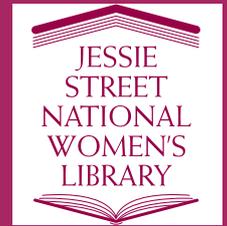


NEWSLETTER

To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful — Ursula Le Guin



Brazen Hussies looking back – 50 years on

In collaboration with the film's producers, Andrea Foxworthy and Philippa Campey, the Library hosted a screening of the iconic documentary, *Brazen Hussies*, on 24 May. It was wonderful to celebrate the diversity and passion of the women's liberation movement. Thanks to Susan Price for all her organising work.

View from the stalls

I sat in the packed cinema surrounded by my sisterhood, and a few brave men, revisiting the phenomenon that was the 1960s and '70s women's liberation movement. The documentary *Brazen Hussies* depicts the journey of discovery when women came together to question the status quo of patriarchy and its prevailing misogyny.

Women met to share grievances caused by the powerlessness and oppression that was the lot of most women in those days. They began to organise to demand equality; to achieve their aims they had to learn to trust each other.

The issues included unequal wages, mandatory retirement upon marriage, lack of childcare, no financial support for single mothers, limited abortion rights, obliviousness about rape and domestic violence, and voicelessness in government. The Whitlam Government in 1972 listened to the protestors, appointed the first women's advisor, and made legislative and financial changes. Of course there was a backlash – conservative forces and marginalised groups felt threatened. Those groups too have their say in this film.

The documentary features iconic women such as Germaine Greer, Liz Reid, Anne Summers and Eva Cox as well as the founders of organisations such as Women's Liberation and the Women's Electoral Lobby. It also includes freshly uncovered archival footage of interviews, marches, meetings and protests

by thousands of women around Australia.

In the 1970s, I had no time for feminist rallies, stuck at home with two small children. I felt oppressed and my career had stalled but I was only vaguely aware of other women's activism. Now as a volunteer at the Library my feminism has been reinvigorated. I have discovered the camaraderie of women trying to preserve women's voices, words and historical artefacts - those precious records of women's activism that will inform the documentary makers of the future. Young women who may not be aware of the tremendous gains for women made by the efforts of early feminists should see this brilliant documentary.

Barbara Henery

View from the panel

After the film I was one of four panellists sharing our experiences. I spoke of being transported back 50 years, to the exhilarating, intoxicating days of second wave feminism. When everything I had been conditioned to as a woman was up for grabs. Daily decisions ranged from, will I wear lipstick? to how to help bring down the patriarchy while managing pregnancy, an increasingly bewildered husband, domestic chores and a full-time job.

But it was WEL that consumed me. I was part of the questionnaire development group surveying candidates on women's issues in the 1972 Federal election. I was also organising local Meet the Candidates events, giving

talks explaining WEL to various groups and holding consciousness raising sessions at home. We were riding the crest of a wave.

Daniela Torsh spoke of her years at SBS, of the trailblazing Sydney Women's Film Group, of the women's studies journal *Refractory Girl*, and of Women in Education. She described researching for the 1975 Schools Commission's report *Girls, School and Society*, so influential in removing barriers to girls' educational opportunities.

Barbara Levy recalled the early days of Sydney Women's Liberation in Glebe, as an inaugural member of the Sydney University Women's Liberation group and the MeJane Collective, the first Australian women's liberation newspaper.

Margo Moore was part of the collective which established CONTROL, the abortion referral service and then Leichhardt and Liverpool Women's Health centres in the early 1970s.

Listening to these dedicated and talented feminists, I was reminded of how their work changed attitudes to women's rights to realise their full potential. The struggle is not over, but the Brazen Hussies generation of activists blazed a trail to inspire subsequent generations, just as Jessie Street and her generation did before them.

Suzanne Marks



Brazen Hussies and Library co-branded T-shirts are still available. \$30 (plus \$5 postage and handling).

Money raised on the night (including the very popular Women's Lib logo underpants!) supports the film's ongoing impact campaign.

Contact Susan Price:
susan@jasep.com.au.com.au.

STOP PRESS!

Due to the continuation of the Covid lockdown, we regret that this year's Annual Luncheon has been cancelled. Tickets for the raffle will be sent in August and it will be drawn on 12 October.

