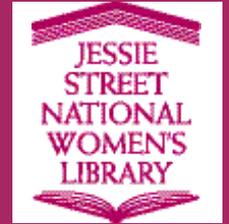


NEWSLETTER

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



The Ballad of Women: Stories of the Australian Women's Songbook

The Songbook is an online archive of 50 Australian women's songs from the 1970s to the 1990s — *firstaustralianwomenssongbook.com*. Launched at the National Folk Festival in Canberra over Easter 2022, it was edited by Kerith Power.

Thirty years ago, having established the Lismore Women's Music Collective, which conducted four biennial National Women's Music Festivals, Kerith sent out a national call which attracted hundreds of cassettes and manuscripts from all over Australia. From these relatively unknown works, and from luminaries of the women's music scene, she sought out, selected and transcribed 50 songs written by women about living and working in Australia. Then the songbook material was shelved while Kerith continued working in early childhood, bringing up her children, maintaining a home, writing songs, singing and pursuing her studies.

Dale Dengate and Kerith first met at the National Folk Festival in 1989, where Dale's singing group, the WWWs ('Witty, Wise Women' — a feminist take on the Industrial Workers of the World or 'Wobblies'), were singing some of Kerith's feminist political songs.

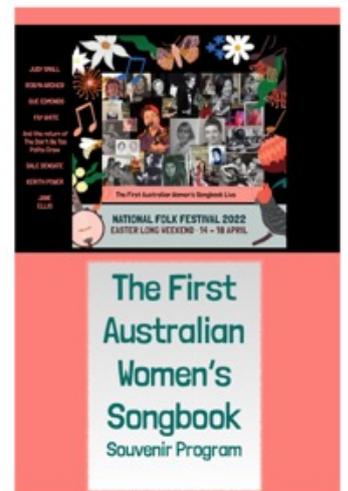
In 2017 the Library asked Dale to write an article for International Women's Day about Glen Tomasetti, who wrote Don't be Too Polite, Girls to support the campaign for equal pay. In the meantime Kerith had come to the Library to digitise the Song-

book. Two years later Dale staged a highly successful National Folk Festival 50 year commemorative concert with Kerith and pianist Jane Ellis and three younger women folk singers, Kate Burke, Chloe Roweth and Jessie Lloyd.

Covid brought a hiatus, but when the National Folk Festival for 2022 was advertised Kerith, having determined to work full time to complete the website during the lockdowns, asked the songwriters for performers to stage a live launch of the Songbook. An offer to participate came from Joy McKean of country music fame. Songwriters Judy Small, Sue Edmonds and Robyn Archer joined the Don't Be Too Polite crew of Dale, Kerith and Jane and Victorian songwriters Fay White and Jane Thompson in rehearsing individual items using online audio files.

A Zoom rehearsal took place on International Women's Day 2022 and a Canberra practice venue was booked for the performers from three states to meet in person and pull together a number of ensemble items. The website came together in publishable form two weeks before the festival. The Covid risk and a serious car accident prevented some performers attending but we found substitute artists among the festival goers. With a revised program and one face to face rehearsal, the Songbook was launched on 17 April, with an audience of several hundred appreciative fans.

Dale Dengate and Kerith Power



Annual Luncheon
Parliament House
12 September 2022

Our Annual Luncheon speaker, Sam Mostyn, with her abiding interest and involvement in current issues of the day, is keen to address topics as they impact at the time.

We anticipate that her Luncheon address will be pertinent and stimulating!

More information will be posted on the website as soon as we know.



Raffle prizes

Our fundraising raffle will be drawn at the Annual Luncheon on 12 September.

