltart, 1992*) but this did not come to fruition. Without this being realised, the Library remained in Hill Street until 1994 when inadequate space generated a move to a larger two-floor building in the east part of Glasgow city centre, rented from Glasgow City Council, and described by one local journalist as 'the envy of London feminists' (*Montgomery, 1994, 8*). At the time of writing, due to the expansion of materials, services and usage, and the planned redevelopment by the Council of the building in which they are located, a future move for the Library is planned. Additional collections, like the one described below, and more visitors have put additional pressures on space.

### *The inclusion of the Lesbian Archive and Information Centre*

Lesbian community is possible - a community that is "separate" in the sense that there is a lesbian center of gravity.

(Frye, 1995, 158).

In 1995, the Library became the home of the National Lesbian Archive and Information Centre, which was established in 1984 and previously based in London. As Chapter Two described, the second wave feminist movement, along with the gay liberation movement that pre-dated and then ran in parallel with it, facilitated many women to come out as lesbians and some to identify as lesbian feminists. Reclaiming a hidden lesbian past, charting a history of oppression and discrimination, and celebrating lesbian lives, loves and creativity was important and the Lesbian Archive was set up to do that. Like the other women's libraries and collections supported by public funding as already described, the London-based Archive was forced to look for another home when its funding, after the demise of the Greater London Council in 1996, collapsed (*Brooks, 1998; Halkett, 1998*). From once employing two full-time workers, the Archive ended up run by volunteers, overseen by a voluntary Management Committee, with eventually its rent subsidy removed by Camden Council. Like The Women's Library and the Feminist Library, academic institutions considered taking the Archive, with Sussex University especially interested, but its inability to maintain women-only usage prohibited the move (*Kemp, 1995*). As both previous chapters have identified, ensuring the existence of women's libraries by locating them within academia and opening them to a mixed clientele, potentially away from active feminism, is highly contentious.

The Archive is now based on a separate floor of Glasgow Women's Library, still linked to a London-based Management Committee supported by women from Glasgow Women's Library who act as the Archive Co-ordinators. Although the collection is national, moving the large collection - of books, pamphlets, magazines, banners, badges, and posters - to Glasgow was also intended to ensure that lesbians in Scotland could include their own material, and to recognise that Scottish lesbians may experience more than one form of oppression (*Brooks, 1996*). This may not have been considered relevant or appropriate by some of the London-based Archive supporters according to some (*Kemp, 1995*). The impact of the Archive on the identity, work and profile of Glasgow Women's Library will be discussed later, and I will now turn to comment further on its services and its organisational structures.

### *Developing the services and spreading the word*

Over time Glasgow Women's Library has developed from a small collection of materials and books that women could read on site, alongside women-oriented support and information,

into a significant collection of books and other resources. According to its literature, the Library is 'a key provider of information services by and about women' (*Glasgow Women's Library, 2002i*) that are described as 'a newspaper cuttings service, research consultancy, women's skills and services database, a widely distributed newsletter and a lending library' (*Glasgow Women's Library, 2002i*). To encourage networking and to promote the development of a feminist infrastructure Glasgow Women's Library has produced a quarterly newsletter, *Glasgow Women's Library News*, (free to Library members and currently 50p to others) since 1996. The first edition, a black and white photocopied publication (that over time through funding has become a glossy magazine), stated the hope that it 'could become a really exciting networking tool and a good read' (*Glasgow Women's Library, 1996, 1*). The newsletter reflects the work of the Library, activities of women's groups and individual women, locally, nationally and internationally, as well as documenting and contributing to contemporary feminist debates. A summary of news and features from the Summer 2003 issue conveys this:

- Library users and staff visit the Scottish Parliament
- The Northern Older Lesbian Network Conference is held in Leeds
- The Feminist Library, London, and its funding problems
- Profile of Scottish feminist, Annette Lamont, and her opposition to the Iraq War
- Volunteer profiles and invitations to potential volunteers
- Lifelong learning at the Library
- Women and music, and reports on the Celtic Connections music event
- Book reviews by Library members
- News from Rape Crisis Scotland
- Advertisements include a women's photography exhibition in Edinburgh, a women's joinery firm, a service for homeless women, and Lesbian and Gay Switchboard.

The Library is now open five days and evenings each week, provides information and library services, a women's space, a venue for meetings and events, a centre for women's literacy and learning, and a focal point for women's activism. Since my interviews took place, the Library has introduced a drop-in, 'listening-ear' service for women, that offers free one-off support in a confidential space in the Library on Saturdays. It has also received funding to develop a women's literacy and numeracy project, as I will discuss later.

### ***Management and staffing***

Glasgow Women's Library developed through the voluntary efforts of women from Women in Profile, but until 1995 no-one received payment for their work and maintained and

developed the library project as volunteers. From 1994 onwards a systematic training scheme for potential and existing library volunteers became established, run by the small group of women who founded the Library. This was advertised through the Library newsletter :

Join the Saturday posse ! Do you harbour a secret yen to stamp books and log in donations ? Would you relish working at the very fulcrum of the women's community in the heart of the city ?

(Glasgow Women's Library, 1999, 15).

Now through project and revenue funding, a group of paid staff alongside a large group of volunteers carry out a wide range of library tasks. In 1999 the Library, via the Lesbian Archive and Information Service, obtained funding from Comic Relief for part-time workers to develop a young lesbian peer support project, LIPS (Lesbians in Peer Support), and in 2000 the Lloyds TSB Foundation funded a part-time Library Volunteer Co-ordinator. Successful candidates for these posts in some cases were long-standing volunteer staff, but new women were also recruited. At the end of 2001 the Library for the first time received money from Glasgow City Council's Social Inclusion budget to implement a lifelong learning project. For example, the 'learning opportunities' advertised for 2002 and 2003 in the Library, funded by the council, include a group for women who have experienced violence, a course on surviving the menopause, various courses on demystifying computers, a course on assertiveness and self-confidence, and individual, and group tuition in literacy and numeracy (*Glasgow Women's Library, 2002ii*). The Lesbians in Peer Support project at the end of 2003 received additional funding for a peer education project that plans to do more outreach work into Glasgow's lesbian and gay community.

The Library became a constituted company in 1994 and a charity in 2000, and operates in some senses as a collective, where decision-making and work tasks are shared, but where individuals have different roles and responsibilities. The paid workers manage strategic and operational functions, and the recruitment and work of the volunteers who undertake more 'para-professional' library tasks. The need for communication and information sharing requires complex structures. Connie, a Library worker, described the meetings cycle :

Tuesday morning, we have meetings. They're about two to three hours long. That's where we go through all the work, and we go through any things that have come up about volunteers or about general admin or stuff . . . and we have development meetings - Glasgow Women's Library development meetings and the Women's Library of Scotland development meetings - they're every six weeks. And then we have our Strategic Development meetings every quarter and Finance meetings. (Connie, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

The implication of collective working, and whether that has been sustainable or desirable in the light of recent changes to funding and work as described above will be discussed in Section Three and Four of this chapter. Glasgow Women's Library's significant journey - from a volunteer-run service to one that now has moved into mainstream project funding to embed many of its innovative functions - has been described, and there is a need to discover the implications of accepting such funding for the Library's feminist ethos and values. The next section will situate the Library within its physical setting, and describe the spaces provided to users and staff.

## **Section Two : Spaces - ancient city and modern diversity**

Glasgow Women's Library's current location, in the Trongate, near Argyle Street, sits within a rapidly changing city. To the north is the expensive and trendy Merchant City with wine-bars, restaurants, designer shops and the gay village; to the south is the River Clyde, the High Court and Glasgow Green; to the west are the main shops and offices of the city centre, to the east, the Barras market, and beyond, the poverty and deprivation of Glasgow's East End. This area is characterised by old buildings and new style bars and hotels, and manifests diversity and difference. The building in which the Library is situated, reached by a lift through the back lane or up high tenement stairs, also contains art galleries and studios including one displaying animated Russian sculptures, marionettes and tableaux. The space inhabited by the Library's neighbours seems full of surprises. Next door is a building, on the ground floor of which is a bingo hall, but above is a closed theatre space that in the nineteenth century was a place of wonder and marvellous spectacle— the Britannia Panopticon. This place, where novelties and wonders were exhibited, contained Pickard's Noah's Ark (a zoo), presented attractions such as freak shows and fortune tellers, and launched the careers of Stan Laurel and Jack Buchanan. Foucault's notion of the Panopticon resonates then in this area, but through the term's other meaning.

The Library itself also incorporates and presents numerous types of space - some which might be expected, such as a library space, a women-only space, a lesbian space and an arts space, besides ones that are less expected. Some of these spaces are within its building, and some are external, yet part of the Library's work and manifest other forms of experience and feminist engagement. I will begin by exploring areas within the Library that recognise aspects of women's experience.

### *Emotional space for women*

When you come in, it looks like a library. It has shelves and books, but I think that it does have other things as well . . . because you don't get pots of nice Cona coffee when you walk into your local public library.

(Alison, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

As Alison, one of the Library's paid staff commented, Glasgow Women's Library provides users with facilities and resources that certainly until the start of the twenty-first century were rarely found in public libraries. One purpose of public libraries was to provide individual spaces for exploration and education within a collective environment, whereas within Glasgow Women's Library there is a desire to engage women with the space in a more integrated manner, and to respect individual need. Its services are offered within a multi-purpose space that combines book stacks and magazine racks, writing tables and chairs, an area with sofas and a wood burning stove, and free tea and coffee. Women's art and posters cover the walls, and all first-time visitors are offered a tour around the Library.

Another Library volunteer, Linda, described the space as having a '*kind of homey feel*' (Linda, volunteer worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000). As has been already described, such approaches are becoming more common in the public library sector as it responds to the new-wave of coffee-house bookshops, and an approach to reading and literature that is perhaps more geared towards lifestyle, leisure and on-line services than traditional library goals of education and study. For Glasgow Women's Library, such informal space aims to break down barriers to its services, and to encourage women to feel welcome. The Library's inclusivity and range of functions however often attracts women who have needs that are not just about information. Linda, one of the volunteer workers, described the types of demands made on workers by women drawn to the Library who may need other forms of support :

We have no trained counsellors, none of us are trained in counselling but we have to answer crisis phone-calls on a regular basis and a lot of our volunteers have disabilities, mental health issues, that makes it quite a rigorous place to work.

(Linda, volunteer worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

Providing this type of informal support is a common experience for women's organisations that operate an open door policy and a women-centred approach, and as already mentioned in response to this the Library has started a free, drop-in support service. It is also true to say that the public library is often a refuge for people who are socially excluded, and this is currently being more positively and proactively addressed than at various points in the recent

past (*Pateman, 2002*). The Library sees its work with women who are socially marginalised as central, but acknowledges that ensuring the needs of all Library users and making everyone feel safe and welcome can sometimes be challenging. This concept of multiple space for women is important as will now be discussed.

### *Multiple spaces for women*

If a woman has got an issue, she might be banned from another place but we don't want her to be banned. We want her to take responsibility for her behaviour in our space. And she's still going to be welcomed, as long as she does that.

(Linda, volunteer worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

Making the space flexible and open to all women is a desire of the Library, but balancing library services with functions that incorporate diverse service users can require spatial and sensitive management. Linda's comment above reveals that the Library tries to accommodate the needs of all women through providing a range of spaces. Alison felt that any future plans for the Library had to take this into account :

It will still be an information dispenser and gathering space, but there are noisy women in here and there are quiet women in here, or women who want a noisy space and women who want a quiet space . . . there will have to be different types of spaces.

(Alison, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

This observation about bringing together myriad spaces is important, as it moves beyond the notion of the quintessential library as quiet and subdued. This vision includes noise, and allows women's voices to be raised and heard in a library setting where women are stereotypically those that enforce silence and quash disorder, as Chapter Six discussed. It suggests that women's libraries can provide a space and borderland between feminism and libraries, where new and diverse dialogue can be shared and identities explored. Grant (*1998*) commented that particular spaces of resistance, including feminist meetings, conferences and literature, are important in creating the conditions for the development of particular identities and it is possible to envisage Glasgow Women's Library in this way. The space created through the location of the Lesbian Archive and Information Centre is also important as a borderland and self-contained area as will now be addressed.

### *Lesbian space*

The Lesbian Archive and Information Centre occupies a floor in Glasgow Women's Library and is both a separate space and an integrated part of the bigger location. The Archive links the Library to the small number of other lesbian libraries and collections world-wide, reinforces its profile within Glasgow's services that address the needs of lesbians and gay men, encourages new users into its space, validates a group of women that had a complex relationship with some aspects of second wave feminism as Chapter Two outlined, and provides a clear lesbian domain and presence within the Library. Bunch (1991) in charting her journey from socialist feminism to lesbian-feminist separatism, argued that lesbian feminism is a primary force in the emergence of women's culture, and a political strategy that desires power for women, not just the development of 'an 'alternative community'' (320).