Book Club report

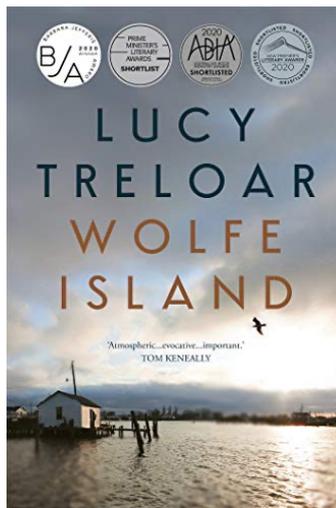
At our April meeting a lively discussion was prompted by the book *Truganini* by Cassandra Pybus. This revelatory story about a remarkably resilient woman could not be said to be 'enjoyable'. The ugly truth about the European treatment of indigenous Tasmanians, and especially the women, was never going to be an easy read. Our generation is gradually learning what has been swept under the carpet since European settlement: colonisation is all about theft and theft involves violence. Added to that are all the 'benefits' which our culture shared with the 'primitive' culture it displaced - guns, germs and alcohol. Government approved

genocide was just a step further!

The book planned for May - *Eleanor Dark, A Writer's Life* by Barbara Brooks - proved hard to obtain, so we moved to *Fugitive Blue* by Claire Thomas which had been planned for June.

Fugitive Blue highlights the endurance of art, following the journey through the ages of a forbidden painting created by a girl constrained by her gender in 15th century Venice, through many hands to those of a contemporary

art conservator in Melbourne. All of us were relieved that the multiple stories in this beautiful and cleverly written debut novel spirited us away from our troubled times. Furthermore, it was not replete with angst, though the ending bothered some of us. Highly commended.



We also discussed writer Kate Jennings who recently died in New York. We recalled how much we enjoyed her book *Moral Hazard*. Several of us went on to read her other books, *Stanley and Sophie* about her beloved border terriers and *Snake*. Both books are autobiographical and recommended by book club members.

For our meeting on 23 June we had planned to discuss *The Fictional Woman* by Tara Moss, but we went into Covid lockdown a day or two before everyone else. We have decided to read more non-fiction so are now planning to discuss *A Certain Style: Beatrice Davis a literary life* by Jacqueline Kent for 28 July. *Wolfe Island* by Lucy Treloar is our book for 25 August. Both are subject to the situation with the virus.

Barbara Henery

Capital Investment Fund

Since the Capital Investment Fund was launched in September 2009, the Library has aimed to reach a target of \$500,000.

This target has now been reached with your generous donations taking it to \$507,309!

The interest from the Fund provides essential support for Library operations. We are always grateful for your support which helps secure its future.

If you would like to contribute, please indicate on the membership/donation form on page 7.

CIF donations since February 2021

Bev Kingston, Kathleen Lamoureaux, Christine Yeats, NSW Retired Teachers Association

Jessie Street National Women's Library

Australia's National Women's Library is a specialist library, its focus being the collection and preservation of the literary and cultural heritage of women from all ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Aims

- To heighten awareness of women's issues
- To preserve records of women's lives and activities
- To support the field of women's history
- To highlight women's contribution to this country's development

Patrons

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Editorial Team

Kris Clarke, Jessica Stewart, Jan Burnswoods Editors; Tinderspark, Graphic Design



Commemorating Louisa Lawson

Born in 1848 near Mudgee, Louisa Lawson was the archetypal country woman, hardworking and resourceful, as portrayed in the women of her son Henry's short stories. She was also 'imperious, self-opinionated, self-righteous and confrontational'. As a child, her schooling was put aside while she looked after her siblings and attended to domestic duties. She married and bore five children, later moving to Sydney.

When her marriage failed, she took in sewing and boarders to support the family. She shared her father's talent for storytelling and wrote poetry, grieving the death of her youngest daughter. In 1888 she started *Dawn*, the first journal edited and printed by women, dedicated to women's activities and women's rights. By 1889, she employed 10 women. Over its 17 year lifespan, she wrote over 200 articles. Louisa lobbied for suffrage, access to higher education, temperance, support for widows, and reform of the marriage and divorce laws, while railing against the evils of prostitution, smoking, drunkenness and corsets. Louisa's *Dawn Club* evolved into the Womanhood Suffrage League of NSW. When her health failed she retired, supporting herself with writing, and died aged 72 in 1920, at Gladesville Mental Hospital.

While her son Henry had been immortalised in the bronze statue in the Domain, Louisa's contribution to feminism and Australian writing has not been commemorated in any significant way. After an interview with *The Bulletin* in 1896 that began with the sentence 'Many gifted men have had remarkable mothers,' Louisa countered. 'I hope someday to be able to look the public in the face as Louisa Lawson, not as the mother of a man.'