1st Prize: Luxurious getaway at Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour, donated by Teachers Mutual Bank, value \$1200

2nd Prize: Unique hand-crafted quilt, donated by Sydney Modern Quilt Guild, value \$900

3rd Prize: Bespoke sterling silver jewellery designed and made by Connie Dimas Jewellery, value \$550

4th Prize: Visa Cash gift cards, donated in memory of Marie Muir, value \$350

5th Prize: Captain Cook Top Deck Lunch Cruise for two people, three course a la carte, three hours of million dollar views, value \$180

6th Prize: Sparkling High Tea at NSW Parliament House, value \$120

7th Prize: Gift voucher for Gleebooks, donated by Gail Hewison, value \$100

8th prize: Signed souvenir copy of *The First Australian Women's Songbook*, Kerith Power with URL access to singer songwriter's profile, music, songs and recording plus bottle of wine, value \$50

9th prize: Signed book, *Sound Citizens*, Catherine Fisher plus bottle of wine, value \$50

10th prize: Signed book *Feminism and the Making of a Child Rights Revolution, 1969–1979*, Isobelle Barrett Meyering plus bottle of wine, value \$50

All wine produced by Kurri Kurri TAFE and donated by NSW Teachers Federation

Annual Luncheon raffle prize donation

This year we are delighted to announce the generous donation of a unique hand-made quilt from the Sydney Modern Quilt Guild as second prize in our raffle.

Anita Brown, president of the Sydney Modern Quilt Guild, contacted the Library in September 2021 in response to the obituary in the Sydney Morning Herald of Shirley Jones OAM, one of the founders of the Library. Part of the charter of the Guild is to contribute to the community and Anita thought our organisation would be a worthy recipient.

The quilt, valued at \$900, measures 170cm x 170cm and was made by members of the Guild, many of whom have exhibited and have won prizes in Australia and the United States. We thank the Guild for this very special prize donation.

Kate Beringer

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

Quentin Bryce AD CVO; Elizabeth Evatt AC; Clover Moore Lord Mayor of Sydney; Professor Emerita Elizabeth Anne Webby AM.

Board of Management

Jozefa Sobski, Chair; Suzanne Marks, Vice Chair; Jean Burns, Treasurer; Sherri Hilario, Secretary; Suzie Forell, Michele Ginswick, Robyn Harriott, Barbara Henery, Susan Price, Janet Ramsay, Beverley Sodbinow, Christine Yeats.

Editorial Team

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

Lunch Hour Talks

Venue/Time: 12.00-1.30pm. Customs House Library, 31 Alfred St, Sydney — on Circular Quay, enter via front of Customs House Cost: \$16 (members) \$22 (non-members) including light lunch.

Pay at the door. Book by noon Monday before the talk. Ph (02) 9571 5359

18 August 2022: Isobelle Barrett Meyerling

Feminism and the Making of a Child Rights Revolution 1969–1979

In a new study of the women's liberation movement, Dr Isobelle Barrett-Meyerling places children at the centre of the feminist campaign. Australian women's liberationists were accused of being anti-mother and anti-child. Isobelle's talk will provide a much-needed reassessment of this stereotype. Her examination of feminists' campaigns on major social issues of the 1970s also reveals women's concerted efforts to apply this ideal in their personal lives.

24 November 2022: Kerith Power and Dale Dengate

The Australian Women's Songbook

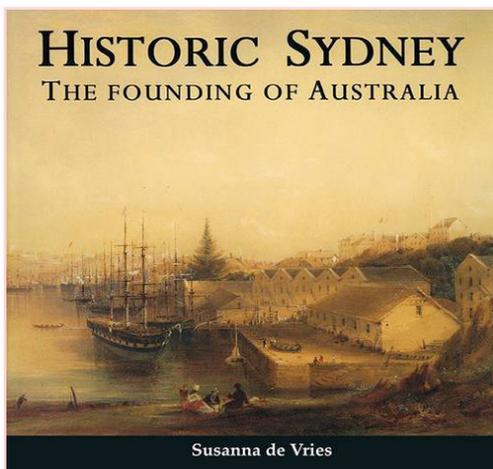
Kerith Power and Dale Dengate have long been involved with song writing, singing, organising events and performing in the folk music scene. Kerith began compiling the First Australian Women's Songbook in the 1980s. The Songbook, now digitised, is an online archive of 50 Australian women's songs from the 1970s-1990s (see p1). It was launched live at this year's National Folk Festival. Hear their stories about compiling the Songbook and a few songs which break through stereotypes of women in Australia.

Book Club update

For June, book clubbers read *Historic Sydney: the founding of Australia* (2013) by the accomplished Australian writer and historian Susanna de Vries. This is the fourth edition of this exquisite picture book that combines over 125 colourful paintings, drawings, topographical maps and engravings by some of Australia's finest artists, with a thoughtful narrative.