The Archive's function in also supporting women who are reviewing their sexuality was noted by Kathy, one of the Glasgow women involved in managing the Archive, who said that some women were attracted to the collection '*because they're just coming out, and they were looking for lesbian stuff and lesbians, and people to talk to*' (Kathy, Lesbian Archive Management Committee member, Glasgow, 2000). The lesbian-oriented archive space is perhaps able to provide a transformative experience for some women that would be perhaps impossible in a mainstream library setting, or even within a general women's library, and has been described as 'the closest thing to lesbian heaven on earth' (Brooks, 1996, 22). Towards the end of 2003, the Library successfully fund-raised from a number of local councils, adjacent to Glasgow, to support a new lesbian outreach service in the Library, recognising that for many women from throughout the West of Scotland, coming to the Archive and the Library can be part of a significant journey of self-exploration. This new project will provide both a lesbian space for groups and networking that appears to confirm Gonda's (1998) comment that 'in discussion groups and conferences, in seminars and at political meetings, lesbian theory continues to draw strength from our collective endeavours' (126).

### *Women's knowledge and educational spaces*

For other women, the Library provides a space for other forms of personal transformation, through the work of the women's literacy project. The women's literacy and numeracy work, led by a full-time worker, has changed the work of the Library and facilitated a new form of space. All staff are trained in working with adult learners and support individual women, encouraging new women to use the Library. One woman described her experience of participating in the programme in a recent edition of the Library's newsletter :

The literacy project has opened up a whole new world for me. I feel part of the world and I want to be a part of it . . . It helps build me up and does not take me down. It helps me to be the person I am and not the person other so-called people thought I was.

(Tricia, 2003, 12).

As well as such individual successes, influence is also being brought to bear by the Library on the national training strategy for adult literacy workers to make it more women-centred and to open up other areas of educational and learning space for a wider group of women. There is also work developing to support other women's agencies in Glasgow, such as Women's Aid, where there appears to be growing evidence of links between women's social exclusion, use of crisis organisations, and literacy and numeracy skills. The Library is also supporting a planned new gender studies course at a local technical college, run by two women that are linked to the Library, that will provide a knowledge space to link women (and men) to feminist learning and understandings. Materials and curriculum support are intended to come from the Library that may potentially also be a location for parts of the course. For the Library, this is seen as a potential way, as also discussed by the Feminist Library in the last chapter, of women developing qualifications resulting from, and integrated with, knowledge gained from using women's libraries. Creating new forms of knowledge and educational space is becoming an increasingly important aspect of the Library. Besides the internal space that the Library inhabits, an external space has recently been developed that has growing significance, as I shall now investigate.

### *Feminist homes and gardens ?*

As Chapter Three discussed, and feminist architects such as Bradshaw (1985) argued, public spaces rarely promote equitable social exchange or any meaningful interaction, and women-centred buildings can help rectify this. Key staff from Glasgow Women's Library have been involved for many years in a project to design and build their own homes as part of a women's self-build scheme that could be seen, quoting Novac's (1995) description of similar projects in Canada, as making 'significant feminist spatial claims on the urban landscape' (65). In Spring 2003 Glasgow Women's Library established a women's community garden in a local council allotment site that is seen as providing camaraderie as well as produce :

Allotments are a lot of fun and the physical and emotional good vibes that comes from being close to the land are fantastic. The allotment is also a place to meet new women and to share in creating a beautiful and practical space - we hope to grow some good organic veggies.

(McCann, 2002, 12).

A strong awareness of the importance of women's space and of its potential contents, outputs and outcomes clearly exists. Bradshaw suggests that changing highly gendered spaces into ones that empower women can be highly transformative :

If we can become more aware of how the buildings we live and work in relate to how we live, then we can create buildings that work with women's struggle for liberation rather than against it.

(Bradshaw, 1985, 106).

Such actions may indicate a strong wish within Glasgow Women's Library for feminist self-sufficiency, and for the creation of a separatist urban utopia. Some second wave radical feminist literature concerning feminist separatism, often linked to the lesbian community that Chapter Two described, would appear to support that analysis. Hawthorne (1991) suggested that separatism was defined by factors including valuing dialogue with other women; engaging in political and social action with women; attending women-only social gatherings; working in an environment run by and for women; becoming women-identified and relating to women, including as a lesbian; participating in creative work with other women and living in a women's environment. She also suggested that such an approach allows feminists to not only dream of new worlds, but also 'to experiment in incorporating them into our own daily existence' (317).

The Glasgow Women's Library allotment in Maryhill, North-West Glasgow came about through the literacy and learning work, and via the 'Bright Green Living Courses' on women and the environment run by the Library. The Library regards the allotment as a space for art, learning and green living - 'an outdoor oasis, a friendly meeting place for women and a "green gym" rolled into one' (*Glasgow Women's Library, 2003*). Weekly programmed events take place in the garden, including a Chinese Kitchen Garden project, and every Friday in the summer women participate in organic gardening surgeries or help with digging. In the Autumn, the Library runs day-trips for women outside Glasgow for country-oriented tasks including berry-picking, making willow bowls, and learning about Native American beliefs. There are plans to use the garden shed within the allotment as a learning centre for women's numeracy and literacy linked to the work within the Library space.

There are strong connections in this development to the radical origins of the British allotment movement in the nineteenth century (*Crouch and Ward, 1994*), to the synergy between physical exercise and radical politics that characterised earlier British political and social movements like the Fabian Socialists (*Pugh, 1984*), to the pioneering work of the Women's Farm and Garden Association, that recently reached its centenary (*King, 1999*), to the growing interest amongst women in having allotments and to community-based Local

Exchange Trading Schemes of which there are many in Glasgow. Crouch and Ward's (1994) explanation of the popularity of city allotments however seem to partly encapsulate some of its intentions when they said that, 'the aspect of escape is part of the search for alternative meaning, that in turn can legitimize our involvement in mainstream contemporary life, disassociated as it frequently is from local social relations' (32).

It would seem that the self-build housing and the allotment scheme are part of an ongoing women-oriented journey for some of the core group involved in Glasgow Women's Library, that is also concerned with creating and developing opportunities for other forms of spaces for women within the city. There are good reasons to argue that this gamut of activities and work represent an active urban feminist community, in which the Library provides a physical, ideological and knowledge space. It will be of interest to observe how these projects sustain over time, especially if there are eventual changes amongst some of the long-term Library staff and visionaries. Such activities move the Glasgow Women's Library into areas that seem far away from conventional notions of library functions and services, but I shall now analyse further the identities that appear central to the Women's Library's mission, and where there might be expectations of a multiplicity of simultaneous identities, some linked to feminism and some to librarianship.

### **Section Three : Identities - structures, feminisms, lesbianism and libraries**

Glasgow Women's Library incorporates a number of physical and knowledge spaces as already discussed, and there is a need to analyse their impacts and outcomes further to explore their manifestation through identities. I will firstly consider the organisation of the Library and assess whether it is a collective, run on feminist principles, and how this has evolved over time. The role of lesbians and of a lesbian discourse in the Library has been highlighted, and there is a need to explore further identities that this reveals. Finally, Glasgow Women's Library appears to have a clear mission as a women's library and I will consider this as another identity being expressed, with an interest to explore where tensions between feminism and librarianship may lie that will inform the following section.

#### ***Feminist collective or feminist hierarchies***

After the Women's Library formed through Women in Profile its collective nature continued, with change appearing to occur from the late 1990s when more paid posts were available, one founder left and another was absent through long-term sickness. The period at which I interviewed those involved with the Library whilst some of these changes were taking place, so reflections are made on the Library's then collective aspirations. For Library volunteer

Linda, for example, the Library's mode of organisation, although inclusive and supportive in some respects, was not in her perception really a collective. She did not see it as particularly open, but acknowledged that it allowed volunteers to understand their roles and tasks, and to appreciate how '*vitaly important they are to the running of the Library*' (Linda, volunteer worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000). There are many writings, informed by organisational theory and by feminism, on collectives or quasi-collectives, including those underpinned by feminist principles. Staggenborg (1995) for instance observed that feminist organisations that prioritised process and personal outcomes over organisational decisions often faced problems :

The lack of an established division of labor makes it difficult to complete organizational tasks, and the refusal to recognize official leaders leads in many groups to unofficial domination by persons tied into friendship networks who lack accountability to the group. Because of this and other internal conflicts, collectivist organisations often do not survive for very long.  
(Staggenborg, 1995, 343).

This warning about the likely unsustainability of collectives has perhaps been avoided by Glasgow Women's Library who have always maintained a semi-hierarchical structure, although this has become refined over time. This differs from what might be anticipated from an organisation that clearly derives from, and continues to see itself as embodying feminism, but may be typical of patterns that occur within feminist organisations (Ianello, 1992). Changes have been reinforced in this case through the continued involvement of the small group that started the Library or who were involved early on, the increased number of volunteer staff and their support and training needs, and the pressures of successfully searching for funding. Myra, one of the original founders, acknowledged that management structures had increased, but did not see them as '*absolutely antagonistic*' (Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000) whilst Linda, although to an extent critical of the Library's organisation, highlighted that obtaining funding requires people who can be responsible :

Who's going to do what ? Who's going to have this energy ? Who's going to sustain the energy to carry on with this project ? And who's going to hang on in there when we get knock-back after knock-back ?  
(Linda, volunteer worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

Acker's (1995) review of feminist organisations indicated that the acquisition of funding can have huge repercussions on the maintenance of aims and ethos, and although 'state support may be essential to the survival of feminist organizations . . . it often undermines their

intended goal' (140). Freeman's (1984) classic work on the 'tyranny of structurelessness' that considered the functioning of non-hierarchical feminist organisations such as consciousness-groups, provides insights that suggest that the solutions found at Glasgow Women's Library may be appropriate for their requirements :

Once the movement no longer clings tenaciously to the ideology of 'structurelessness', it will be free to develop those forms of organisation best suited to its healthy functioning . . . Mostly, we will have to experiment with different kinds of structuring and develop a variety of techniques to use for different situations. (Freeman, 1984, 14).

Like the experiences of the volunteers at the Feminist Library described in the last chapter, volunteering in Glasgow Women's Library can have positive personal outcomes, as Linda told me :

Working in the Library restored my faith in a lot of things, my confidence in a lot of my skills and abilities, and it was just a friendly environment to gain some strengths. And I think a lot of women use the Library individually in ways to gain their skills or develop communication skills and to challenge themselves. (Linda, volunteer worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

Regular advertisements in the Glasgow Women's Library newsletters to attract potential new volunteers describe them as representing 'a very broad spectrum of age / histories / expertise / interest and reasons for volunteering' (*Glasgow Women's Library, 1999i, 5*). Anyone who wishes to become involved needs to offer 'between 1 hour and 5 days a week, have general or specialised skills and like books, newspapers, magazines and people . . . (no professional library experience necessary)' (*Glasgow Women's Library, 1999i, 5*). This highlights the positive diversity of volunteers and reiterates that library experience is not necessary. Having a feminist commitment can be just as important, if not more important, as Myra commented when talking about the personnel required if the Library expanded in the future. In her view, employing women who had not worked in a women-only environment would be '*a difficult thing to envisage*' (Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000). The desire to protect the Library's feminist ethos and preferred ways of working is clearly regarded as more important than librarianship skills, whatever future funding brings, similar to views expressed by the Feminist Library, London in the last chapter. Many volunteers in Glasgow Women's Library began their involvement through being a Library user, some through their engagement with the Lesbian Archive, and I will now discuss the significance of this acquisition and the identity outcomes for the Library.

*Lesbian identities*

Glasgow Women's Library has always had a strong lesbian identity, and even before the arrival of the Lesbian Archive was heavily used by lesbians and seen as being a safe lesbian space. Acquiring the Lesbian Archive however, although highly positive and affirming something that already existed, has brought new challenges for Glasgow Women's Library including staffing and collection development, the expansion of physical space, and the need to support a lesbian collection without new resources. For one woman whom I interviewed, a long-term Library volunteer and now member of the Archive Management Committee, this relationship is not as streamlined as might be hoped :

Without being too simplistic, there are two camps. One camp, thinking that the Archive should be more independent, autonomous and on its own, and one camp who think that it is not the case - it is embedded within the Library effectively, it wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the Library, it doesn't make sense to become autonomous. Where does that leave us if we're applying for money for activities, for projects, for developments ?  
(Kathy, Lesbian Archive Management Committee member, Glasgow, 2000).

From Kathy's view point, the Archive, although securely and safely housed within a setting which many lesbians use and appreciate, is vulnerable as it appears effectively a subsidiary of the Library, and not robust. She saw the Archive as 'piggy-banking' on the Library as '*there is no Lesbian Archive representation on the Steering Group of the Library, for example*' (Kathy, Lesbian Archive Management Committee member, Glasgow, 2000). When I interviewed Kathy the overall funding of Glasgow Women's Library was less healthy than it then became, and her views of an uncertain future for the Archive that might compromise the conditions under which women donated, now seem over pessimistic. However, her comments that mechanisms need to be in place to keep the Archive safe, '*in the event of personnel in the Library changing, or what happens if the Library folds ?*' (Kathy, Lesbian Archive Management Committee member, Glasgow, 2000), remain perfectly sensible.

