

**Graham Camfield**

## LSE library: a history of the collections

### Report

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## **LSE Library:** A history of the collections

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Graham Camfield



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Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1895

# LSE Library: a history of the collections

**Two world wars, the end of empires, the rise and fall of ideologies, the development of international organisation and co-operation – these are but some of the momentous events and changes which have shaped the world and human society in ways unimaginable in 1896, when LSE Library was founded as the British Library of Political Science. In their wake the social sciences and related disciplines have taken new directions and developed new concerns, generating an ever increasing output of literature across the globe. Like no other Library, the collections at LSE record and reflect more than a century of political, social and economic change, offering student and researcher a unique resource for the study and interpretation of past and contemporary societies.**

One hundred years on from its foundation the British Library of Political and Economic Science made the bold claim to be “the world’s greatest social science library”. Since then that claim may have been scaled down but the Library remains a world leader in provision of resources for social science research. The breadth and depth of those resources owe everything to the Library’s dual role as a national collection and the working collection of the London School of Economics. The naming of the Library as the “British Library of Political Science” affirmed Sidney Webb’s intention that it should be a national collection of primary sources for the study of society. The subsequent acquisition of national and local government publications from around the globe laid the foundation of a world class in-depth collection of such material. Likewise the curriculum and research of the School, leading the development of the social sciences, has contributed to and formed the broad interdisciplinary aspect of the collections.

Developing together over one hundred and twenty years each institution has derived a mutual benefit from the relationship. Association with the School has contributed greatly to the Library’s standing and provided wide contacts with the public and academic worlds, while the Library collections have attracted large numbers of scholars and researchers to the School. Indeed, the value set on the Library by the School is a theme which runs through this narrative. Tracing the development of the Library from its beginnings to the present, this history will highlight the acquisition of significant collections, well-known and long forgotten, recount the often pressing need for greater and more appropriate space, and place the collection in the national library context.



payments which he had (after informal consultation with his co. trustees from time to time) made prior to the present meeting, in order to enable the library to be opened. These payments, as shown by the passbook & chequebook, were as follows:

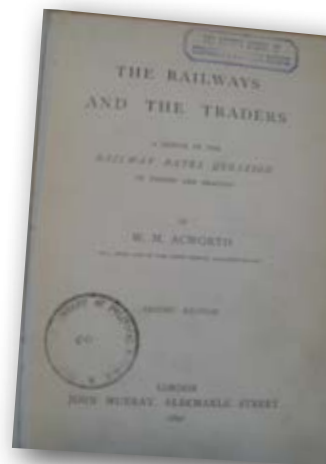
<u>Installation Expenses</u>		£
Lon. School of Economics. (on account)		250.0.0
<u>Furniture</u>		
Wake & Dean (bookcase)	40.0.0	
D:	87.10.0	
Schoolbred & Co. (table)	<u>8.15.0</u>	136.5.0
<u>Books</u>		
W. Muller	160.0.0	
J & E Bumpus	50.0.0	
G. Philip & Son	4.0.0	
W. S. Sonnenschein & Co.	2.8.7	
W. Muller	10.15.0	
J & E. Bumpus	50.0.0	
C. Herbert	5.12.6	
H. Sothman & Co.	10.11	
		<u>283.7.0</u>

Record of expenditure from the first Trustees meeting in November 1896

# The first decade, 1896 – 1906

**Planning for a Library of Political Science to support the work of the newly founded School of Economics had begun early in 1896, some months before the Library was established. It was to be a collection like no other in Britain at that time, which would “provide, for the serious student of administrative and constitutional problems, what has hitherto been lacking in this country, namely a collection of the materials for economic and political research”.**

There is certainly a reflection here of the difficulties Sidney Webb had encountered when conducting his research into aspects of local government and public administration, but also of his conviction that Britain was lagging behind like institutions in the United States, France, Germany and Italy. Without access to primary sources, data and scientific analyses researchers were lacking the resources required to find solutions to pressing social and economic problems of the day. Initially, therefore, official bodies and private individuals were approached to help start the collection by supplying requisite materials. Beatrice Webb wrote on 26 March 1896, “our time, for the last five weeks, a good deal taken up with writing “begging letters” for the Political Science Library”. This was followed by a public appeal to raise more funds. When the Library opened in November that year more than £2,500 had been donated. It was located, with the School, on the lower floor of 10 Adelphi Terrace, off the Strand, the home of Charlotte Payne-Townshend, future wife of G.B. Shaw.