De Vries' absorbing text skilfully integrates the back stories of many of the artists, with the historic context of the pictures. Many were trained military or naval artists (and some unacknowledged convicts transported for forgery or other crimes). The resultant cleverly curated book draws on both private and public art collections in Australia and elsewhere to chart the evolution of the city from the convict settlement to the beautiful harbour city we know today.

The detail of the illustrations reveals glimpses of Sydney's daily life and development, with cricket matches and picnic parties in the Governors Domain where kangaroos and emus still roamed, sailing races on the harbour, the paddocks of Paddington Village and the workers' cottages of Balmain. We see Sydney Cove as the muddy estuary of the Tank Stream before Circular Quay was constructed and the worn track beside its western shore which gradually morphed into George Street.



We see trees and fields where now there are only buildings and roads; windmills dot the ridges; horse and bullock-drawn vehicles convey passengers and goods to markets. We even see *Lasseters*, the largest retail store of its day, mentioned in the May Book Club selection, *The Countess of Kirribilli*. An unknown artist made the hand-tinted lithograph of the shop some time between 1865–70 entitled simply *Corner of George and Market Streets, West Sydney*. We also see Rose de Freycinet, the central protagonist in our next book, *Rose*, in the garden of Government House being greeted by Governor Macquarie.

Historic Sydney is an important record of Sydney's heritage — its suburbs, churches, schools, colonial mansions, convict cottages and parts of the city that have been destroyed, as well as areas that have been preserved or restored.

On the other hand, this is essentially a

chronicle of occupation. We rarely see the first Australians included in those landscapes as the British gradually claimed their land, excluding them from their hunting grounds and sacred sites.

Our readers really enjoyed the nostalgia, most especially the little known stories and pictures. De Vries guides us on a tour through our past, thanks to the skills and foresight of those early artists who captured the beauty of the natural scenery and recorded our most significant buildings. We appreciate what we have gained, as well as regretting what we have lost or never saw. Highly recommended.

Barbara Henery

Upcoming books

- * **July:** *Rose: the Extraordinary Journey of Rose de Freycinet*, Suzanne Falkiner
- * **August:** *Goodwood*, Holly Throsby
- * **September:** *Females on the Fatal Shore*, Susanna de Vries

Catherine Fisher

Lunch Hour Talk – 16 June

Sound Citizens: Australian Women Broadcasters Claim Their Voice. 1923-1956

Skillful oratory has long delivered political power to those with the 'gift of the gab'. Catching and holding an audience's attention has launched many a successful career throughout history. How did the first women elected to the Australian parliament use the medium of radio to make their voices heard? *Sound Citizens* traces the changing role of radio as a tool for women's activism and examines its wider significance to the history of women's advancement.

In 1902, Australia became the first nation in the world to introduce equal federal suffrage, excluding First Nations people. Getting women into parliament has proved to be an 'easier said than done' proposition. In 1921, Edith Cowan was the first woman elected to the Legislative Assembly of the Western Australian Parliament, thus becoming Australia's first woman parliamentarian. But it would be another 22 years before a woman made it to Canberra! In 1943, Dame Enid Lyons, representing the United Australia Party and Senator Dorothy Tangney, representing the Australian Labor Party, were the first women elected to the Federal Parliament. Jessie Street also stood for the ALP in that election in the seat of Wentworth, and gained a 20 per cent swing to Labor, though was narrowly defeated.

In her talk, Dr Fisher's audio-visual presentation examined the role that radio played in the political careers of Lyons and Tangney. Fisher's research examined these three women's use of radio as a political tool during the period 1923-1956. These women had broadcast for many years before standing for election, so were familiar with the medium. Street used her broadcasts to emphasise 'good citizenship' encouraging 'considered deliberation' for voters and candidates.

Fisher listened to Lyons', Tangney's and Street's broadcasts during the 1943, 1946 and 1949 elections, comparing and contrasting style and content. She played short excerpts of Lyons' and Tangney's broadcast speeches during her talk. Both women sounded articulate, well-spoken and commanded the attention of listeners. A cultivated vocal delivery was deemed an essential requirement in keeping with 'British Empire standards' in the days before an Australian accent became acceptable on the radio.