Other activities described in this chapter indicate that the Library has contributed to the visibility of lesbians within Glasgow, and appears to have some unexpected converts. Remarks made by Glasgow's only Conservative M.S.P., Bill Aitken, about City Council grants received by the Library focused surprisingly on the fact that the services being provided, described as 'preferential treatment for lesbians' (McAuley, 2003, 7) were separate, rather than mainstreamed within public libraries. He said :

I'm all for helping lesbians but I do not see why they require an exclusive service . . .  
 I don't know why they can't have a separate lesbian section in one of the council's  
 public libraries.  
 (McAuley, 2003, 7).

Such a view, although double-edged to an extent, appears to accept that lesbian life, and the literature and information that reflects and supports it, is legitimate and should be more widely available, and infers, presumably unwittingly, a second wave feminist response to organising women's books in public libraries.

### *Women's library*

From post-second wave and arts-oriented origins the Library has developed to provide library and information services and an expanded portfolio of activities, many of which move beyond anything else comparable in the United Kingdom within a women's library setting. As has already been stated, this has been often directly in response to the multiple needs of women, external stakeholders and a broad interpretation of the functions of a library. The next section will explore more fully linkages with librarianship and with feminism, but I will briefly explore the potential implications on women's libraries of funding, and the need to perhaps integrate a more knowing professional discourse. As earlier chapters indicated, professionalism and feminisms have not always sat easily together and funding success can bring potential dangers for women's libraries and their ability to maintain feminist underpinnings.

Debates about potentially professionalising and neutralising feminism are important and highlight some of the dangers proposed by those who fear the outcomes of postfeminism (*Coppock et al, 1995; Walter, 1999*). For women's libraries, this reluctance to become more professional also perhaps refers to potential shifts towards a structure and framework that might become increasingly library and librarianship-oriented, rather than one that prioritises women and feminist principles. As comments from the Feminist Library in the last chapter showed, librarianship is not necessarily regarded by feminist activists as a powerful identity, profession or a practice, whereas personal change and positive outcomes achieved through working with other committed and politicised women is. Weighing up such options can force women's libraries, like other women's organisations, to make crucial decisions about whether to accept statutory funding. The nature of an organisation can be changed through funding, potentially affecting the ideals that were central to its inception, its physical space offered and the services and experience available within it. As Grant commented :

Where . . . spaces have been so thoroughly incorporated as to be no different from more traditional social service organisations, there are fewer opportunities for the development of counter-hegemonic identities (and movement).  
(Grant, 1998, 54).

If we substitute libraries for social service organisations, what could happen to women's libraries in that situation? One librarian involved in these developments at Glasgow Women's Library, Irene, raised concerns to me about a potential 'selling-out' of its values, and that these could happen in '*a slow insidious way*' (Irene, academic librarian, Glasgow, 2000). However, early evidence indicates that the statutory funding received by Glasgow Women's Library has led to the onset of new women-oriented services that appear to be continuing its ongoing feminist emphasis, and although the Library has increased its links with Glasgow City Council, these have not necessarily been with the public library service. I will now turn to further explore the Library's engagement with feminisms.

#### **Section Four : Articulating feminisms - from herstories to funding**

Having already established that Glasgow Women's Library represents a range of spaces and services for women, I will now turn in more detail to the ways in which feminisms are represented through the Library. I will firstly consider the historical trajectory of the Library and its location within a still active women's movement within Glasgow, and the feminisms represented within the Library through the personal histories of staff members. The Library's appeal to women, existing and potential users, as a feminist organisation and space is vital to investigate, as are the implications of funding on the Library's feminisms, as has already been touched on.

##### ***Feminism - 'this impossible word?'***

Glasgow Women's Library is an explicitly feminist organisation based around a women's library service. Although 'not begun during the WLM (or before)' (*WLM Bibliography, 2002*), Glasgow Women's Library conveys a strong feminist message through its stock, ethos, atmosphere and its visible identification with feminism and the women's and lesbian communities. Original materials, many from the second wave women's movement and created by women active in the arts, are collected within a setting that is arguably a centre of contemporary feminist activism in Glasgow.

Since the 1970s Glasgow has had a fairly active women's movement, in recent times partly facilitated through funding from Glasgow City Council and Greater Glasgow Health Board

who have funded women's organisations via equality, social inclusion and women's health agendas. This contrasts with the experience of London women's organisations as described, where such funding has become restricted. For Glasgow Women's Library staff, attempts to support the multiple needs of women and develop women-centred events before more funding was available, raised many questions for founders such as Myra who felt torn between ensuring longer-term sustainability and meeting women's immediate needs :

Are we just going to be always responsible for that, delivering all this, or do we say that there are quite a lot of other women out there who could be the beneficiaries of this excellent resource and maybe it's about making sure you can deliver in the long-run ? But also being realistic about what you can do for women.

(Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

The Library in Hill Street, although cramped, began to provide a physical and ideological space for women who were interested in feminist politics but were finding it hard to connect to what appeared at that point to be a dwindling feminist movement and infrastructure in Glasgow. Alison, one of the other Library workers that I interviewed, described her introduction :

I was a student at the Art School and the Library was based near the Art School, and I started to use the Library. Basically, because I was doing some research on Section 28 I went into the Library. And also because I'm a feminist, and a lesbian as well, I was attracted to the Library as a place that I could go.

(Alison, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000).

Alison became a volunteer worker, and later a paid Library worker. This happened through a process of incorporation into the Library's feminist space - as she commented, *'Before you know it, you've been in twice, you've made coffee for everybody, and then you're putting books away !'* (Alison, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000). Women involved in the Library that I spoke to identify strongly as feminists, and see their own personal agendas and those of the Library as closely linked, as Connie demonstrated :

Everyone that's been involved, because they are feminists, they have tried their best to always have feminist principles in place and to work together, and start up a co-op, and all that has been very difficult. It means that the Library - as it stands now - we still have our feminist principles in place and we still work with them everyday.

(Connie, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

Staff that I interviewed had long-term lived experience as feminists, and working in a setting that was openly feminist reflected and also made a positive statement about their own personal beliefs. Myra said that *'feminism is the most significant political thing that I've ever been involved in, it's really changed my life'* (Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000) and Alison commented that by the time she was twenty-one she had come out as a lesbian and *'identified as a feminist for a long time before that'* (Alison, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000). Connie was however conscious of the difficulties in maintaining a feminist identity in an often oppositional world, and where many women, including some Library users, did not feel empowered to call themselves feminists :

I am a feminist, and lots of people that come here are feminist, and lots of people that come here that say that they're not feminists, are feminists . . . I just think that this word, feminism, has negative power. Being an activist and working with women and striving for equality, I do find it very difficult. This impossible word !  
(Connie, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

The dominant feminism acted out within the Library derives much from radical feminism and lesbian feminism but has always, because of the Library's specific origins, had a very firm link to women's creativity and culture, and to concepts of a women's community. The attractiveness of this combination of feminisms to women and their then use of the Library will now be considered.

### *Users and members*

Women might come in just to browse, because they've heard that we've got a log fire and you can sit on a settee and have coffee ! Or you know, she might have an enquiry, about *'Is there a women's bed and breakfast somewhere in Scotland ?'* . . . Before you know it, they're rooting through the boxes and engaging with the materials in ways that maybe they hadn't expected.  
(Alison, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow).

Glasgow Women's Library encourages all women to access their resources and space, but membership is needed to borrow books. As the comment above suggests, the Library space offers a range of possibilities in exploring feminism or the women's community or in just using the physical space. By summer 2003 there were over 1,500 individual and group members who paid fees ranging from £ 8.50 (for an unpaid or low waged individual) to £25 (for an organisation or group). Numbers have increased steadily since the Library began. In 1995, the 500th member joined, by 1996 there were just over 700 paying members and in 1998, the 1,000th member signed up. The usage of the Library has increased through its new

vision, and approximately 15,000 women now access its various parts and services each year, especially through the literacy work and the increasing number of minority ethnic women attracted to developments like the women's community garden. This appears comparable to the numbers using The Women's Library in London, and indicates that high levels of funding do not always ensure that resources and services become increasingly accessed. (The Women's Library's funding – as the 'National Women's Library' - was partly based on estimates of 60,000 visitors in its first year, although as Chapter Eight indicated, this has not been achieved).

### *Funding and its effects*

We can't go on for ever, you know. Next year will be the tenth anniversary of the Library setting up . . . the personal cost is heavy sometimes and you do take the whole burden of things home with you. The Library is my life.

(Alison, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

Until fairly recently Glasgow Women's Library maintained its services through membership fees, donations and the unpaid efforts of volunteers. To maintain and develop services, high levels of dedication and individual sacrifice were required, as Alison commented. The need for fund-raising, coupled with the arts backgrounds of the original members, and a desire to reach women, involved the Library for a number of years in generating social and cultural events including discos, quiz and games nights and auctions. These events resonated the early days of second wave feminism and the desires to create temporary or permanent women's spaces and to generate women's culture, as Chapter Two outlined, and inevitably for some women provided their first exposure to a women's community and women-only events. The impetus for such events, like the annual pantomime that was written, produced, promoted and acted by the then voluntary collective for a number of years in the 1990s, was partly to gain funds and to promote the Library, but also to enact a shared view that the Library had a responsibility as a women's centre and resource.

The information resources within the Library and its growing role as a focal point within both Glasgow's women's community and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community has also led staff to gain paid contracts to research and write reports and documents for external agencies including Glasgow City Council. Subjects covered have included lesbians and gay men and poverty (*Glasgow Women's Library, 1999ii*). The Library had been fairly ambivalent about Council funding, through a desire for autonomy and to protect its women-only space and activist image, but also feeling that local government was an appropriate funder for women's activities. In 1991, for example, in an early newspaper article, staff openly criticised the local authorities in Glasgow - then Glasgow District Council and

Strathclyde Regional Council (*Coltart, 1991*). One commented in an article that they were trying to embarrass local politicians into recognising that ‘while millions are spent every year maintaining and encouraging a culture which has always been dominated by masculine values, the female side of our culture is still sidelined or even ignored altogether’ (*Coltart, 1991, 10*).

Nearly ten years after these comments that could be interpreted as being somewhat essentialist, when I interviewed Library staff, similar views prevailed. For example, Library worker, Connie, commented that it is ‘*hard to keep your autonomy and to get lots of funding for it as well*’ (Connie, paid worker, Glasgow Women’s Library, 2000), and that compromises might result ‘*if we have to work with public libraries or whatever to get funding*’ (Connie, paid worker, Glasgow Women’s Library, 2000). This view has changed, even since I interviewed Connie and the others, and the Library is now increasingly linked into mainstream funding and positioning itself as an influential agency within Glasgow’s main public agencies, rather than as an external agitator. The range of services that the Library provides has however caused complications when making funding applications to local authorities and other potential funders. The combination of a library with activities that may have empowering effects that are more subtle or harder to count or quantify was felt difficult to convey, without undermining or denying the Library’s feminist principles, as Alison described :

If we’ve made applications to charities or trusts, we always have to go through the same thing because they read the name and come and look round and, yes, we’re called a library, there’s hundreds of books . . . we’d talk about the work that we do with marginalised women and socially excluded women, so in some ways it sounds like you’re being patronising.

(Alison, paid worker, Glasgow Women’s Library, 2000).

Accepting funding from local authorities or other mainstream agencies can be both a positive and negative experience for many women’s organisations, or those that originate in other radical politics. Linda, another volunteer from Glasgow Women’s Library, commented that although it brings recognition for the work and potential expansion, there can also be a difficult transformation of values because ‘*money equals power equals who’s using it, who has access to it*’ (Linda, volunteer worker, Glasgow Women’s Library, 2000). Commentary about the incorporation of feminist work into mainstream services, when grassroots enterprises can become increasingly institutionalised (*Grant, 1998; Matthews, 1995*) indicate that many such agencies (for example, those that support women survivors of domestic abuse) can move from being ‘grass-roots, informal, peer-counselling organisations to government-funded, ‘social service agencies’ employing professionals’ (*Grant, 1998, 51*).

There are major shifts in public policy towards mainstreaming of equality issues within Scotland through the devolved Scottish Parliament that are advantageous in some senses to women's organisations, but potentially can also change the ethos and atmosphere of previously small, voluntary-run structures. The advent of the Scottish Parliament has also led the Library to consider its role and its geographical coverage as the next section identifies in which linkages and engagements to librarianship form the main subject.

### **Section Five : Classification and other aspects of librarianship**

To provide library and information service Glasgow Women's Library undertakes tasks similar to those used within conventional libraries but which have developed with a limited formal librarianship input, with feminist thinking often dominating decisions and solutions. In this section, relationships that the Library has with librarianship will be considered, including staff reflections on being librarians, linkages with mainstream librarianship and librarians who are also feminists, the practices of librarianship undertaken within the Library, with special reference to ongoing work concerning the development of an appropriate classification scheme. This section will conclude by drawing together developments within the Library and consider whether they manifest librarianship within a feminist context.

