



# Feminist Archive North

## Newsletter No. 5 Summer 2011

[www.feministarchivenorth.org.uk/](http://www.feministarchivenorth.org.uk/)  
blog - <http://fanorth.wordpress.com/>



This issue focuses on outreach – how we've been getting our message across. Since the first Newsletter over four years ago, the archive has grown enormously. Many important collections have been donated, from activist groups, education departments, local authority-sponsored projects, arts centres, and individuals – we can barely keep up with the basic preparation and recording.

But it's just as important as growing the archive to ensure that ever more people know of this fantastically rich and varied resource – and feel welcome to use it. So we must spread the word in every way we can - through working with other bodies, with exhibitions, by our website and other electronic media, but also by encouraging personal visitors. This all helps to make sure that the struggles and achievements of feminists - which benefit women *and* society - become more widely known and appreciated.

So first, a brief report on the range of recent requests we've met, with an appreciation by one of our real live research visitors. Then from our part in the university-wide centenary celebrations of International Women's Day reports ripple out through our major contribution to a Leeds City Council exhibition of Anti-Apartheid activities in the 1980s, to tracking the usage of our Learning Journey on the internet.

All this activity takes people-power and money. But FAN receives no funding and has no paid staff. How much we can do depends entirely on volunteers and donations as the last newsletter item makes clear. Any contribution you can make will be welcomed. We really need your help!

*Ailsa Swarbrick*

Thanks to the continuing support of the Brotherton Library's Special Collections, and the five volunteers who contributed to this issue.



## Recent Requests and Acquisitions

- FAN was able to supply a member of the public with a copy of the Working Women's Charter of 1976
- The Pavilion women's photography and arts exhibition collections were consulted by several researchers (See website Newsletter No.1 for Treasures article on the Pavilion)
- Various publications held in the extensive Periodical collection were requested (see website for details)
- Written and visual material about the Leeds Reclaim the Night marches from the 1970s onward were requested
- Items from the Leeds Women Against Apartheid collection were borrowed for an exhibition in the Leeds City Museum from mid-July (see website Newsletter No.2 for Treasures article on LWAA)

## Researcher & graduate of Ripon St John's, York Elizabeth Thorpe writes -

*I first discovered the Feminist Archive North while researching for my undergraduate dissertation on the impact of the 1970s women's liberation movement on local women. I was looking for primary sources on local groups and a quick internet search took me to the archive centre at the University of Leeds. At the archive centre I was able to delve into a vast amount of material, from magazines such as Shrew to conference minutes, with the help of the staff who not only provided friendly and helpful guidance but also advice and suggestions to improve my search. They even put me in contact with a lady who had been part of Bolton's Liberation Group, enabling me to back up my written documents with a personal account. Being able to access such an in depth range of local material undoubtedly strengthened my work and provided an education on a key event in history on a much more real and personal level. I would like to thank FAN for their contribution not only to my dissertation but to highlighting the passion and struggle it took to get to where we are today.*

FAN has received a collection of papers related to the development of Women's Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University. The papers consist of policy documents, minutes of meetings, course outlines, student evaluations, etc. The

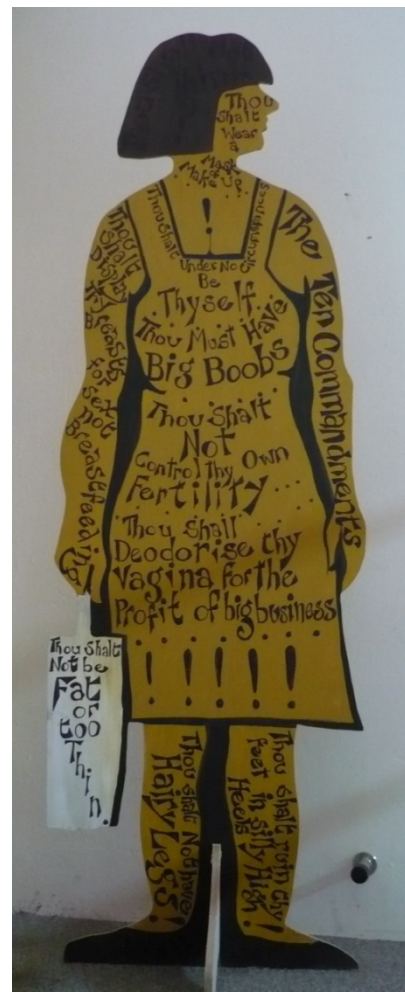
material will fill about 10 archive boxes once they have been catalogued. Fan holds other collections of Women's Studies courses, administration and organisation from the University of Bradford, Bradford College, York and Saint John's University.

*Elaine Glover*

## International Women's Day - the Centenary!

Our contribution to International Women's Day 2011 was an exhibition in the Brotherton Room on 10<sup>th</sup> March as part of the University's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. We were delighted to be invited by Kathy Aveyard of Leeds University Equality Service to join in, as she advertised our event widely and this helped us to make links.

We'd also like to thank Janet Morton of the Sociology Department for her help in publicity, particularly for arranging a small display with one of the Bolton WLG life-size figures down in the foyer of the library. This certainly attracted attention!





