

WOMEN'S SERVICE LIBRARY

THE FIRST SEVEN YEARS.

P **PAMPHLET**

29 MARSHAM STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1.

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CITY OF LONDON POLYTECHNIC  
FAWCETT COLLECTION

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## WOMEN'S SERVICE LIBRARY.

### THE FIRST SEVEN YEARS.

Women's Service Library is a Special Library covering subjects useful to women as citizens. Its most important section is devoted to the economic position of women in this and other countries, with reference specially to their employment. It covers also general economic, social and political subjects, including public health, education, central and local government, League of Nations, etc. It contains a large biographical section (mainly the lives of women) and a collection of the history of the Women's Movement which is probably unique.

#### History of the Library.

Although Women's Service Library only came into being in 1926, the London and National Society for Women's Service whose Library it is, began its existence in 1866 as the first Society for Women's Suffrage in England. The Library was therefore inaugurated in its jubilee year.

#### Premises.

Women's Service Library first saw the light of day in a converted public house in Marsham Street, Westminster. The Librarian's desk had about it a bar-like aspect, and to the end the premises contrived to wear a look more usually associated with beer than with books. The collection it housed was at first a small one, but expansion was rapid, and by the end of 1929 it was already bursting its bounds.

In that year, however, by the generosity of a



benefactor, new premises, also in Marsham Street, had been built for the Society. These included a beautiful Library, a Reading Room and a Bookstore. A generous grant made by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust for equipment made it possible to house the books worthily in shelves of a pleasing tone of natural oak and to provide library fittings of the same colour and material. Their grant for the purchase of books has enabled the Library to maintain an up-to-date collection of works on its special subjects and thereby greatly assisted it to expand its sphere of usefulness. It was in January, 1930, that the Library was moved to its present quarters.

### Contents.

The Library now contains some 5,000 volumes, and includes on permanent loan the Crosby Hall collection of feminist books and the Edward Wright and Cavendish Bentinck library. In the antique section of the latter are many rarities and valuable first editions, a number of books dating back to the earlier half of the Seventeenth Century. Some sixty current periodicals are taken, including the leading foreign feminist papers. The collection of English periodicals dealing with the Women's Movement dates from 1858 and is almost complete. Students of the social history of the latter half of the Nineteenth Century have found in this periodical literature a most valuable source of information. A special feature is made of Government publications, as it has been found in practice that these are hard to come by elsewhere. Hansard is taken regularly, and the bound volumes of the House of Commons Debates date back to 1900. Reports and pamphlets issued by Associations, including much early propaganda issued by the Women's Suffrage Societies, form a useful feature of the Library. There is also an interesting collection of Autograph Letters written mainly by the pioneers of the Women's Movement, and relating chiefly to the Movements for Women's Suffrage and the Higher Education of Women. The press is carefully cut

daily, and the newscuttings are catalogued and classified on the Universal Decimal Classification which is in use throughout the Library.

### Catalogue.

The Library is catalogued under Authors and Subjects, and there is a printed Index to the Subject Catalogue.

### Some Statistics.

The steady growth of the Library's work is shown by the following statistics:—

	<i>Books taken out by borrowers</i>	<i>Transactions with the National Central Library</i>	<i>Enquiries</i>
1926-27	379	—	52
1927-28	536	—	98
1928-29	891	34	128
1929-30	1,077	69	201
1930-31	1,186	104	230
1931-32	1,276	144	234

The number of books borrowed is admittedly small, but in a Special Library of this type much of the work, which takes the form of research, is done on the premises.

### Users of the Library.

Though primarily for members of the Society, the Library has been used extensively by non-members, including many distinguished foreigners. Among its most constant users are Members of Parliament and their Secretaries, Local Councillors, Civil Servants, Political Organisations of all parties, Voluntary Associations, Social Workers, University Professors, Lecturers, Research Workers and Students, Authors, Journalists and Public Speakers.

### Purposes for which use has been made of the Library.

The purposes for which the Library has been used include the writing of books and articles, the preparation of lectures and speeches and the collection of material for



debates—Parliamentary and otherwise. Persons giving evidence before Royal Commissions have sought here for material for the preparation of their cases. Tutorial classes in the North of England have been supplied with books and information. Much research has been carried out within its walls, and considerable use has been made of its resources by English, American and German students engaged on writing theses involving a study of the position of women at different periods, and especially the history of their emancipation. Nor is the Library used solely for the purpose of instruction and mind-improvement. Much reading is done, the object of which is primarily amusement, and much advice is sought on such comparatively frivolous questions as the choice of a play or a new dress.