#### ***Doing librarianship and being a librarian***

Some services offered by the Library, like the journal and newspaper cutting collection, exhibit high levels of skill in classifying and organising materials, and selecting, keywording and storing articles that have been devised in-house and refined over time. For Irene, one of the librarians involved in discussions around the Library's systems, such activities could be perceived as librarianship and be associated with a librarian identity if Library staff wished :

They've been running a library for, what, ten years now or something and that means doing all the day to day stuff, and thinking about all the issues that those of us who work in the mainstream maybe think about, and coming up with their own solutions. (Irene, academic librarian, Glasgow, 2001).

Irene however, felt that the involvement and guidance of librarians was essential for the Library to prevent '*reinventing of the wheel*' (Irene, academic librarian, Glasgow, 2001) as many issues that needed to be resolved were '*second-nature for a librarian, who's got experience of managing a situation like that and would know what to do*' (Irene, academic librarian, Glasgow, 2001). The coming together of feminist librarians with the 'non-librarian' Glasgow Women's Library staff at the end of the twentieth-century that I will discuss later

exposed a number of different opinions. However, the feminist origins of the Library are also central for Doreen, who went on to say that *'it's good to go into a space where you take a certain perspective for granted'* (Doreen, public sector librarian, Edinburgh, 2001). In other words, a feminist discourse that cannot be assumed, or expected in a mainstream library setting. A comment below from Irene exemplified the complexities of bringing together feminism and librarianship :

There's a lot of commitment from the Women's Library women to use the help that professional librarians are offering, in spite of their fears, and wanting to say *'No, no, no, no - we don't want that'*. They don't want to put us off and run away. And the professional librarians are like *'What is this system? It's not what we were expecting, and it's really kind of slow and it's really inefficient'*.

(Irene, academic librarian, Glasgow, 2001).

For other women librarians linked to the Library, there were further issues about the convergence of separate cultures and expectations. Doreen, a public sector librarian, felt that it was wrong to suggest that Library staff could be considered as librarians, and that they perhaps fitted *'more into the public information, sort of public help things that were going in the early '90s'* (Doreen, public sector librarian, Edinburgh, 2001). She went on to say that although Glasgow Women's Library has collections and literature, for her *'it doesn't feel like a proper library in the way that I'm used to with the librarian head on'* (Doreen, public sector librarian, Edinburgh, 2001). One ex-N.H.S. librarian, Louise, now a politician, knew of Glasgow Women's Library, but saw the low input from librarians as problematic, and even though now in a different career, her self-identity as a librarian needed recognition and to be protected. Louise's following comment implies that Glasgow Women's Library workers are playing at librarianship, and do not possess the knowledge or have the authority required to literally wear the 'badge' of librarian :

I do still feel a bit sad when I see initiatives like that being set up and it doesn't have the professional to make sure it's set up properly in the first place . . . I can remember as a school librarian one of my pupils bringing me in the wee enamel badge that said 'librarian'. I still have it. And she brought that in to say to me *'I was the librarian in my primary school, would you like my badge?'* It was very sweet. But there is that - if you stand behind a desk and tidy up books, you're a librarian.

(Louise, politician, Edinburgh, 2001).

Some of the librarians involved with the Library were well aware that their own training and personal identity as librarians could lead them to adopt certain behaviours that could be

excluding and off-putting, or that could be perceived by Glasgow Women's Library as such. Doreen observed :

We talk the same language to each other, so we probably seem quite alien. We're not as committed to their resource, if you like, or perhaps they perceive us as like that. (Doreen, public sector librarian, Edinburgh, 2001).

June, an academic librarian, also felt that without being aware of it, there was a possibility that librarians would come to Glasgow Women's Library, '*all librarianship and professional, and coming in and stomping all over it, without even meaning to*' (June, academic librarian, Edinburgh, 2001). Even with a shared commitment to feminism, there still appears to be a relatively high level of suspicion and discomfort between feminist librarians and library feminists.

### ***Relations with librarianship***

It is important to consider how Glasgow Women's Library workers identify with the librarian role. Connie, for example felt that she was not a librarian, because she was not trained :

I don't really think I am . . . And also because the Library hasn't got a cataloguing system in place - it's just the box files and that information that's relevant to the section. It doesn't make you feel that you're up on your Dewey Decimals, that kind of thing . . . I wouldn't call it being a librarian. (Connie, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

Connie also felt that only librarians from 'proper libraries' can provide expert advice. This mirrors comments from the Feminist Library volunteer, Maimie, in the last chapter, in not recognising a women's library as a genuine library, and in believing that authority and status could only be awarded through librarianship infrastructures like the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme. Like Maimie, who worked part-time in a public library, as well as at the Feminist Library, Connie felt that her skills would be inadequate outside a women's library, and dismissed them by saying that '*I am alright here, but I don't think that anyone else would take them*' (Connie, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

Myra, one of the original founders of Glasgow Women's Library, was more confident in her abilities and their relevance to librarianship, but felt that involving feminist librarians in supporting Library development to an extent undermined this. In Myra's view, the phrase 'champion of the Library' better explained her function. Besides that the role of librarian was

a contested one, as it embodied aspects of power which may have negative connotations for Library users :

Women keep telling me that I am, but at the same time we're getting the message that we're not sometimes by librarians, and by feminist librarians or women's librarians . . . Maybe it's better to say *'There's a member of staff there'*, and if women are used to libraries, then they'll use us. But if they're not, they might not be as frightened, approaching somebody. Because I think they . . . (librarians) . . . are powerful people. (Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

It is clear that for some Glasgow Women's Library workers being a librarian is not perceived as being necessary or desirable, but sometimes as mysterious, powerful, and perhaps counter-productive to users. However, there have been long-standing engagements between the Library and staff within other library settings, especially those that hold feminist views who consider the Library an appropriate referral and support route, and one that could benefit from librarian's support.

### ***Glasgow Women's Library as a resource for other libraries***

A number of librarians interviewed, from National Health Service and academic libraries, were aware of the Library as a potential information source to support their own work. One commented that the Library was excellent for women and librarians, as *'professionals such as myself can say 'Why don't you try so and so?''* (Jean, NHS librarian, Glasgow, 2001) and it provided another option. Gill, an academic librarian and also a Library member, felt that if her colleagues could not help users with certain information requests, they sometimes refer to her, *'knowing that I'm a member of the Women's Library and I might be able to give them information'* (Gill, academic librarian, Stirling, 2000). For both Jean and Gill, Glasgow Women's Library can underpin their own work within mainstream settings, but for Jean it is clearly not a professionally-run resource, whereas for Gill, it was something that, as an 'out' feminist, she was more happy to be associated with.

For some mainstream librarians who did not personally identify with feminism, even though they could see the benefits of the Library, its feminist approach and women-only nature were contestable. Jean, for example, felt that women-only spaces, like *'women's libraries or women's health centres'* could be seen as excluding and negatively stereotype the women who used them (Jean, NHS librarian, Glasgow, 2001). Such attitudes appear directly linked to personal experiences as a feminist and how that relates to a librarian identity. Women librarians who are more supportive of women-only activities and women's libraries are generally those that have had historical contact with the second wave women's movement,

and those that have not, although they might have quite well-informed opinions, perceive it as more threatening.

Like the Feminist Library in London, Glasgow Women's Library never set out to influence mainstream librarianship, but the higher profile of the organisation within Scotland, its eventually more secure funding and the irregular involvement of feminist librarians has meant that there has been an increased awareness of its work amongst librarianship and libraries within Scotland. The Library has links with a number of special libraries within Scotland, like the Scottish Poetry Library, and as already suggested, with women's libraries, nationally and internationally. In 2003, the Library became the first Linked Library of the Scottish Parliament's Education and Outreach Service, which links women from the Library into information and training about politics and providing opportunities to meet MSPs and to attend sessions at the Scottish Parliament (*Campbell, 2003*).

There has been media coverage about Glasgow Women's Library in a variety of settings. One of the founders wrote an article in the main Scottish library journal (*Patrick, 2000*), the Library Association Record has covered it (*Library Association, 1995*), another staff member wrote an article for an American feminist journal (*Crook, 1998*) and numerous articles and features have appeared in the Glasgow and Scottish press over recent years (*Booth, 2002; Brooks, 1996; The Bulletin, 1994; Coltart, 1997; Coltart, 1995; Coltart, 1992; Coltart, 1991; Evening Times, 1994; Galloway, 2001; The Glaswegian, 1999; Halkett, 1998; Kemp, 1995; Montgomery, 1994*). I will now consider how Glasgow Women's Library has dealt with core librarianship practices like classification to assess whether feminist theory has influenced how collections and materials are organised.

### ***Classification - the crux of the matter***

The definition, classification and selection of women's collections pose numerous problems. Some of those collections stand alone in separate buildings, others are the contents of a file cabinet or two in rooms used principally for other purposes. (Hildenbrand, 1986, 7).

As Hildenbrand (1986) comments, and as Chapters Seven and Eight discussed, the organisation of material within women's libraries, oriented towards feminism and women's experience, is complex. Glasgow Women's Library has developed a subject based method of organising materials, partly through the lack of computerisation and the scant involvement of librarians in the Library's early days, but also because its materials and stock have grown in an unpredictable manner that would not have necessarily early on suggested the need for a systematic classification scheme. The absence of librarianship input was highlighted by

Library worker Connie as a reason for the lack of cataloguing and classification systems *'because everyone that has been involved hasn't got a library background'* (Connie, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000). However, she considered that having qualified librarian input would be useful in trying to move to a better system, and that this could create a 'proper' library environment, as *'it would be great to have expert advice, maybe before we put something in place and have people that are from proper libraries'* (Connie, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000).

Alison similarly commented that the Library could not handle *'the support needs, the information needs, the research needs of women'* (Alison, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000) unless they had an electronic infrastructure and appropriate systems of cataloguing and classification. The need for a more rigorous classification scheme was prioritised by Glasgow Women's Library at the end of the 1990s, linked to discussions about becoming a national library for women in Scotland. Strathclyde University librarianship students assessed the Library's classification needs and recommended that an amended form of the Dewey Decimal Scheme would be most useful because of its ability to fit electronically with other libraries, although with an awareness of its shortcomings, particularly around feminist and women's issues (McIver, 1999). This outcome was viewed positively by some library staff, including Connie who commented that *'it was kind of interesting to see from someone's perspective, from a librarian's, how they would see Dewey fitting in what we've got here'* (Connie, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000). The library students expressed the complex challenges ahead for the Library in achieving a balance between being a dynamic feminist space and a professional library service :

Glasgow Women's Library has a charm which no doubt comes from it growing from nothing through the hard work of the women who have been involved over the years. The open fires and lax order of the books add to this, and it would be a shame if this is lost in a move to become more professional, although it seems unavoidable. (McIver, 1999, 7).

The work of the students informed debates in which I was involved, around feminism and librarianship and the type of classification scheme that would best fit the Library, its stock, staff and users. In Spring 2000, a Cataloguing Group was established that included Library staff, feminists who were working in library and information settings, and individuals like myself with interests in these areas. The group aimed to develop a scheme that could fit the needs of the Library and move it into an expanded physical and virtual situation. In parallel with discussions about becoming a national library, this facilitated some unique dialogue between non-librarian feminists and feminist librarians. A meeting in May 2000 brought together Library staff and librarians who were feminists, including myself, to discuss the

challenges of expanding the Library, maintaining a feminist ethos but accepting that other solutions, some derived from librarianship, would be needed to ensure a functioning service.

To aid this process, a number of papers were presented, including one in which I described library classification, its embodiment of historically determined cultural, social and political values, and suggested the options for women's libraries (*Ilett, 2000*). As Chapter Seven suggested, when establishing a women's library, or retrospectively classifying and cataloguing feminist collections as was the situation for Glasgow Women's Library at that time, the choices are between using an existing scheme and expanding its accommodation of feminist materials through using feminist thesauri, or developing a scheme from scratch that accepts a feminist approach or women as central. I indicated that the approach of women's libraries towards classification had typically been fluid because :

1. There may not be enough resources to build up an extensive stock which would need organisation, and in-house systems work.
  2. Women involved in women's libraries may not come from, or be influenced by librarianship as such.
  3. Where women are aware of library classification schemes, they may deem them unsuitable because of their perceived bias and complexity.
  4. The range of materials to be encompassed may make the task seem impossible.
- (Ilett, 2000i, 5).

After this meeting, other discussions took place linked to the aspirations of the Library for national status. Another feminist librarian and myself were remitted to think further about the needs of the Library, and after much consideration, set out to develop a scheme based on Dewey that would develop the work of the Strathclyde library students and be tailor-made to fit Glasgow Women's Library's feminist context. Our work continued into 2001, when due to various personal issues for those involved, coupled with the wider developments that will be considered later, the process came to a halt and the scheme was left incomplete. Even though this was frustrating, numerous outcomes resulted from the level of engagement and thinking that was achieved through the convergence of feminism and librarianship. Since then, the Library has continued to develop new approaches that specifically incorporate feminisms within a women's library setting.