The digitised recordings are now freely available to the public through the National Film and Sound Archive online and you can now listen to these speeches in their entirety.

Her research revealed that early women broadcasters were

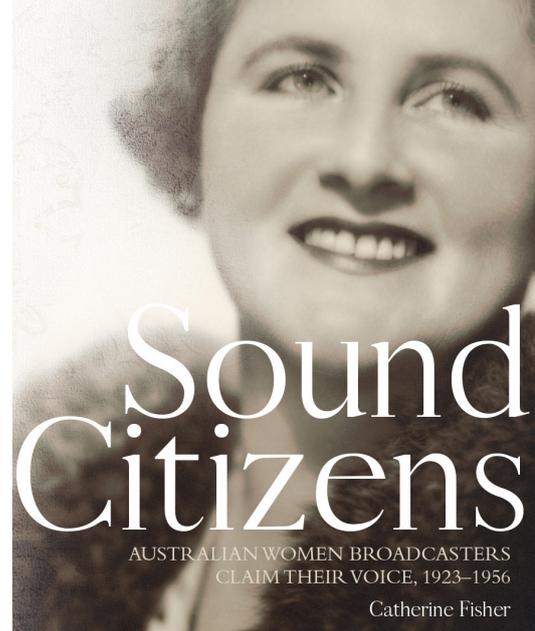
predominantly given roles, timeslots and programs for talks on mothercraft, cookery, fashion and so on that reinforced their domesticity, restricting women to the roles of wife, mother and homemaker. But

aspiring politicians quickly realised that radio could provide a platform for both men and women to speak on a wide variety of topics. It was during this time that female political candidates used it to educate female voters about how political decisions affecting women on such critical issues as health, housing, childcare, child endowment and education were made predominantly by men in both State and Federal governments. They pointed out that more women elected to parliament could join debates and influence the direction of policymakers.

Radio enabled women to spread their message directly to a large audience of other women in their homes, amplifying feminism as a political movement. Initially some critics complained that women sounded 'shrill or lacked authority' but over time, the increasing broadcasts accustomed audiences to hearing women's voices and opinions on a wide range of issues which impacted their lives and those of their families. After the war, women were active participants in educating new citizens on both commercial radio and the ABC.

In her research for *Sound Citizens*, Fisher concluded that a cohort of women used broadcasting to contribute to the public sphere, which raised women's status in Australia from 1923 until the introduction of television in 1956.

Barbara Henery



Capital Investment Fund

Since it was launched in September 2009, the Capital Investment Fund has reached \$520,792.

Our target is \$1,000,000, which will provide essential support for Library operations. If you would like to contribute, please indicate on the membership/donation form on page 7.

CIF donations since May 2022

Alison Bray	Chris Burvill
Jenny Foster	Mary Henderson
Carol Hyde	Sybil Jack
Bev Kingston	O Popovic
Gail Radford	Marie and Noel Ryan
Jozefa Sobski	Kay Vernon
Christine Yeats	Estate of the Late Diane Hague

The Library's T-shirt collection

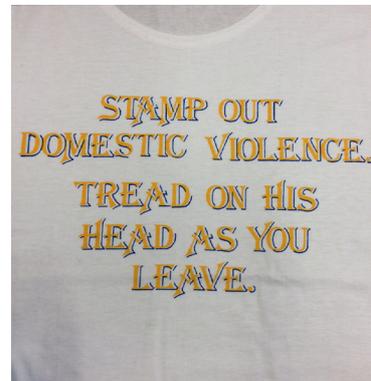
T-shirts first became the powerful messaging platform they are today in the late 1960s. Whether promoting rock bands or protesting against the Vietnam War, graphic T-shirts were about shocking and outraging people and challenging the status quo. Aided by the birth of screen printing and an outburst of creativity, they were an ideal way for the new women's movement to disseminate feminist messages. The Library has a small but important collection.

The Library acquired some T-shirts from the Canberra Women's Archive. 'Feminists fighting for freedom' was illustrated by the Supergirl cartoon commonly used in the 1970s, while another produced by WEL in 1975 supported Susan Ryan's campaign for the Senate. The message 'Stamp out domestic violence. Tread on his head as you leave' still resonates today for its anger and humour, and its continuing relevance.