Having reached the 100 year anniversary of Louisa's death, and in recognition of her many achievements, a life-size bronze statue is planned for her hometown of Mudgee, sculpted by Eurunderee artist, Margot Stephens, and managed by the Rotary Club of Mudgee. There are also eight maquettes available (the final wax model for casting, left, above).

The cause has been taken up by Lesley Hughes, our proposed Annual Luncheon speaker this year; see her article 'Louisa Lawson, our first public feminist' in *The Monthly*, August 2020. If you would like to support this important project, please consider donating: louisalawson.org.au

Kris Clarke

Nola Harris – life member and centenarian

When we were advised, in a very courteous letter from Nola, that, because of her advanced age – 103 – she would be resigning as a member of the Library after more than twenty years, we immediately decided to award her Honorary Life Membership.

As Board Chair, I arranged a time with her to present our framed Certificate. Nola lives at Simmons Point in Balmain in a three storey brick house with panoramic views of the harbour. She is fit and ascends the stairs daily. Her bedroom is on the top floor with the best views! She has lived there since the 1980s and enjoyed the friendship of Margaret Fulton who lived across the road.

Nola travelled extensively in exotic and unexpected parts of the world when these were not so fashionable. She collects postcards and I saw some from Yemen and Tunisia.

Nola Harris (nee Lowrey) was born in 1918. She grew up in north Queensland in Gordonvale, south of Cairns. She was one of eight siblings. She left school at 14 and then moved to Burwood, New South Wales. She attended Stott and Underwood Business College and learnt shorthand. Indeed, she learnt it so well she won a prize for her outstanding results. This skill gave her employment as a court reporter for the Australian Army during World War II near Darwin. That journey to the Northern Territory was an adventure and she was the only woman in the back of the army truck for four days. She achieved the rank of Sergeant.

She married Norman Harris during the war in the Burwood Presbyterian Church. They had two sons.

Nola Harris lived and lives a full life. She remains modest about her achievements and is excellent company for all who enjoy reliving a period in Australian history marked by sacrifice and service.

Jozefa Sobski AM



The legacy of Jessie Street

Two recent events remind us of the honoured namesake of the Jessie Street National Women's Library and of the things that mattered most to her. Both would have pleased Jessie Street a great deal.

The first was the 65th meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). It took place at UN Headquarters in New York, meeting partly in person and partly virtually, given Covid. CSW continued its responsibility for overseeing the response of member nations to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action agreed at the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995. The priority theme this year was women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life.

That meeting brought back special memories for me. In March 1988 I was a member of the Australian delegation to that year's CSW meeting, in Vienna. I was a relatively new staff member at the Office for the Status of Women in the Prime Ministers Department. Our delegation in Vienna included two women diplomats to make sure we amateurs did not go clumping into any sensitive areas. My jobs were to write speeches, to draft the resolution we wanted to get passed (it was about provision of more adequate staff and funding) and to undertake what were called 'corridor negotiations' to get other delegations to support our resolution.

Jessie Street was one of the women who made sure that a Commission on the Status of Women was one of the founding Commissions of the United Nations. Jessie Street was the sole woman member of the Australian delegation to the conference in San Francisco in 1945 that established the UN. She was also one of those responsible for ensuring that the founding Charter included a commitment not only to equality of race, language or religion, but also of sex. In 1947-8 she was the first Australian representative to CSW and also its Vice President.

The driving passion of Jessie Street's life was her commitment to improvement in the human rights of neglected and disadvantaged people, including women, indigenous people and poorer nations. She was a lifelong idealist but also a tirelessly practical strategist in pursuit of her commitments.

One of the strategies she believed in, having lived through two World Wars, was the building of international structures to bring the nations of the world closer together and so work for the lessening of inequality and the achievement of world peace. She was a supporter of the League of Nations, disappointed by its failure to prevent a Second World War, but committed to the building of its successor, the United Nations. She later withdrew from frontline work in the UN after she decided that the powerful nations cared more about protecting their own interests than in living up to the principles of the Charter.

Still, Jessie never lost her hopes for CSW, and that coincided with another of her lifelong strategic convictions. She was committed to the importance of non-government (NGO) organisations and their representation of community opinions as an essential part of a vibrant democracy. She worked at the San Francisco conference to ensure that NGOs would have access to the work of the UN, including CSW.