### ***Librarianship from a feminist perspective***

The Library is now running activities, linked to the literacy and numeracy work, that bring together women and literature; some of them grounded in librarianship and some derived from feminist practice. A bookclub has been set up, where women read second wave, and

more contemporary, feminist texts, and the Library is also developing 'satellite libraries' within local women's organisations, an idea similar to that floated within the Feminist Library in London, beginning with one located at Glasgow Women's Aid. There is also a desire to have a writer in residence to work with women in creating new texts and self-knowledge, possibly targeted specifically at minority ethnic woman. The Library is also developing a bibliotherapy project in which second wave women's movement texts, including autobiographies, will be used to provide transformative and empowering experiences for women, that recognises the wide-ranging needs of women that increasingly use the Library.

Modelled on a successful contemporary project within Calderdale public library services in West Yorkshire, the Library are applying for funding to establish this initiative. Based on the therapeutic value of reading, or literacy conversations for healing (*Hendricks, Hendricks and Cochran, 1999*) bibliotherapy can be traced back to the positive regard for reading held by the Ancient Greeks and the Romans, but particularly to the inclusion of libraries in European mental institutions in the nineteenth century. It also has strong roots in librarianship, especially in the aftermath of war and the rehabilitation of servicemen, and was fiercely championed by American women librarians including Elizabeth Green, who wrote about the therapeutic use of hospital libraries in 1919, and Sadie Delaney, an Afro-American librarian, who gained an international reputation for her work with Black American veterans in the 1920s (*Hendricks, Hendricks and Cochran, 1999; Hildenbrand, 2000*).

According to Library staff, virtually all the women coming to these literary and literature-based activities have never accessed Glasgow Women's Library before. Publicity is circulated via health services, including GP surgeries, and through Glasgow City community libraries, reaching a wide group of women. As some of these developments appear to be bringing together aspects of feminism and librarianship as is also the case in other British women's libraries, I now discuss linkages between Glasgow Women's Library and their sister organisations.

### ***Linking with other libraries - especially The Women's Library***

I went to a conference in Amsterdam . . . the gathering of women's libraries and archives and documentation centres. And I felt absolutely part of that network, and our project was absolutely part of that network.

(Alison, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2000).

Glasgow Women's Library has established and maintained links with other women's libraries, with women's and feminist organisations, and to an extent with mainstream

librarians. The comment above by one of the Library's staff recollects an international conference, Know-How, in Amsterdam in 1998, that brought together women's libraries and information centres as described, and at which she represented Glasgow Women's Library. A 1997 Glasgow Women's Library newsletter described their long-standing connection to the German women's art archive, *Kunstlerinnenarchiv* that inspired the inception of the Library, and highlighted mutual concerns, like 'our current research into the cataloguing on computer of our women's library materials' (*Glasgow Women's Library, 1997, 13*) that encourage joint working between women's libraries. The Fawcett Library, later The Women's Library, features within the section, called 'Library Links', with a brief description of it as 'the national research library for women's studies' (*Glasgow Women's Library, 1997, 13*) clearly taken from Fawcett Library promotional material of that time.

The possibility of creating a consortium of women's libraries was prominent on Glasgow Women's Library's agenda at the turn of the twenty-first century, linked to their aim to become a national women's library for Scotland but also in the spirit of feminist concord. The Genesis project, and the funding of The Women's Library in London as the last chapter demonstrated, raised great interest amongst women's libraries in improving links and co-operation between organisations that appeared to have similar values. Glasgow Women's Library's relationship with The Women's Library is therefore of interest. My links to The Women's Library and before the Fawcett Library, through my research and attendance at various meetings such as the Friends Annual General Meetings, allowed me to access non-confidential, but not necessarily public, information about their plans and ambitions that, because of my long-standing relationship with Glasgow Women's Library, I discussed with them throughout this process.

One suggestion to generate collaboration, and a united approach to the strategic and operational aspects of UK women's libraries was to hold a national women's libraries summit in Glasgow linked to site visits to the libraries. This meeting was seen as including The Women's Library, or the Fawcett Library as it was then, and taking place at the beginning of 2001. A meeting was planned between Glasgow Women's Library and the Fawcett Library at the end of 2000 to discuss this and other methods of collaboration. However, the visit by Glasgow Women's Library staff to London did not go to plan, partly because of confidential difficulties being experienced by the Director over the ambitious public and private funding package that had been achieved on the grounds of plans that were perhaps unworkable, but also because of a seeming lack of interest from The Women's Library in collaborating with Glasgow or other women's libraries. There seemed to be little desire from the more powerful library for any relationship beyond a sharing of virtual catalogues and linking of web-sites. This set-back led to the Glasgow Women's Library Cataloguing Sub-Group Meeting of December 2000 concluding that The Women's Library had little interest in feminist libraries

or in creating added value through co-operation and besides, that Glasgow Women's Library should pursue its own strategic and funding plans, alongside facilitating a coalition of smaller, less well-funded, women's archives and libraries.

Linked to ongoing considerations over classification schemes, this period was very disappointing for women from Glasgow Women's Library who felt that their concerns with inclusion, women's empowerment and joint working were not shared. Glasgow Women's Library has now curtailed its immediate plans about becoming a national library for Scottish women, and is concentrating on the growth of women's adult learning and literacy as a more dynamic way of achieving its vision and engaging with women. Outstanding issues that directly involve librarianship matters still need to be addressed, including classification and cataloguing perceived by Myra, in a recent conversation with me, as 'getting critical'.

### **Conclusion - is Glasgow Women's Library a gendertopia ?**

This chapter has set out to investigate the work, motivations and context of Glasgow Women's Library, the youngest of the three sites being considered in the final part of this work. The conclusion will review these findings through considering each of the five main sections in relation to the contribution that they make to Glasgow Women's Library as a potential gendertopia. The first section explored the developing history of the Library and its continuing trajectory. Glasgow Women's Library began as a volunteer-run activist arts resource and is now a service with an acknowledged role in the women's community in Glasgow and beyond. The Library has grown through a period that has been unfriendly to feminism, and appears to have defied the views of Hildenbrand (1986) that the fortunes of feminism and women's libraries are inevitably entwined, and that when feminism is in decline, women's libraries will also be so. There are various possible reasons for this, some based on a specific set of local conditions.

Firstly, the funding climate within Glasgow has allowed piece-meal, and later longer-term security, and secondly, the women's movement in Glasgow partly through the ongoing work of second wave feminist organisations (many funded through local authority or N.H.S money) has provided linkages, support and opportunities for the Library. Furthermore, the physical space that the Library has developed has allowed it to facilitate the inception of some of this feminist infrastructure through formal and informal processes. This trajectory has had positive outcomes for the Library and expanded the number of women who have been able to access its service, many of whom will have been exposed to such settings and ideas for the first time. This, and other developments, including the development of new

strategic plans appear to indicate that Glasgow Women's Library continues to see itself as making a positive contribution to women's knowledge and services.

Space was the second aspect considered. There are multiple entry points into feminism and to becoming aware of individual and group experiences of being a woman and experiencing and expressing the impacts of gender. There are constraints on the Library space, and its location and access are not ideal, but women are encouraged to see the space and opportunities it offers as their own. Individual testimonies indicate the benefits that the Library has had on many women, and many of its activities are very unthreatening and women-centred, rather than necessarily feminist-oriented. Innovative ways of engaging with feminisms, through bibliotherapy and gardening for example, can introduce life-changing and consciousness-raising ideas to women.

The chapter has established the number of identities that the Library contains, from a women's library to a lesbian space, and indicated that these have offered new possibilities to women, although sometimes causing confusion of focus and a lack of clarity over management roles and responsibilities. Funding applications have brought in new projects and new staff that have expanded the number of Library identities and functions, for example, there are now five paid staff and twenty part-time literacy tutors and volunteers. Of the original staff, their relationship to the Library has changed, structures are more clear and manageable and identities have transformed – one founder, Myra, recently commented to me that *'having a defined role in the library for the first time, I know where my boundaries are'* (Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2003). The integration of the Lesbian Archive into the Library has also brought in new audiences and researchers and new knowledge, identity and physical space that was not possible before.

The fourth area of discussion, feminisms, would be expected to be significant for the Library which has been shown to have been established by women with strong personal identities. The Library is aware that its success has come in a fallow period for feminism. Myra commented that during their existence, there has been a *'backlash against feminism, and a retreat from women-only things and an embarrassment from younger people about feminism'* (Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, 2000). However, this has also ironically given the Library the chance to grow, partly through donations from women's organisations, including women's archives that have closed down through lack of financial support or women's involvement. As Myra said:

The Lesbian Archive came to us because in London there weren't enough volunteers or money to run it, the Edinburgh Women's Centre, the Camden Black Women and Lesbian Centre archive . . . London Lesbian Line . . . so I think the outside climate has been a hostile one in certain ways.

(Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2003).

It can be seen that the Library supports different audiences through a wide range of services, has diversified into numerous areas and specifically targeted some activities at women who are socially disadvantaged and some who may not identify as feminists. This has changed the way that the Library space is used and perceived, and the groups of women that feel that they belong, and avoids a continued reliance on only one group of potential users.

The final section interrogated the relationships that Glasgow Women's Library has with classification and other matters of librarianship, and it was seen that there is an understanding of the role of library practice and its relevance, along with a desire to work with interested feminist librarians to generate new thinking. One area that the Library wishes to progress in the future is the development of its collections and archives, as Myra recently commented, the gap in the Library now *'is a librarian, someone who is working with the resources'* (Myra, paid worker, Glasgow Women's Library, Glasgow, 2003). It seems possible that the Library's firmer basis could perhaps achieve this through funding a new library post, bringing together for the first time the real possibility of feminist librarianship and furthering the Library's gendertopic potential.

In conclusion, Glasgow Women's Library appears to have begun to meld elements from post-second wave feminist and librarianship into a resource that may have gendertopic possibilities, as it is aware of the need to critique the constructions of both these practices and provides a large number of knowledge, physical and emotional spaces for a wide range of women. The Library appears to transformed into a third wave feminist organisation that represents a more diverse range of identities and types of women than before, in which second wave feminism is providing a firm basis, but new energies and influences are generating change and vigour. The success of the Library has arguably been achieved through the energy and tenacity of those that started it - some of whom have remained, their abilities to respond to changing circumstances, their capacity and creativity in being able to attract new women as users and as volunteers and supporters, and to continually generate new responses. As a feminist movement project, knowingly engaging and utilising principles and concepts from librarianship, and that appears to be accepted by mainstream funders as an innovative resource and women's setting, this library may have particular significance.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have used insights from second and third wave feminism to examine librarianship as it moves through another period of significant change, and to illuminate why its historical construction may have made it vulnerable. I have situated my own histories as a feminist and librarian within my investigations. As a feminist, my views and commitments have changed over the last twenty-five years, having embraced at various times radical feminism, socialist feminism and lesbian feminism, to reach now what could be termed third wave feminism. These personal shifts have been incorporated into the text through discussion, commentary, autobiographical material and reflections on my involvement with some of the events and issues discussed. My briefer history as a librarian also brought together at different times connections and divergence between feminism and librarianship that have shaped my arguments and provided new insights and understandings, as I set out.

A central purpose has been to explore librarianship's silence about its true origins. I have related this to second wave feminist concerns about uncovering women's hidden experience and the gendered nature of professions, and have then considered areas of third wave feminist interest that have given fresh areas of investigation. In this conclusion, I will discuss the five third wave themes that became the framework for interrogation in the last part of the thesis, and use the concepts of heterotopia and gendertopia to further analyse their significance. This aims to provide an individual reading of the current situation in librarianship and to reveal more about this state of flux and to look forward at other possibilities that could emerge. Each facet – trajectories, identities, space, feminisms, and classification and librarianship - will be examined in turn through the raising of a question applied to different outstanding issues within mainstream librarianship and women's libraries that have been the subject of much of my discussion. The knowledge gained from the latter sites will both reflect on, and critique some of, the concerns within mainstream libraries and offer insights into their transformative potential.

### *Trajectories and histories :what lessons can public libraries learn from women's libraries ?*

Contemporary public librarianship has been shown to have evolved through a trajectory that responded to a variety of factors including the need for mass education and for meaningful leisure time, the powerful role of the middle classes in determining which occupations became authorised professions, and the desire to harness the perceived natural attributes of women within appropriate settings. The enthusiasm demonstrated by public library pioneers, like Melvil Dewey, bolstered by his own personal history, belief system and inner psyche is comparable to that of some of the women who established the women's libraries that have been studied, who interpreted external ideologies to develop resources for other women.

Both public libraries and women's libraries aim to provide transformative experiences for their users, within Foucault's definition as heterotopic counter-sites – the former through encouraging access to general worlds of knowledge, learning and information to enhance or support individual and collective experience and enquiry, and the latter through providing access to women's creativity and knowledge production that may not exist in the former, so that women can better understand their histories and gain a raised awareness of women's social and political experience.