Another collection commemorates the Women against Rape in War march in Sydney on Anzac Day 1983. In their striking SWARC (Sydney Women Against Rape Collective) T-shirts, some 300 women marched through the city and 161 were arrested for causing 'serious alarm and affront'. Not to be intimidated, the women produced a T-shirt negating the offence and wore it to court. The magistrate agreed, dismissing the charges because he could not believe the arresting police were really alarmed and affronted.

The striking T-shirt for the fifth Women and Labour Conference held in Sydney in 1995 reflects an important series of conferences for feminists and labour activists. It was donated by Sue Wills who was also involved in the first of these conferences, held at Macquarie University in 1978, which attracted 2000 participants.

If you have T-shirts you would like to add to our collection, the archivists would be delighted to discuss them with you.

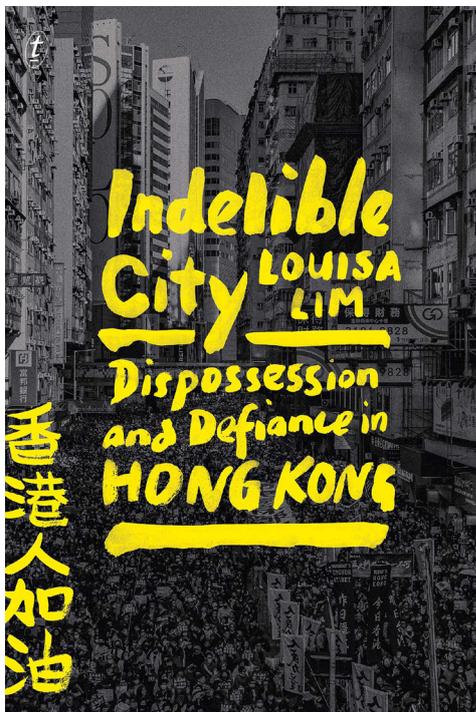


Book Review:

Indelible city, Louisa Lim

The child of an English mother and Chinese father, Louisa Lim grew up in Hong Kong at the same time as I did. She flitted between two worlds, two cultures like a 'hungry ghost', and her book brings extraordinary insight into the people I lived amongst for so long, separated, as we expatriates were, by thinly disguised racism. I caught Louisa Lim at the 2022 Sydney Writers' Festival.

My childhood is on every page of her book, *Indelible City*—the noise, the smell; the crush of the city and the openness of its countryside. The jagged tops of the hills of the 'nine dragons', which we would wend through in our early years. When I read that Lion Rock, one of these peaks (right), was strung with a massive banner by the protestors calling for universal suffrage, I was moved to tears.



Meticulously researched, every paragraph notated, *Indelible City* integrates history and culture to give an extraordinary insight into the recent uprisings in Hong Kong. Beijing's turning of the screws on democracy came after Hong Kongers were beginning to think that 'one country two systems' might be possible. For those years after 1997, it seemed as though nothing would change.

Then Hong Kongers saw the creeping and later the absolute refusal to honour the Sino-British agreements and implement the Basic Law, negotiated over the last decades before handover. *Indelible City*, named for Hong Kong's refusal to be erased, recounts its full force in painful detail.

Lim saw the same police brutality in Hong Kong in 2020 as she had seen in China — police beating protestors, breaking the arm of one lying face down, waves of arrests of peaceful people participating in elections. She documents the tracking



down of protestors, the rendition, imprisonment, sentencing and the acceleration of censorship. The detail Lim presents is extraordinary, stitching together the accounts from her sources with forensic research of troves of papers.

It is soul-destroying to see how quickly the lights can go out in a once-free city. 'If Beijing didn't like Hong Kong's laws, it would simply reinterpret them.' The systematic suppression goes on page after page. The Occupy movement's leaders are arrested, rearrested, bugged, hacked, threatened. The organiser of the 2019 protests, the Civil Human Rights Front, is threatened with violation of a law not enacted until 2020. Live ammunition is used against protestors, and tear gas and pepper spray become commonplace.

Lim's accounts of the protests describe an intensity I could never have envisaged. The fight against creeping totalitarianism goes on and on and though frequently shattered, it resumes. The students feel that to stop is to die. Beijing's goal was total dominance.