The second recent event is that before, during and after this year's CSW meeting, means were provided to connect non-government women and organisations with all that was happening. This was done by the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA), the central structure within a set of women's alliances funded by the Federal Government to provide women's organisations with means of connecting with each other and of providing information to the government about women's concerns and proposals. The Library is one of 65 women's organisations connected in this way. As our Library's representative, I happily took part in the opportunities to observe the CSW meeting.

Jessie Street would have been very pleased.

Janet Ramsay



Woollahra Council honours Jessie Street

A plaque commemorating the life and work of Jessie Street was unveiled on 25 May on the footpath near 2 Greenoaks Avenue, Darling Point, where she lived for more than 40 years (the house has since been demolished).

Introducing the plaque, Woollahra Mayor Susan Wynne highlighted Jessie's achievements by pointing to her lifelong commitment as a feminist and activist in Australia and overseas. She proudly informed us that 60 percent of Woollahra Councillors are now women.

The quote she chose encapsulated the power of Jessie's lifelong commitment: 'I saw plainly that the reason for these discriminations [by my father] was to protect the status, rights, and privileges of the white man vis-à-vis women and the coloured races.' (Jessie Street, *Truth or Repose*, 1966 p 2).

The laying was attended by several members of the Jessie Street Trust, Woollahra councillors, members of Jessie's family including her grandson Grey Fingleton and great granddaughter Jessie Street. Our patron Justice Elizabeth Evatt AC and longstanding member Jeannette McHugh also attended.

Suzanne Marks

Jessie Street's desk chair

Tuesday 15 June was a day to mark an important acquisition for the Library. Members and volunteers gathered with Grey Fingleton, Jessie's grandson, who was officiating at the handover.

Jozefa introduced Grey, who recounted some of his early memories of Jessie. As a boy in 1953, he recalled visiting Jessie in her London home, where they listened to the newest LP records. He commented on a moment of feminist awakening for Jessie in 1938 on a European tour that included Russia. Jessie was impressed with the communist women's 'can-do' attitude.

As part of the formalities, Grey and Jozefa added their signatures to the Deed of Gift.

The upholstered cedar desk chair dates back to the 1830s and was a feature at the family's property Yulgilbar in northern NSW, later moving with them to the family home in Greenoaks Ave in Darling Point.

Sherri gave the vote of thanks and presented Grey with a Jessie Street pin as a memento.

As we want to preserve the chair in its current condition, it has been prominently placed on top of the IT systems cupboard in the Library (so no one is tempted to sit on it). Sherri has plans to incorporate the chair as the centrepiece in a commemorative design including a graphically altered poster. Watch for the updated photo in a future Newsletter.



Kris Clarke



Diane Hague – a tribute

The Library community of volunteers and members is mourning the passing of one of its most dedicated workers, Diane Hague. She passed away on Saturday, 19 June 2021 in Coffs Harbour where she moved to be closer to family and to ease the asthma which had plagued her.

Diane became a volunteer in 2011 and joined the Board in 2012, and remained with the Board as a corresponding member from 2015. She chaired the Annual Luncheon committee for some years. She contributed hugely to the initial modernisation of the content and look of the Library's website and worked in the team to maintain it. But, beyond this, she was pivotal to building our social media presence through Facebook with her posts highlighting women from all backgrounds and those linked to contemporary feminist issues.

She had a keen political sense and knowledge honed by her years in the NSW Teachers Federation and involvement with the women's movement. She was part of a large group of women who organised the 1987 Socialist Feminist Conference at UNSW: *Sisters are doing it for Themselves*. After a period in the Public Service Association as an activist, Diane started teaching at TAFE in 1982. She was Women's Coordinator on the TAFE Teachers' Association executive in the mid- 1980's. At that time, she worked on the TAFE Sexual Harassment Policy. Elected a TAFE Organiser in 1989, she then became Editor of the Federation journal *Education* from 1990-1994, commenting that: 'I made sure that the minority interests ... had their place in the journal.'

In 2003, as Industrial Officer, Diane was responsible for the TAFE part-time casual teachers' case which eventually gained significant improvements in their salary and working conditions. She retired from the Federation after spending from 2005 to 2009 as its Media and Communications Officer. She initiated the establishment of the Federation's Oral History Project. As a Life Member of the Federation, she will be honoured in a special memorial event.

Diane was deeply committed to the Library and generous with her time and expertise. Her work will endure. Her contribution is secured by the many improvements she made during her years as a volunteer.