As Chapter Seven indicated, some female public librarians inspired by second wave feminism felt that the opportunities offered within many public libraries to women was limited, and that changes had to be made to increase their heterotopic, and potentially gendertopic, scope. The workplace trajectories followed by many of these women was often anchored to, and tempered by, the external position of women and the fluctuating strength of feminism and other social movements. I suggest that the growth of a more diverse social agenda in the last decade, partly through the change from Conservative to Labour administration, and through a more liberal social climate, has enabled public libraries to be more reflective of wider individual and group experiences and to reverse some of the outcomes of the feminisations that affected British public libraries in the 1970s and 1980s. The public library as a potential gendertopia that acts as a site that questions external society with a gender awareness may now be more possible. It would also be hoped that this enquiry could extend to include awareness of other forms of disempowerment and inequality, and although not the scope of this thesis, similar discussions are possible concerning racial and cultural awareness and competencies, for example. The librarian is however subject to imagery that I have already argued has been to their detriment, and that of librarianship itself, and this will now be further analysed as possibly open to postmodern influences at the start of the twenty-first century.

### *Images and identities – out and proud ?*

The image of the librarian has been shown to be powerful and highly contested, with the additional potential of multiple identities offered through third wave feminism. This work has shown that the image of the contemporary librarian derives from its gendered origins and the introduction of archetypal female characteristics into the library at the end of the nineteenth century. For many women that I interviewed, this was still an outstanding issue that caused them to often deny their own training and work role and to deliberately distance themselves from a librarian identity. For some commentators, this denial and desire not to be associated with librarianship contributes to, and helps maintain, the negative public image that librarians have, as well as their own low self-esteem. Cram (1995) compared it to a version of 'passing', when light-skinned black people pass as white to avoid racism and to adopt the

benefits of the dominant culture. She suggested that 'it signals a massive inferiority which does nothing for our ability *as a profession* to advocate both for ourselves and our libraries' (*no pagination, italics in text*).

The wish to remain invisible or to adopt more acceptable identities also strongly resonates with the need or desire of some people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities to remain in the closet, and maintain an acceptable heterosexual public persona. For gay writers like Signorile (1995), damaging physical and emotional health consequences arise from staying in the closet and using coping strategies to survive. One public library manager that I interviewed saw the admission of being a librarian as 'like a stigma' (Frances, public library manager, Ayr, 2000). 'Passing' as a non-librarian was almost necessary for self-protection for a number of women librarians working in mainstream settings. Although it may be the case that many librarians deny themselves in social situations amongst non-librarians, there is evidence that within cyberspace librarian identities are being reclaimed and subverted, and generating some surprising new versions.

Information technology has revolutionised worldwide communication, and the work and practice of librarians and libraries as discussed. The World Wide Web, through websites, e-groups, weblogs and other modes has seen a proliferation of discussion and debate amongst many professional and occupational groups, including librarians and others in the information field. Much of this use of the Internet involves self-reflection and introspection about being a librarian (*Brewerton, 1999*) within a heterotopic space (*Young, 1998*) that may have gendertopic potential. Many of these sites juxtapose or subvert librarian imagery with radical, political and unexpected identities including some that provide linguistic linkages to different feminisms and other radical affiliations. Anarchist Librarian, Bellydancing Librarian, Library Girls, Lipstick Librarian and Modified Librarian all provide opportunities to subvert librarian legacies and to introduce third wave and postmodern identities.

Such virtual dialogue links librarians and creates multiple communities beyond those ratified and offered by the professional associations and other official structures, and can reinforce and strengthen individual knowledge, confidence and connections. There are however possible dangers in this seeming playfulness and subversion. One web-article (*Library Juice, 2002*), although supportive overall, cautions against regarding this activity as a radical critique of librarianship and definite evidence of the birth of a new form of librarian :

These sites show that a new generation of librarians does not fit the old stereotype. And it seems a much better way of fighting the stereotype that renaming ourselves “information professionals”. “No”, young librarians are saying, “We are librarians and we like punk rock; we like sex; we like motorcycles; we like belly-dancing; we have tattoos; if we are geeks then maybe we’re the ones who made it cool to be a geek.

*(Library Juice, 2002, no pagination).*

If the Web is a significant arena for challenging librarianships’ archetypal underpinnings, although the multiple identities being created and displayed are amusing and involve to some extent a deconstruction of nineteenth century librarianship, they may also be reinforcing them by inferring the strangeness of such couplings. The Web itself is also problematic, as its commercial nature may well ensure that the medium is the message and that other vehicles for challenging librarianship are not employed (*Library Juice, 2002*). Within other significant parts of the Web, like the fast growing eBay auction site for example, as in other areas of popular culture the term ‘librarian’ is used to denote clothes that convey frumpiness and anti-fashion (*Worels and Barclay, 2003*). For Owen Massey (*2003*), a prominent British web-oriented librarian, both arguments are valid, as although ‘there is a danger of getting caught up in the fun and froth . . . there’s no point in a revolution of we can’t have fun’ (*no pagination*).

Arguably the current subversion and manipulation of librarian identities in cyberspace is indicative of a period in which librarians are changing, as are the libraries where they work. Evoking and critiquing historical identities by those who did not experience them directly is affectionate, and also an acceptance that some identities are nearly defunct but need to be remembered before they disappear. Many of these websites engage with gender-related imagery from both female and male perspectives. There is debate about ‘guybrarians’ in some e-groups, obviously denoting librarian as the female form / norm, and a weblog called Male Librarian Centerfold (<http://www.malelibrarian.blogspot.com/2003-11-23-malelibrarian=archive.html>) sets out to establish male librarians as vigorous and sexy, and not the ‘fastidious, limp-wristed aesthetes’ (*Thislewaite, 2003, 92*) that arguably are outcomes of the feminisation of librarianship.

Understanding librarianship from a queer theory perspective has resonance. Trajectories affecting librarianship’s construction include the role of unmarried women and the impacts on, and of, the men who became librarians, have made librarianship both stereotypically and in reality often welcoming to lesbians and gay men. Chapter Seven discussed the British group, Lesbians in Libraries, and from the 1970s a lesbian and gay group met within the American Library Association. Sexual imagery surrounding female librarians, including

notions of unleashed heterosexuality being sublimated to the library and associated repression of the library users, contains overtones that can be viewed as homophobic and misogynist, as well as incorporating heterosexual male fantasies about lesbians. The library itself and its framework of classification schemes as has already been demonstrated, was established to promote and maintain the natural order, including that of heterosexuality as Hornsey and others have pointed out, and to suggest that other forms of sexual expression were literally unclassifiable and therefore not welcome.

However these histories and others have affected gender dynamics within librarianship, and those that concern sexuality and sexual orientation, it can be observed that contemporary cyber-debates concerning the female nature of librarianship rarely move now beyond postmodern images and fun. Although virtual spaces exist for those who wish to theorise further from a feminist perspective, within what could be called cyber-gendertopias, they do not appear especially popular. For example, an attempt to establish a feminist librarians e-group, via Yahoo, only attracted 14 members in its first year, 2002 – 2003. It appears to be the case that, although multiple identities for contemporary librarians are being adopted and created, there is evidence that female stereotypes, although less desirable or needed now, are still a knowing reference point.

The female librarian as an evocative and iconic signifier in a more physical form is demonstrated by the librarian doll manufactured in 2003, modelled on a well-known American library manager, Nancy Pearl (*McPhee, 2003*). Dressed in twinset and pearls, the doll moves its arm up and down to its mouth in a shhking movement. Widely promoted through librarian websites, and sold via eBay, Nancy's purpose may be to critique outdated imagery and offer familiarity and humour as librarians move into a new period of opportunity and gender freedom, but has been criticised by some librarians who feel that it undermines this changing profession. The model for the doll however commented that 'today's librarians are secure enough in their work that they won't take offense at the old cliché' (*Pearl, 2003, no pagination; USA Today, 2003*). If younger people regard library and information work as potential employment, with the American Library Association currently promoting it as cool, it is of interest to see whether twenty-first century women and men are offered inclusive options that move beyond gendered stereotypes, and associated pay, and where Nancy is no longer seen as relevant or recognisable in a gendertopic future.

### *Space – can we always recognise a library ?*

The spatial form of the library has been discussed throughout this work as developing and reflective of changing times and needs. The site with which I have been partly concerned, the public library, has been revealed as wishing to encourage readers partly through its

familiarity and similarity to the domestic home where women decorated the physical library space and acted in gendered roles. This space has typically been seen to promote conformity and order, as well as to open up new worlds, but with the end of the twentieth century seeing an expansion of the physical nature of public libraries as they integrated new technology and attempted to incorporate wider social functions and the needs of an increasingly diverse population. At the start of the twenty-first century, the nature of the library as it was when the model of public librarianship currently being tested, like that of its workers, is becoming iconic. The period that appears to be most evoked is the time when librarianship and the public library etched themselves into popular consciousness – the post-World War Two period – which incorporated and acted out the notions of its nineteenth century creation, including the expected behaviours and functions of women and men within and around the library space. Library furniture and imagery and the space that they inhabit in our dreamworld of libraries are powerful and suggest feelings of security and home.

The Library Hotel in New York demonstrates this adoption of library imagery and atmosphere. On Madison Avenue, near the New York Public Library and the Morgan-Pierpoint Library, the Library Hotel conjures up feelings of familiarity and service as soon as the foyer is entered. The entrance is modelled on a library enquiry desk, with floor to ceiling book-cases containing real books, bought in bulk from the famous New York second-hand bookshop The Strand, and a reception-cum-issues desk in front of banks of what look like library catalogue card boxes, but are false and an affectation. The female receptionist behind the desk is smart and helpful, like the ideal librarian. The floors and rooms in the hotel are classified by an amended version of the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme that was considered appealing according to Hotel Manager, Craig Spitzer (2003), 'because of the sense of nostalgia that it invokes, so many people remember it from grade school . . . (and) . . . the numbers worked very well with arranging our room numbers' (no pagination).

Floors in the hotel correspond to the main Dewey classes, with rooms themed to fit major subject areas, containing corresponding books for the visitor to read and browse, unsurprisingly the rooms themed erotica and sex are the most popular. In September 2003, the owners of the Dewey scheme, Online Computer Library Centre legally challenged the hotel's unauthorised use. After legal wrangling, in November 2003 the parties reached a settlement that allowed the Library Hotel to use the scheme with full acknowledgement of its ownership, along with making a donation to a charity that promotes children's reading. The Library Hotel will thus be able to continue to provide an experience for visitors that both conforms and challenges previous experiences of using libraries, but that which incorporates existing archetypes of library infrastructures like classification schemes.

As public libraries are becoming more like leisure and entertainment settings, where electronic information and coffee areas are prominent, the existence of the Library Hotel as a commercial postmodern evocation of a historical space can only reinforced the notion that the construction of librarianship at the end of the nineteenth century is still contested, and yet revered. For librarians, who form a large number of the Library Hotel's clientele, the hotel space may offer an ironic and slightly forbidden experience, rather than one that offers a gendertopic possibility. The Library Hotel presents a knowing re-reading of the archetypal library for the middle class traveller, but perhaps without any interest in highlighting the role of women librarians in supporting this historical discourse or that such a space, its content and staffing are contested. The public library is emerging as a multi-functional space, with Internet access, cafes and coffee areas, rather like contemporary boutique hotels, but the image of the Library Hotel, although clearly containing these possibilities, presents them in a form that looks back to the past for inspiration and security. In the next section, I return to the feminist-inspired activities of some women librarians, many of whom challenged the impact and effects of a librarianship manifested through the libraries that the Library Hotel embodies, and will look to the third wave period for insights into its potentiality.

*Feminisms in the twenty-first century – how does it affect librarianship ?*

I have described various trajectories of theory and activity concerned with feminism and librarianship within mainstream librarianship inspired by feminism, and a more explicit form of feminist or women-centred activism that employs aspects of librarianship to progress its purpose. I have firmly suggested that the integration of these two processes is uncommon and the reasons for this lack of convergence are effectively the starting-point for many of my arguments. Approaches to potential linkages from both feminism and librarianship vary, depending on the ideology of individual librarians and individual feminists, with the latter depending very much on the theoretical and historical feminist wave in which they became politicised. For example, for many second wave feminists, although librarianship was viewed as a female profession and therefore something that was inevitably devalued, it was regarded as middle class, and perhaps not thus needing support. This then prevented an understanding to develop of the underpinnings of librarianship and the potential value that feminist insight could bring. Conversely, for many librarians during the second wave period or who still perceive that as the over-arching feminist position, feminism was viewed as not relevant. Colleagues then that were influenced by feminism could be seen as misguided, and disrupting the perceived neutral position taken by librarianship, whilst those developing women's libraries could be regarded as not real librarians.