We decided to put together an exhibition of campaign material with a focus on Leeds. Staff cleared the Brotherton Room for us so we were able to use tables, stands and display cases for the more valuable material. We displayed posters, articles about activism, leaflets and newsletters. These covered Male Violence Against Women including Domestic Violence, Rape, Childhood Sexual Abuse, Sexual Harassment and Pornography, and posters and pictures of Reclaim the Night marches. There was a large display of material from Leeds Women Against Apartheid; and also other struggles including Clause 28, some current Leeds Campaigns such as CROP (Coalition for the Removal Of Pimping) SARSVL (Support After Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds) and a current Leeds University Union one – against Sexual Harassment. A video (from Bolton Women's Liberation Group) and a CD played all day, and we had a rota of six volunteers on hand to answer questions and talk to the visitors.

About 40 people came to visit the exhibition including many from the University Feminist Society with which we had made links. Comments included "Wonderful Display – Inspirational Stuff", "I didn't realise FAN had such treasures in its archive." "Really enjoyed looking at the exhibition" "Nice to see the Anti Apartheid Collection" "Great to see Leeds Women's History".

Sandra McNeill

### Voices Against Apartheid - Leeds City Council Schools' Project

This summer FAN has a wonderful opportunity to raise our profile locally. Leeds City Council invited us to join their project to create a permanent record of Anti-Apartheid campaigns in Leeds. A particularly lively group of activists here during the 1970s and 1980s worked to help bring down the oppressive and racist system in South Africa: it was this which led the Council to twin with Durban and invite Nelson Mandela to Leeds in 2001 to receive the Freedom of the city.

Nearly 20 years after liberation it's important the younger generation is aware of Leeds AAs part in the struggle. Students from six high schools have interviewed campaign survivors (including two FAN volunteers) and a selection from our Leeds Women Against

Apartheid holding will be in the City Museum exhibition during July and August.



By the mid-1980s when South African state oppression and township violence were escalating, women in Leeds AA urgently wanted to publicise the desperate position of women there, and increase practical support. Many, experienced in the feminist activism of the 70's and political resistance e.g. Women Against Pit Closures, were used to organising co-operatively in a non-hierarchical way. We set up a women's group, affiliated to the national AA, rapidly becoming a very effective campaigning force with a focus on women and children. Locally, we made links with other women's groups to hold public day-schools, organise boycotts, and collect medical and school supplies. LWAA skills auctions, women's cabaret and karaoke nights, all helped raise funds especially for the Soshungu Women 's League in a township near Pretoria. Memorably, in November 1993 just before liberation I was invited to a joyous



meeting there – an impossibility even a year before.

FAN's display in the exhibition is a colourful reminder of those heady times – carrier bags in ANC colours, orange and lemon balloons from the Boycott Bandwagon, custom-made T-shirts and greetings cards, display-boards of photos and posters, leaflets promoting Material Aid and library exhibitions. Although much has been lost, including the fabulous appliquéd banner, these were rescued by a core of LWAA members from attics and garages and donated to FAN. And this brings home FAN's role in ensuring that women's activism is no longer 'hidden from history'.

*Ailsa Swarbrick*

### **My Learning - Using Google Analytics**

In Newsletter 4 we reported on our Learning Journey (LJ) - Feminist Activism: Education and Job Opportunities, on the My Learning website (an online educational resource run by Museums, Libraries and Archives). The My Learning website now uses Google Analytics which, once we have familiarised ourselves with the rather complex reports, will enable us to analyse more accurately and in more detail how our LJ is being used – the number of visitors, which pages they visit and how long they stay on each page. The LJ, now in it's third year, continues to attract a steady trickle of users each day and we are currently working on the next Learning Journey – Feminist Activism: The Fight for Equal Pay.

*Lynette Willoughby*

### **VOLUNTEERS**

FAN is a volunteer led archive where new volunteers are always welcome. At the moment there are 15 working on different collections beginning with basic preservation and through to database cataloguing. Volunteers may have worked in archives previously or have no previous experience, and may or may not have computer skills. Tasks are allocated and training is provided as needed.

The key, ongoing, and basic activity is the preservation of donated collections. This involves removing staples, replacing paperclips and re-boxing in acid free archival boxes. These are then labelled, numbered

and added to the database of the collections and their locations. There are also books from organisational collections and Women's Liberation Movement posters. Collections include papers, newsletters, journals, pamphlets, dissertations, books, posters, badges, fabrics, and audio-visual material.

Other activities include responding to emails and requests for materials, work on the newsletter and Learning Journeys, website maintenance, interviewing WML activists and organising outreach events. There really is something for everyone.

FAN is open two days a week, at the moment Wednesday and Thursday, though days may alter given volunteer availability. Ideally, we hope volunteers can give a day a week although the amount of time and its regularity varies from occasional to every week. If you have any time you can give please contact us to discuss further your interests and how you may be able to contribute to FAN.

*Jalna Hanmer*

### **FINANCES – GIVE A BOX A MONTH**

As a volunteer-led archive FAN depends upon donations and fundraising. The basic expenses consist of the purchase of acid free boxes, stainless steel paperclips, acid free paper, the website server and domain name, print cartridges, and other small items. Archival materials are expensive. **Each acid free box costs £5.00.** FAN has basic expenses of £2,000 a year.

FAN volunteers also raise funds but we need regular donations to meet our basic needs. **£5.00 a month paid into the FAN bank account buys a box.** As FAN is a charity, donations can be gift aided. We need your support and ask you to consider filling in the enclosed form. Thank you.

*Jalna Hanmer*

This newsletter was edited and produced by Ailsa Swarbrick and Lynette Willoughby

**WANTED URGENTLY –  
A VOLUNTEER SKILLED IN  
DATABASE SYSTEMS AND  
WEBSITE MAINTENANCE.**