Jozefa Sobski AM



Lunch Hour Talk

22 April – Michelle Balogh

Her Kind of Luck

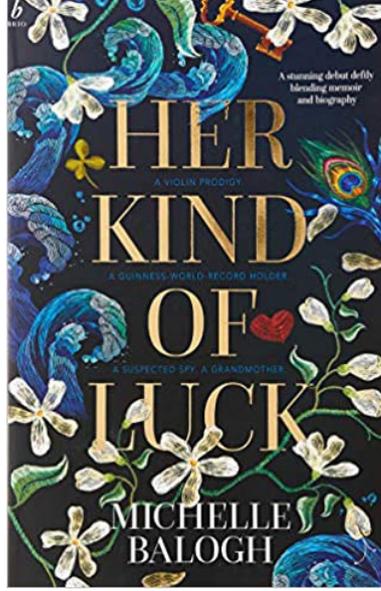
This was the first hybrid Lunch Hour Talk, held at the Customs House City of Sydney library, and also on Zoom. I tuned in at home, and while the ambience of the room, the give and take of a live presentation was missing, it was a good compromise. Michelle Balogh (below) was an engaging speaker, eliciting many laughs from the audience. She stumbled across her great-grandmother's unusual life when she was struggling with depression and taking stock of her own life. Shan-Yi had died in 2012 and since her Bellevue Hill apartment was empty Michelle moved in.

Shan-Yi had been a constant presence when Michelle was a child, and her apartment was a magical place where she was free to roam over the old, dark furniture and hide behind the velvet curtains. Now, it gave her a much-needed project. With time on her hands, she began with a thorough cleaning, going from room to room, scrubbing, vacuuming. It was, she says, 'an apartment frozen in time.' Then, Michelle started to explore. Among the secrets and treasures, she found bookshelves with false backs, concealing a trove of letters, and photographs of the young Shan-Yi — beautiful, exotic, mysterious. Intrigued, Michelle began to read. Her journey to writing this book started there, at Shan-Yi's home.

Incredibly, Shan-Yi had kept carbon copies of her letters to friends and family. I have often wondered how collections of correspondence to and from are gathered together! They revealed a woman who could be abrupt, with a no-nonsense frankness, but who was also dreamy and sentimental, besotted with her husband. Her life, which Michelle had always guessed had been interesting, began to take real shape. But who was she?

Michelle followed the trail, her research taking her to Seattle where that age-old source, telephone directories, helped her track their next steps. This is a story of migration too. Born in China, the Lin family migrated to the United States in 1920, the family having been separated

for months while Shan-Yi's father made the initial visit before bringing the family over. In an old high school yearbook, Michelle discovered a photograph of Shan-Yi, or Alice, as she had been known in America. As the lone Chinese-American, she stood out. Glowing in her white dress, she had been the star of the



orchestra. Very excited, Michelle knew that she was on the right track.

Shan-Yi was a virtuoso violinist, and had run away from home at sixteen, pursuing her studies in music, and ended up travelling the world with her first husband selling magazine subscriptions.

Moving to Sydney with her German husband just before the Second World War, they were a glamorous couple and, unsurprisingly, were the focus of considerable attention. Curtain-

twitchers in the neighbourhood delighted in reporting the couple's nefarious activities (smoking German cigarettes and being collected in 'strange cars'). She was of course, suspected of being a spy, and she had an intelligence file.

Michelle told us that she had to make a choice to either recreate the story or tell it in Shan-Yi's own words. Letters are different to a diary, Michelle realised. Instead of the single voice, they revealed this woman's many different sides as she wrote to different people in her life. In cleaving to the letters, she has brought a fascinating woman to life in her own words, and as Michelle told us, learned about herself as the same time, grateful for this rewarding journey.

Report by Jessica Stewart

Upcoming Lunch Hour Talks

The August Lunch Hour Talk has been cancelled due to Covid lockdown.

25 November 2021

Dr Amanda Tattersall

How do we build powerful movements for change?

Venue: Customs House Library, 31 Alfred St, Sydney on Circular Quay.

Cost: \$16 (members) \$22 (non-members). Pay at the door. Also live on Zoom.

Book: by noon Monday before the talk.

Phone: (02) 9571 5359

Zoom: The Library will email the Zoom link to attendees.

Dr Amanda Tattersall is a Sydney-based change maker and has initiated a variety of large social change organisations in Australia from founding GetUp, to instigating the Sydney Alliance, to helping organise the Walk against the War Coalition against the Iraq War and most recently in creating the ChangeMakers podcast, sharing stories of social change. She trains academics and community leaders in building participatory policy.