Protestors hold up blank pieces of paper to protest against censorship. 'Language itself was beginning to vanish.' But the preservation of words is vital to freedom, to history. *Indelible City* illuminates the struggles by artists, performance artists, musicians, driven by the fear of erasure. When large swathes of files are discovered missing, a crew of volunteers step up. The missing files included hundreds from the 1980s of the Joint Negotiation between Great Britain and China and archivists play a critical role in filling the gaps. Young volunteers come daily to sort through files to reconstruct Hong Kong's history.

I read *Indelible City* with sadness at the unequal battle — the protestors who want a say in their futures, and the autocracy that is China which will not concede an inch. Lim ends, saying 'Hong Kong will see light again.' I hope so. It will always be my first home.

Jessica Stewart

New members

A warm welcome to

Amy Baker Christine Currey Aloma Fennell

Donations

General donations

Christine Jennett
Jan O'Reily
Caroline Phillips
Gail Radford
Dori Wisniewski
Jan Wood

Donations of material

E Johnston
Judy Wright
Spinifex Press

MoAD – Democracy DNA update

After many delays, the new permanent exhibition 'Democracy DNA' at the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) opened in May. On 21 June I attended the opening of 'ChangeMakers: The Trailblazing Women Who are Creating a More Equal Australia' in the ChangeMakers Gallery space.

The evening was hosted by Annabel Crabb as we sat in the Chamber of the House of Representatives where several women were seated at the Table.

Ngambri-Ngunnawal Elder Dr Mathilda House welcomed us on Country. I was deeply moved and heartened by her emphatic acknowledgement of Jessie Street and the depth of friendship and strategic activism between Street, Faith Bandler and Pearl Gibbs. Australia's first female Governor General and a patron of the Library, Quentin Bryce, delivered the keynote speech. She was introduced by outgoing MoAD director Daryl Karp. Also seated at the table were exhibition guest curator Virginia Haussegger, Professor Marilyn Lake, Rose Batty, Tal Fitzpatrick, Katy Gallagher, Mehreen Faruqi and Deyi Wu who were invited by Crabb to reflect on 'what does it mean to have a seat at the table?'

It was a privilege to represent the Library at this inspiring event, introducing myself to both Quentin Bryce and Annabel Crabb. On a serendipitous note, I met artist Eve Glenn who turned out to be the designer of one of the posters we lent!

A group from the Library is being organised to attend the exhibition. Follow the link to book.

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/383370269797>

Vivienne Binns: On and through the Surface

The Library is thrilled to contribute to this comprehensive survey exhibition just opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art 'tracing 60 years of work by one of Australia's most significant feminist artists', presented by both Monash University Museum of Art and the MCA. A significant part of this expanded exhibition features archival material related to Binns' collaborative and community-based projects during the 1970-80's. We have lent 'Craft NSW Special Issue: Women and Art' for the 1982 Women and Arts Festival. The Festival included more than 1,000 events throughout NSW in October 1982. Binns was 'Artist-in-the community' running a project which covered many central western NSW towns.

The MCA has generously donated a copy of the exhibition catalogue to the Library.

Sherri Hilario

Membership/donation form

I wish to join the Library renew my membership
 make a donation become a Library volunteer.

Date: ___/___/___

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

Name: _____

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Preferred tel: _____

Alternative tel: _____

Email: _____

Please send Newsletters by email instead of hardcopy.

Membership category

- Full member \$70 Life member \$1,000
 Organisation \$140 Student (conditions apply) \$25
 Concession (Pensioner/Centrelink cardholders) \$35

A membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December. Members joining after 1 October are financial until 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 happy 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 \$_____

Name of cardholder _____

Card no. _____

Expiry ___/___ CCV ___ __

Signature _____

Auto debit authorisation

I authorise JSNWL:

to charge this, and all future membership renewals as they fall due to this credit card number.

to charge \$_____ annually to this credit card as a donation to:

- the Library for general purposes
 the Library's Capital Investment Fund

Signature _____

Become a volunteer

The Library runs on volunteer labour. Join us! We'd love to have you. Forward us this form and we will contact you:

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

Visit us:

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Enter through the Ultimo Community Centre, Bulwara Rd
Please use the intercom for admittance

Opening times:

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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:

GPO Box 2656
Sydney, NSW 2001

Telephone:

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info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

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