Within Britain there are other factors that have made librarianship less open to the influence of feminisms, from both feminism and librarianship. The genesis and complexion of British

librarianship is not typically seen as radical or progressive, and the centrality of the 'social responsibility' agenda from the 1960s in the United States never took root to the same extent. I argue that this has inhibited potential debate about gender and has maintained a semi-genteel occupation that finds it hard to acknowledge or address its origins. The lack of an academic infrastructure around librarianship or through women's studies librarianship, again different from the United States, has also meant that critiques or explorations of librarianship from academic feminists have been virtually non-existent. For example, second wave feminist critiques of medicine deconstructed the gendered nature of the medical model, and developed alternative models of women-centred health care and medicine that have had great impact. There is no similar critique of librarianship, and limited attempts to describe what a women's librarianship could be like. Clearly librarianship has a different engagement with women than medicine, but the fact that librarianship is undertaken by a highly gendered group appears to have been of little interest to feminists, perhaps because it has less power and is seen as less significant.

When looking at women's libraries from a feminist and librarianship point of view it is also clear that they represent the feminist milieu in which they were formed and the feminist insights and values that they inherited, including the feminist view of librarianship at that time. The first library considered, The Women's Library in London, developed during first wave feminism within a liberal wing of the suffrage movement, and assumed the feminist and librarianship trappings of that time. It dwindled as a women's force during the second wave period, as it has little insight or interest in more radical women's politics, but gained funding in the third wave a effectively a first wave library operating within a third wave context. Its staff are professional, not openly motivated by feminist agendas, and employ traditional library behaviours and tolls, although within a space that is broader in scope than the conventional library. As Chapter Eight indicated, the Library may have to change its articulation of feminism to respond to the interests of younger generations and the multiplicity of women that it should regard as its constituency. The Library has an opportunity through its incorporation in academia to encourage new thinking about librarianship, but as it sees its mission as women's history, this may not happen.

The second women's library, the Feminist Library also in London, developed as a resource for the second wave feminist movement and as a generator of women knowledge and history. It adopted second wave feminist staffing and management structures, remaining independent and outside the mainstream. Its synthesis of feminism and librarianship has made it less able to capitalise on funding opportunities or to develop in ways that could be seen to deny its origins. Its development of feminist classification tools has been of some interest and publicised through some circles that bring together these two areas, but their use and updating within the Library has declined in recent years, partly through a lack of volunteers with

library training. During the period of my study, the Library entered another crisis concerning funding and accommodation, but to survive and effectively respond to, and influence, new forms of feminism and needs of women, may not be possible without the involvement of new Library champions that bring together both feminisms and librarianship to help them move to the next stage.

The final women's library investigated, Glasgow Women's Library, developed after the second wave feminist era through cultural arts-based feminism. It has shifted its thinking from initially being resistant to mainstream funding to, in the last few years, accessing statutory bodies to support work that seems to integrate library functions with the needs and concerns of various groups of women. The involvement of a wider group of volunteers also appears to have made it more open to a broader range of feminisms than the last example. The Library has attracted the attention of some feminists who are trained librarians who have supported many of its strategic and developmental plans, and attempts to synthesis the two practices via new feminist classification schemes have begun but not necessarily completed. Changes in the external policy and funding environment in Glasgow and Scotland have benefited the Library, and it seems likely that it will continue to grow and to bring together various feminist strands within a librarianship context.

The future success of all three women's libraries in the twenty-first century may well depend on how successful and appealing is their interpretation of feminism and the actual items that they have, rather than their ability to critique, subvert or influence librarianship. The threat of postfeminism as a proposition that undermines the need for women's libraries and for any open feminist debates, may potentially inhibit their developing role in providing gendertopic conditions, unless they can adapt to changing circumstances in both feminisms and librarianship. One contested component of librarianship, classification schemes, has already been discussed as the subject of feminist concern, especially within women's libraries. I now reflect on outstanding issues concerning classification schemes post-second wave, and consider their gendertopic potential.

### *Classification and librarianship – what can third wave feminism offer ?*

As discussed throughout this work, classification schemes underpin the organisation of libraries and recorded knowledge, are also a set of embodied notions and beliefs representing the time and space in which they were created and are iconic statements that are often seen within librarianship as neutral and objective. The inability of librarianship to address the meaning of classification schemes is arguably for a number of reasons. Firstly, the similarity between classification schemes and positivist science as has been suggested, both implies uncontested truth and a form of organic reality that may seem non-contestable or with

unknown origins. Secondly, classification schemes have been absorbed by generations of librarians in their training and acquisition of library knowledge, with many unmotivated or uninterested in their symbolism or embodiment of often Victorian world-views. Thirdly, the gendered nature of the construction of librarianship has meant that women and men who perceived problems with classification schemes either saw it as less important than combating more overt forms of sex discrimination or were ignored when they attempted to do so. It has been demonstrated that most of the challenges and critiques of classification schemes that have emerged from the women's movement have come from women within libraries that are not considered part of the mainstream, and where their status as librarians is ambiguous. I will now further propose a set of four main implications of these outstanding issues and propose some new third wave feminist insights into classification schemes.

Firstly, women who have created feminist classification schemes have done so as part of separate feminist projects, desiring to provide more coherence for their materials and to increase their accessibility to other women. Developing new feminist forms of classification schemes for women's groups and women's libraries, even on a small scale, can be regarded as a form of third wave feminist consciousness-raising, as it requires debate about personal and collective identities, gender relations in the world, and an analysis of dynamic social arrangements. It allows the possibility of increasing solidarity and community between the group undertaking the process and of new ways of engaging with material and its contents, through processes which synthesise components of feminisms and librarianship.

Secondly, the theory and practice of developing feminist classification schemes provide opportunities for feminists to interrogate knowledge and its divisions through subjectivities, power differentials and relationships. It also gives feminism the chance to create its own knowledges and to present a view of the world informed by feminist understandings that, without advocating for mutually exclusive male and female ways of seeing, recognises that a gender-lens exists and that areas of knowledge and knowledge production are differently accessible to the sexes. Accepting that third wave concepts of knowledge advocate for a range of possibilities and for a fixed, uncontested hegemony, feminist classification schemes provide a counter argument to the notion that classification schemes are set in time, and would argue for fluidity and inclusive spaces where possible.

The view acted upon by front line second wave feminist librarians as outlined, that traditional classification schemes should be collapsed and books re-arranged as appropriate, is highly valid, but engaging more explicitly with the structures of schemes, as feminist library academics like Hope Olson (*1994; 1995; 1998; 2001*) advocate, may have some real value. As Olson (*1999*) commented, when I discussed my plans for this thesis with her, different

approaches to classificatory challenges are taken by firstly, women's libraries, and secondly, by mainstream libraries :

There is a willingness to jettison mainstream subject access tools if they don't do the job. In mainstream libraries, however, there is a tendency to say that the mainstream subject access tools have to be tolerated because it would be too expensive to deviate from the standard . . . my perception has been that the mainstream classifications are better crafted while the alternative ones are more responsive.

*(Olson, 1999, no pagination).*

Whatever the levels of feminist deconstruction or integration of classification structures, it can be stated thirdly, that creating alternative classification schemes from feminist or any other perspective, is significant. Its significance comes from a refusal to accept that standard items are always fit for purpose and that only those in authority, often historical, can create and shape such tools. The power of the bodies that oversee the maintenance and promotion of schemes like Dewey, as this conclusion ably proved, continues, and is becoming more prominent through the increasing use of web-based applications. Developing feminist classification schemes can be viewed as a political act and an explicit challenge to the multi-national capital of organisations like OCLC that perseveres into the twenty-first century with a product that at its heart symbolises the values and beliefs of a past world.

Finally, the creation of new classification schemes is an opportunity to create a transformative and cognitive space for women through the processes involved in constructing a scheme and then promoting its use. For women's libraries, it is to guide users through physical and knowledge space differently, to make new connections, and for women not to be surprised or confused by unexpected assumptions and exclusions that historical schemes may provide, as Chapter Eight commented on in relation to The Women's Library and Dewey. Understanding the world differently through the creation and employment of feminist-inspired schemes is a form of gendertopia that can have importance for women as individuals and groups in personal insights and knowledge development, and in group cohesion and empowerment. Having detailed outstanding issues concerning gender, feminisms and librarianship at the start of the twenty-first century, I now reflect on the potential shape of gendertopic librarianship that integrates the outcomes of third wave feminism with librarianship.

### ***Gendertopic librarianship : typology and conditions***

I now draw on the three waves of British feminism as articulated during the last two centuries as applied to librarianship to build a model of a potential form of librarianship that could be

termed third wave and gendertopic, along with a tangible set of conditions. This is undertaken with the knowledge that gendertopia, as derived from heterotopia, primarily refers to a physical space as has already been applied, particularly in relation to women's libraries, but for this conclusion, the meaning is being utilised to refer to ideological and critical intentions within the theory and practice of librarianship. It would be expected that a third wave feminist librarianship would include learning from each feminist / librarianship wave to compose a new form of theory and practice appropriate to the contemporary challenges of both mainstream librarianship and the interpretation of librarianship occurring within women's libraries and archives. Clearly as already described, within each feminist wave, different notions and applications of feminism existed, often causing schisms and affecting the likelihood of large-scale change, but for this conclusion the main characteristic themes from each period are summarised. This review will use as important reference points the five pivotal areas of third wave feminist interest that have been the framework for the last part of the thesis and some of the conclusion.

It is important to recall initially, that contemporary librarianship's tensions and crises rest in areas strongly linked to these five conditions that as demonstrated are often contested and ambiguous. Secondly, during the first and second wave feminist periods, librarianship was partly challenged as a patriarchal manifestation that prevented the full participation of women. However, a coherent unified theory that could be termed feminist librarianship has been lacking, partly through difficulties in utilising feminism as an ideological tool or mechanism for change as described. Women's libraries have had also had reservations about wishing to adopt such a term because of ambivalence about their relationship to librarianship overall, and a desire to promote feminisms or women's interests, rather than librarianship, as Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten and comments above indicated. So, although a conscious organised set of critiques is not extant, evidence will be gathered from throughout my investigation to support my final conclusions.

### *Responses from the first wave*

To reflect key concerns of the first wave feminist period, feminist librarianship would need to promote women's equality as independent beings and their full participation as workers and users of libraries. It would be expected that women would have equality as practitioners within the library, and would contribute to all aspects on equal terms with men. This would include involvement in the professional library associations, in library education and in ensuring that librarianship understood and incorporated women's potential, without it being marginalised or seen as an adjunct to dominant male interests. Women should be able to gain employment and their skills and aptitudes recognised as important as those of men. The

efforts of pioneering library women in challenging misogyny and exclusion should be encouraged and their work publicised.

As readers and library users, women should be able to use the library unfettered and freely, without requiring the permission of men or to remain within restricted areas. They should find material in the library that represents women's contribution to society, and their full interests and concerns. They should be able to access information that will help them progress their individual and collective input into society, the economy and their family. Libraries should be designed with women's needs in mind, not as men's studies or offices, and should provide space for women's visible creativity and work. Women's academic needs should be met by the library to enhance their educational opportunities and to allow them to move into areas of employment that may have been previously unavailable.

First wave feminism arose during a period in which other areas of marginalisation and discrimination were of less interest to some women who were committed to women's suffrage, and notions from this period into the third wave would thus need some expansion. Equal access for all should be explicit within gendertopic librarianship, and the gendertopic library. The needs of all library users in the twenty-first century would be recognised, including minority ethnic users, disabled people, refugees and asylum-seekers, children and young people, and older citizens. A gendertopic librarianship would no longer have an overtly white, middle class image, as wider education and training would be accessible to all, within an occupation that had carefully examined and acted upon its inheritance.

For such developments to take place, other structures would need to be addressed. The underpinnings of the library, like cataloguing and classification, should present men and women as equal, and not position women as a sub-set of men. Other groups like minority ethnic people, lesbians and gay men, or those who are disabled, should not be viewed as deviating from the classificatory norm. Schemes should avoid assumptions or stereotyping and a broader range of people with a variety of identifications and identities should be involved in their compilation and in decision-making about how subjects are knowledge are understood and categorised. The first wave feminist period is therefore bringing into gendertopic librarianship core notions and values about equality in employment and access, in and in the structures and underpinnings of the library. It is concerned to challenge and amend some of the exclusions that women and other social groups have experienced, and to champion the voices of those who have been silenced. I will now carry out a similar exercise with the second wave feminist period and extract the components that it can bring to gendertopic librarianship.

### *Responses from the second wave*

From a second wave feminist position, women's needs and interests should be fully understood by all aspects of librarianship and the library. For this to happen the nature of librarianship concerning gender relations needs to be fully understood, and the needs of women as librarians, paraprofessionals and library users seen as a priority. A second wave feminist view of gendertopic librarianship would require feminist positions to be made explicit and for beliefs and value systems to be overt and public. This would also mean that women librarians would need to be open about their work identity and feminist commitment, and be actively concerned with promoting the positive outcomes of both of these identities the workplace without punishment or restrictions on their careers. Such a perspective requires that professional library associations accept the existence of gender inequality internally and externally. It also requires the acknowledgement that they have a role firstly, in supporting the eradication of gender inequality in society and in librarianship; secondly, in openly advocating for the equality of all marginalised groups, and thirdly, in understanding that challenges will thus be made to librarianship theory and practice and its constituent parts concerning the treatment of women and others.

