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Leslie Mackenzie Profile

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ATG: *We understand that you recently launched The Women's Library at LSE. Can you give us the specifics as to how you made this happen?*

EAC: In March 2012 London Metropolitan University made it known that they were seeking a new custodian for **The Women's Library**, an incomparable collection of Women's history — the oldest and most extensive in Europe and a key part of the UK's heritage. Founded in 1926, it holds unique UNESCO-recognized documents, many personal and organizational archives and more besides such as suffragette banners and early printed books on the rights of women. I made a business case at LSE with substantial academic backing and took the proposal through many committees. Aably supported by my staff, we put together a professional bid for the August 2012 deadline and in late September knew we had been approved. Seven universities expressed initial interest in bidding. There was a fair amount of protest as we are moving the collection to LSE, not leaving it in its current specially-adapted building. But there are so many links between the two collections we will be able to provide a much enhanced research resource. We became legal owners in January 2013 and managed the Library in East London until April. It was closed for packing until we moved it this summer to a new purpose-built archive store. Nine staff moved with the collection. A service started August 1, and next we are building a new Reading Room and then creating an Outreach and Teaching Room, a Museum Store and an Exhibition Space. It is a large and long project with many hiccups along the way, but with a great team supporting me and with passion and persistence we are getting there. It's genuinely exciting and I plan to speak more about it at the **Charleston Conference** in November. To cover the period of closure I co-curated an online exhibition of the life of **Emily Wilding Davison**, whose personal papers are in the collection and who is best known for her death at the Derby 100 years ago in 1913.

ATG: *In what other ways have services and collections changed at the library since you took the reins in 2010?*

EAC: Looking back I can see many changes, but I think the most important one has been to get colleagues involved in developing a Vision for The Library and then devising a Strategy. The Digital Library as I've already described puts us amongst the frontrunners in this area, and we are working hard to replace our Course Collection multiple copies area with eBooks. Right now we are planning the use of more space which we have recently been granted, and we have also taken on support for Publishing at LSE, which is an exciting opportunity for us. In the meantime we have provided very popular beanbags for our students to relax on. Being a student in a big city is different from being on a campus.

against the grain people profile

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L. Mackenzie

BORN AND LIVED: Born and lived in the Cleveland area. Lived and worked in New York before moving to rural Connecticut and Dutchess County, New York.

EDUCATION: University of Wisconsin.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: SRA, Scholastic, and Grey House Publishing.

FAMILY: Three adult children: Son, vice-president commercial real estate in Chicago; son, lawyer Department of Homeland Security; and a daughter, producer on the Today Show (NBC).

IN MY SPARE TIME: Running, gardening, town and charitable boards.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Whatever my book club is reading. 🌱

If you have to travel a long distance to where you live the Library becomes a focal point of the day and a place not just to study but to meet your friends. I see my responsibility as working to future-proof the library for LSE.

ATG: *A fair amount of your published work has dealt with collection development. From your perspective, what are the main challenges that libraries face in developing relevant academic collections? Are there opportunities to expand collections? What is LSE doing to meet those challenges and take advantage of those opportunities?*

EAC: Actually collection development will always face similar challenges, making sure the collections are relevant to your user community and building carefully. We have specialist staff who work closely with departments buying the materials they need as well as fulfilling our mission to cover the broad range of social sciences. When I say Social Sciences I include the boundaries of science such as bio-medicine and climate change and the boundary of the humanities with history. We try to get as much electronic material as we can to our academics' desktops. LSE academics research all kinds of topics and in any one day we may be looking for data on Happiness in the UK or poverty in the Favelas of Brazil. Although we have been allocated more space we need to put much of that towards study areas so there is a finite space for more printed materials. My staff also do a lot of Information Literacy training with students, helping them to find the best materials for their work. There is no point spending millions of pounds on materials unless they are useful. Librarians, however carefully they listen at committees and work through lists of recommendations, will always need a proactive approach to collecting.

ATG: *You also have a longstanding interest in library building design. If you were designing the perfect library what would it look like? What design features would be at the top of your list?*

EAC: It's seldom the case that Librarians have the opportunity to work on designing new space, but I have had that opportunity working on the new social science library in Oxford and now the expanded space at LSE Library. I have to say LSE Library is often the starting point for anyone designing new space, but now as it is approaching its 12th birthday in this guise it begins to show signs of wear. The first thing is providing an inspiring space and being sensitive to the needs of the users. In our case the layout does not allow enough space for group work, which has developed greatly over the last decade. I am also concerned that my staff are not visible but hidden for the most part behind closed doors, and I would like to change that in the new Masterplan which we are working on. LSE students work very hard, and while we have some designated silent study areas we need more. Bearing all this in mind, we don't know what will be needed after another ten years, so flexible space is important. Who would have guessed ten years ago how much electricity we would be "lending" students to charge up their various devices? In the autumn we are embarking on an ethnographic study of Library use to aid our planning for the future.

ATG: *According to our sources, you are an avid collector of miniature books. We are sure that our readers would love to hear all about it. Can you fill us in? When did you start? Which titles are the stars of your collection?*

EAC: I started collecting small books when I was still at school. Miniature books have a spine height of less than three inches so while I have some of these; many of the books in my collection are merely small. I calculate I have more than 500 now but of course they don't take up too much room. Anyway when I bought the first two books, a two-volume set of **Wordsworth** poems, the elderly lady bookseller said "these aren't miniature books" so I learned that very early

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