#### Work in Foreign Countries.

During the last five years, information has been supplied to the following countries, either as a result of a request received by post or through the personal visit of a national:—

Austria	Holland
Australia.	Japan.
Estonia.	Poland.
Finland	Spain.
France.	Sweden.
Germany.	Switzerland
Greece.	United States of America.

Some idea of the nature of the information asked for and supplied to other countries can be gathered from the following extracts from the list of such enquiries:—

1. **Estonia.** A request was received from a member of the Estonian Federation of University Women for a list of biographies of famous Englishwomen and of books on Women's Questions. This information was to be used in compiling the Estonian Encyclopaedia, to the women of which country had been allotted the task of writing those sections dealing specially with women.

2. **France.** Statistical information on the progress of Englishwomen in the Professions since 1921 and on their fitness for certain types of industry was sent to a French writer for use in a book.

3. **Germany.** A German Social Worker made a study in the Library of the law relating to children in England, with special reference to the legal position of the illegitimate child, guardianship, adoption and provision for orphan children. Her visit to England formed part of a tour of the Northern Countries, her object being the amendment, where necessary, of the law relating to children in Germany.

Three German students were given help in the writing of theses by the sending of books and information to Germany. In two cases the student later visited England and made further use of the Library before completing her thesis.

Material supplied by the Library formed the basis of a text book on the social history of Englishwomen during the last hundred years which has recently been compiled for use in the higher forms of girls' schools in Germany.

4. **Holland.** A Dutch Master of Law visited the Library, where she made a study of the position of women in English Universities and the higher education of women. Books were later sent to her in Holland to enable her to complete her work.

5. **Japan.** A Japanese post-graduate student made a study in the Library of the status and work of women in England.

6. **Spain.** A Spanish journalist sought information on the position of Englishwomen in the professions and public life, with a view to holding them up as an example to the women of his own country.

7. **United States of America.** An American research student made use of the Library for the purpose of investigating the work of Englishwomen in the International field, and many similar enquiries have been received from the United States.



### Other Special Enquiries.

Much work has also been done for enquirers from the United Kingdom, and information has been supplied on such subjects as the following:—

1. Co-option of members to sub-Committees of Town and County Councils, and to what extent such Committees must include women.
2. Dates of granting of Women's Suffrage throughout the British Dominions.
3. Right of women to hold property in various countries throughout the world.
4. Limitations and restrictions imposed on the work of professional women in Great Britain, and status and prospects of women in different careers.
5. Number of Women Members in Legislatures throughout the world.
6. Examples of women starting life as shorthand typists who later rose to wealth and position.

### Bibliographies.

In 1929 a short bibliography on the Women's Movement in Great Britain was compiled for inclusion among the booklists issued by the National Book Council. Other short (unpublished) bibliographies on the Position of Englishwomen between the years 1700 and 1750 and the History of Women from Primitive to Modern Times were compiled respectively for a German student taking the subject for her thesis and the leader of a Tutorial Class.

### Organisations with which the Library is in Touch.

Women's Service Library is an outlier of the National Central Library, to whom in the last year it has been indebted for the loan of 84 books. In the same period it lent 60 books to the National Central Library. It is also a member of the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux, and contributes to its List of Unpublished Information.

The extension of 396, the classification number for feminism, worked out for use in Women's Service Library, has been accepted in its entirety by the Commission Internationale de la Classification Decimale for incorporation in the Universal Decimal Classification.

### Library Rules.

The use of the Library is free to members, and books may be borrowed by non-members on payment of 3d. a week per volume. Book boxes for special studies can sometimes be arranged. To borrowers resident out of London, books can be sent by post or rail on payment of carriage. Books may be kept for a fortnight, and can be renewed at the end of this period if not required by other borrowers. There is no limit to the number of books that may be taken out at one time.

Information is given on all subjects covered by the Library for the following fees:—

	To members	To non-member
For simple enquiries	6d.	1/-
For enquiries involving much work	1/-	2/6

Research can also be undertaken at the rate of 2/6 per hour.

The Committee are most anxious that the fullest possible use should be made of the Library. They believe that many people would be glad to avail themselves of its services but for the fact that they are unaware of its existence. Those making considerable use of it would probably wish to become members of the Society, but the Library is also open for a small charge to non-members, and visits or letters from those who feel they might find something to interest them will be warmly welcomed.

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**PAMPHLET**