From a second wave feminist viewpoint, knowledge within a gendertopic library should be wide and inclusive and meet the needs of women from all backgrounds. It should include women's own writings and have separate women's sections to draw attention to the creativity of women, which would be left unacknowledged or uncatalogued in libraries that are not gendertopic. Library stock should include material published by women's organisations and groups, and link to and support grassroots women's organisations. Materials should be organised with reference to classification schemes reviewed from a feminist perspective and either amended or an alternative devised and introduced. Women should be encouraged to use the library to meet their information needs and beyond, and the infrastructure and facilities should include crèches and other supports that facilitate women's involvement and recognise the social exclusion that mother and many other women feel. The expansion of library space to promote women's social interaction would be paramount, as would its ability to provide a range of services and resources for women as groups and individuals within a safe space for all women including minority ethnic women and lesbians. Such activities could include local women's services, the development of library-based groups, and the organisation of events and displays promoting women and their experiences.

As Chapter Two began, and other chapters continued, the second wave feminist movement made huge strides in highlighting gender inequality and in promoting the rights of women at all levels, but had some difficulty in incorporating the multi-faceted nature of women into its analysis. For the second wave to contribute fully to gendertopic librarianship, it would bring

an explicit set of principles about the unifying features of women's gendered experience along with a more overt promotion of the desire for equality for all women, championed and defined by a wider constituency of women. Such a perspective would bring these challenging ideas into the training of librarians to explain the gendered nature of librarianship and the need for a more inclusive notion of gender.

### *Responses from the third wave*

Contributions from the first and second feminist waves to gendertopic librarianship as proposed have already reversed some of its long-standing structures. Librarianship is no longer associated with women librarians managed by men and many of its classic components, like classification schemes, have been revised and made less powerful. The library is an inclusive and welcoming place that offers a range of opportunities to the whole population and sees its mission as one of empowerment and the achievement of social and economic equality. From a third wave feminist perspective, these important changes would be built upon to maximise the potential that a gendertopic librarianship could offer. Such a construction would integrate third wave interpretations of the five key facets that have already been identified and utilised – trajectories, identities, space, feminisms and classification and librarianship.

Third wave feminism would promote a gendertopic librarianship that promoted wider understandings and awareness of the inheritance and trajectories of all aspects of librarianship and the bodies and structures associated with it. It would wish to interrogate further the histories of other groups of librarians and library users, besides women, to understand their external experience and its internal impacts, along with their experience of living within different social and cultural contexts. This would be with a view to explore further the complex influences that have shaped librarianship and its application, and the effects that this had on its participants and subjects. Third wave feminism would also wish to investigate the trajectories and functions of other library and information services that have developed, both to understand their development and effects, but also to utilise that understanding and its outcomes within gendertopic librarianship. It would argue that those studying librarianship, and those working as practitioners, worked in a range of settings including women's libraries, local community projects and across sectors to gain wider understandings into their work and inheritance.

As already discussed, the subversion and adoption of multiple librarian identities through cyberspace is increasing and manifests power and uncertainty alongside a postmodern aesthetic. Such activities are clearly open to third wave feminist support, along with an explicit integration of understandings of gender inequality and other forms of social

exclusion. Playing with librarian images, and challenging their historical dominance by sexist archetypes, would be contained within gendertopic librarianship, but considering and understanding the identity claims of library users would be crucial. Thinking about library users, not the librarian, would be paramount. Community engagement and public participation are contemporary political credos, greatly affecting libraries reliant on public moneys, yet also activities would be supported by a gendertopic librarianship that advocated equality, meaningful access to information for all, and for the space for library users to reflect on their motivations and satisfaction levels. If librarianship and the role of the librarian were less contested in gendertopic librarianship, those who use the library could become much more central.

Engagements with library users take place within libraries, physical spaces that offer in reality increasing opportunities to access different forms of information and other services and resources. Within these spaces, virtual space is increasingly the place that people wish to visit, and is typically a main attraction for many visitors. Within gendertopic librarianship, both spaces would exist but would be of a wider range, and would include the increasing incorporation of spaces that are not libraries but that would be seen as part of its continuum. The contemporary library space, however postmodern and different from the sandstone Carnegie building, is not always attractive to the whole population, and so gendertopic librarianship would need to get out more. Library activities would take place in health centres where borrowing books could be combined with a visit to the doctor; a trip to the supermarket could involve emailing via the public library's linked server, and seeing a film at a local cinema could bring someone into contact with a worker promoting a women's literacy group at the local library. The gendertopic, transformative potential of the work of the library would be everywhere. In all these interactions, the multiple needs of all potential users would have been considered and incorporated and the development and maintenance of partnerships between statutory and voluntary agencies would have taken place.

If such a deconstructed public library space existed, as is becoming more a possibility within some British library services and as Glasgow Women's Library of the women's libraries that have been studied perhaps demonstrates, arguably underpinnings of the typical library space and librarianship itself, like classification schemes, are less relevant. The totemic power of classification schemes is partly maintained by their continuation as an important sole entry point into a library collection that is viewed and perceived as an entity. Deconstructing historical notions of the library, librarianship and the librarian, critiquing classification schemes in the ways that have already been suggested, and including the pivotal role of the Internet in both reclaiming and undermining classification schemes may imply that a gendertopic librarianship would view classification schemes as less important and of decreasing power. It is true that the modern day library student learns little about

classification schemes and they are viewed to an extent as ancient relics. It is important to acknowledge that even within the gendertopic librarianship as has so far been proposed, there remains a need to remember the gendered construction of librarianship and that classification schemes still hold clues and evidence of note. Having established what a gendertopic librarianship could be like, I now conclude by setting out the practical conditions required for such possibilities to be realised.

### *Conditions of gendertopia*

Gendertopic librarianship is possible to imagine; arguably many elements exist already and new thinking is continually broadening librarianship and the work of the most librarians. The end of the twentieth century has heralded major changes in British public librarianship, partly through changed governments, but also through technology and new responses to the changing nature and needs of the population. However, for the real underlying components of my vision of gendertopic librarianship to be developed, significant changes would be required. The role of the librarian is changing in reality and is causing concern and confusion, as well as being the source of ironic fun, and new individual and collective identifications. Other ways of being a librarian are being made possible with new identities and roles, but for gendertopic librarianship to become possible, the professional associations would be the first subject requiring change. The British library association has gone through a major merger during my investigation, and now engages with wider notions of library and information work and those who undertake it. However, its image and seeming inability to accept and challenge the true meaning of librarianship's longstanding feminised status, whatever the effects (financial and otherwise) of the entry of more men into a more technological librarianship brings, is problematic. Besides this, the library associations still appear to find it hard to accept that the historical construction of the female librarian remains a barrier to progress.

Other areas would need some amendments to progress gendertopic librarianship. Librarians themselves would need to accept the variety of staff being involved in library and information work, some of whom who did not have formal librarianship training, as offering positive opportunities to progress beyond historical constraints. The lack of status that many librarians have in public-funded bureaucracies has been identified already as a barrier to increased conditions and greater recognition of the work of librarians. Moves towards separate pay and grading structures within public libraries and the National Health Service would help clarify the situation and status of staff working in a variety of library and information roles, and could provide a firmer notion of the librarian as having potentially a number of different career and educational trajectories, but possessing a recognisable core set of attributes and abilities that are identifiable and distinct.

Current circumstances indicate that this is a genuine turning-point for the model of librarianship that Dewey and others developed, that has clearly already been tested and amended but still has some significance as an iconic set of practices and conditions. The numerous challenges and forces reigned against it remaining intact are increasingly powerful, the opportunities being offered are immense, and although it is necessary to acknowledge its power, and address as appropriate its inheritance, there is a clear necessity to move on to a new period of librarianship. The notion of the hybrid librarian, working across multiple areas with a range of skills and engagement with both the theory and practice of librarianship, is a positive way forward for an occupation that has changed before but that has perhaps had less opportunity for such large-scale possibilities.

Gendertopic librarianship would need to resist the constraints of the past and allow its practitioners to engage in wider opportunities to network and develop partnerships. This is increasingly taking place and can incorporate both practical and theoretical possibilities. For example, Glasgow City Libraries are working with my organisation, in the National Health Service, to provide information and library services within community-based reproductive and sexual health clinics, that operate with a stated awareness of gender and its impacts, and that are being remodelled to reach a wider range of users than currently the case. These proposals should provide health service users with expanded and linked services where information and library activities can be accessed while coming for a sexual health check-up for example, but public library staff would be working within an environment beyond the archetypal library space, where their work could be specifically viewed as health-promoting. Such activities mirror many other examples of joint working between public libraries and other agencies, but the funding and statutory arrangements often make such partnerships difficult or moribund. Gendertopic librarianship would demand flexibility of funding and the potential for the maximisation of resources across all sectors to develop the most transformative services possible within the library and with other settings.

As I conclude my investigation, I can observe much change and progress in some of the trajectories that I have interrogated as part of this process. At the start of the twenty-first century, librarianship is in some areas beginning to seize new opportunities for development and moving away from some of the constraints and inhibiting factors derived from the past, and is perhaps coming to terms with itself more maturely. However there are still concerning signs of the continued gendered construction of librarianship, and for some of the women's libraries where forms of gendertopic librarianship can be found to different degrees, this is also a reason for their ongoing, although in some case, very fragile, existence. In gendertopic librarianship women's libraries perhaps should be defunct, as their services and empowering attitudes towards users and clients would be mainstreamed within all services. However, if gendertopia integrates choice and recognises the need for multiple spaces and identities, even

ones that individuals and groups adopt and use at different times and places, then they should remain as an alternative to, and resource for, the mainstream and the public, alongside a much fuller incorporation of their ethos and contents across all services. Gendertopic librarianship is one way of considering a new model of librarianship that accepts its role in redressing inequalities and in advocating for collective and individual needs, where women are visibly at the centre as active agents of change, rather than viewed as stereotyped harpies or repressed women in sensible shoes.

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## Appendix One : Interview questions

Note : The questions were prompts and not asked in the same order or necessarily in full. The emphasis changed depending on whether the interviewee worked in a mainstream library or a women's library, and some questions were not asked.

### *Section 1 : Librarianship as an organisation and institution*

Main themes :

- 
- personal history as feminist and librarian
- identity as librarian and feminist
- working within women-centred setting
- experience of women librarians in male-dominated occupation
- feminist activity and awareness
- feminism and links to librarianship

*Questions :*

1. What is your current job and what does it involve ?
2. Can you tell me how you got involved in librarianship / this work ?
3. Is doing this work important to you ? Why ?
4. Would you describe yourself as a feminist ?
5. Is that important to you ? Why ?
6. How long would you say you have identified as being a feminist ?
7. Has your interest in feminism changed since you became involved in librarianship / this library ?
8. Could you tell me about any / other women's activities that you have been involved in ?
9. Tell me about yourself as a librarian / do you identify as a librarian ?
10. What does being a librarian mean to you ?
11. How does feminism link to the work that you do ?
12. Can you describe where being a feminist has supported or informed your current work ?

13. Where have you found a feminist analysis most effective ?
14. Are / how are issues of feminism discussed in the library ?
15. Why do you think so many librarians are women ?
16. Do you feel that their experience differs from that of yourself and your colleagues ?
17. Have you a view on whether librarianship is a good career for women ?

*Section 2 : The practice of librarianship*

Main themes :

- censorship and ideology
  - feminist critiques of librarianship
  - constraints of public funding
  - profession of librarianship
18. What is the history of this library / organisation ?
  19. In what ways do libraries / women's libraries promote women and feminism ?
  20. How does public funding, or the lack of it, affect this library ?
  21. What would happen if there was more funding ?
  22. Are there times when you have dealt with users or issues that you feel sit uneasily with feminism / your views as a feminist ?
  23. Can you describe the ways that you promote feminism to library users - where have they been most successful ?
  24. Do you think that having women-only libraries are a good thing ?
  25. Do you feel that other libraries, like public libraries / women's libraries promote the needs of women ?

*Section 3 : Librarianship as a profession and power*

Main themes :

- gender dynamics in librarianship
- feminist libraries
- feminist deconstruction of librarianship

- professional issues and professional associations
26. Do you think that the theory and practice of librarianship is dominated by a male agenda ?
  27. Do you have a view on how women are covered in the materials that you work with, or how librarianship deals with knowledge ?
  28. Do you think that feminist ideas can help think about librarianship components like cataloguing and classification ?
  29. Have you ever read anything or attended any meetings about feminism and librarianship ?
  30. Are you aware of any libraries / librarians that work from a feminist perspective ?
  31. Have you ever linked with feminist librarians working in mainstream libraries / women's libraries ?
  32. Do you feel that your work is valued as much as male librarians / women who are trained librarians ?
  33. Would you ever consider training as a librarian ?