Our library resources far and wide

Museum of Australian Democracy update

Jozefa Sobski, Lynne Morton, Barbara Henery and Sherri Hilario hosted a visit by Democracy DNA curator, Jennifer Forrest, at the Library in February. She was shown a range of items such as badges, banners, posters, rare books and the WEL questionnaires distributed to NSW parliamentary candidates in the 1972 Federal election.

This was followed up with sending Jennifer over 60 poster and badge images, a digitised version of one of the questionnaires and a digitised version of the Australian Women's Charter, 1943. From these, two posters were chosen. These are: *Working Womens [sic] Charter: ... regional meetings*, March 1980 and *Leave us alone to get on with the job: sexual harassment is not a compliment*. The posters have been safely delivered. The anticipated exhibition opening is sometime in the third quarter, hopefully in October, and will run for two years.

Ms Represented

In this centenary year of Edith Cowan's election to become Australia's first female parliamentarian in 1921, Annabel Crabb (below) is presenting a four-part series on 100 years of women in Parliament: **Ms Represented**.

Over the past year, the Library has been providing research material to the ABC's Library Research and Archives teams. It was a pleasure to meet Research Librarian Cathy Beale and Archivist Michelle Boukheris and show them around the Library. They were deeply appreciative of the significance of our holdings.

For more information, go to abc.net.au and search 'ms represented'. The series is available on ABC iview and the companion podcast is on the ABC listen app.



Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp

More recently, we were contacted by Tangerine Productions, a French based company in production on a documentary for European public channel ARTE about Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp titled *Women Against the Bomb*.

They are dedicating a chapter to women's peace camps around the world, including in Australia, inspired by Greenham. We provided digitised images from posters, slides and photographs related to Pine Gap Women's Peace Camp, 8–25 November 1983. Unfortunately, as they were on a tight production schedule, there wasn't enough time to provide digitised images for Cockburn Sound Women's Peace Camp, 1–14 December 1984.

Sherri Hilario

Membership/donation form

I wish to: join the Library renew my membership
 make a donation

Date: _/ _/ _

Title: Ms/Mrs/Miss/Mr/Dr/other

Name: _____

Address: _____

Preferred tel:

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Please send newsletters by email instead of hardcopy.

Membership Category

Full Member \$70 Life member \$1,000

Organisation \$140 Student \$25

(conditions apply)

Concession \$35

(Pensioner/Centrelink Concession Cardholders)

A membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December. Members joining after 1 October are financial until 31 December of the following year.

Donations (donations over \$2 are tax deductible)

I wish to make a donation of \$.....

to the Library for general purposes

to the Library's Capital Investment Fund

I am willing to have my name published in the Newsletter

I wish to remain anonymous

Payment Details

Enclosed is my cheque/money order for \$ (payable to Jessie Street National Women's Library)

Please charge my MasterCard/Visa with \$ _____

Name of cardholder: _____

Card no. _____

Expiry date _/ _ CCV _ _ _

Signature: _____

Auto Debit Authorisation

I authorise JSNWL to charge this, and all future membership renewals as they fall due, to the credit card number above on this form.

I authorise JSNWL to charge \$ _____ annually to the above credit card as a donation to

the Library for general purposes or to

the Library's Capital Investment Fund

Signature: _____

Become a volunteer

I would like to help the Library by becoming a volunteer. (You will be contacted for an interview.)

Please forward the completed form to:

Jessie Street National Women's Library
GPO Box 2656, Sydney NSW 2001

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Note: Please advise the Library if your contact details have changed.

Visit us:

523-525 Harris Street (cnr William Henry Street), Ultimo
Enter through the Ultimo Community Centre, Bulwara Rd
Please use the intercom for admittance

Opening times:

The Library is open to the public Monday to Friday 10 am to 3 pm

Borrowing policy:

The public can access items using the interlibrary loan system. The public cannot borrow items but may use them in their library of choice. A loan collection is available to financial members

How to reach the Library:

- * The Library is a 20 minute walk from Town Hall Station through Darling Harbour or from Central Station via the Goods Line walk or via Harris Street
- * Bus 501 (Railway Square to Ryde/West Ryde) at Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre stop
- * Bus 389 (Maritime Museum to North Bondi) at Harris and Allan Streets stop
- * Light rail from Central Station or Dulwich Hill to Exhibition stop
- * There is limited two hour street meter parking available

Postal Address:

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