Over nine hundred books had already been received by early October 1896 and were duly entered in the accession register, starting with William Acworth’s *The Railways and the Traders* (1891) with accession number 00. Of the first ten items five concerned railways and five concerned trade and commerce. Other early receipts included statistical series from several individual American states. Material was predominantly in English with a smattering of French



and German. The very first accessions register still survives, a large bound folio volume listing the first 10,000 titles received. A large number of these are now to be found in the Reserve Book collection, a treasure trove of the early history of the Library. Minutes of the first Trustees meeting in November 1896 reveal that over £283 had been spent with booksellers.

Meeting for the first time on 25 February 1897, the newly formed Library Committee was presented with a classification for the collection with the number of books in each class, totalling 2,145:

<b>A</b>	Economics	885
<b>B</b>	Political science	226
<b>C</b>	History	297
<b>D</b>	Law	152
<b>E</b>	Statistics	302
<b>F</b>	Miscellaneous	283

In his report on acquisitions the Director reported that: ...of the books entered in the accessions book rather less than half, consisting of standard works in the different departments have been purchased by the

Library Trustees, the remaining volumes have been presented to the Library.<sup>1</sup>

Later that year, in an address to the Library Association, Sidney Webb outlined in some detail his vision for the systematic collection of political science literature in Great Britain. Just as the advancement of science had been enabled through the collecting of materials and specimens by public museums, he believed that public libraries should become the “museums of the sociologist” collecting administrative records and contemporary descriptions of social organisations in their respective localities. Among these were numbered all the reports, statistics, minutes, and other publications of town councils and other governing bodies, as well as reports and documents of trade unions, co-operative societies, friendly societies and others. He urged public bodies and municipal governments to supply their local public libraries. On a national scale such a collection was beyond the remit and resources of the British Museum. He argued therefore that the formation of a Library of Political Science had gained a special urgency, especially in connection with the School, where its studies and investigations were “seriously

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<sup>1</sup> LSE MINUTES/10/1/1

hindered by the absence of any adequate collections of sociological material".<sup>2</sup>

An examination of the courses offered at the School in these first years reveals two distinct strands: firstly, an emphasis on training and equipping municipal officials and administrators in the study of modern economic and social problems with a thorough grounding in statistics, economic theory and economic history; and, secondly, on developing future leaders of business with a sound commercial education. In 1896/97 the following subjects were offered:

- **Economics**
- **Statistics**
- **Palaeography and diplomatics** [the reading and critical analysis of historical documents, e.g. early charters]
- **Railways** [with a focus on economics]
- **Banking and currency**
- **Commercial law**
- **Commercial geography**
- **Commercial history**
- **Political science**

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<sup>2</sup> *At this time sociology and political science were in their infancy as scientific disciplines and the terms were interchangeable in Webb's thinking. "The Function of the Public Library in respect of Political Science; with some particulars of the British Library of Political Science", read at the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Library Association, October, 1897. The Library, 9 (1), 1897, 230-238.*

In politics and economics these courses were for three years with the final year focused on research. In addition there were two year courses for training in statistics, the "Higher Commercial " Course, and special courses for railway and municipal officials. There is a reflection here of the differing emphases and interests of Sidney Webb and the first Director, W.A.S. Hewins. Webb's focus was primarily on research, while Hewins', as head of the School, was on instruction and training. As Professor Dahrendorf has written:

It was the Fabians and notably Sidney Webb who insisted on the need for unbiased research, who sought to hire research students and promoted publications which would 'permeate' general consciousness, whereas Hewins did not hesitate to advocate the training of an Imperial commercial elite.<sup>3</sup>

Both men, however, were united in their desire to create a Library which would serve the needs of teaching and research. In his address to the Library Association Webb described how successful appeals for materials were contributing to build a unique and comprehensive collection for political science research.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ralf Dahrendorf, LSE: a history of the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1895-1995. Oxford: OUP, 1995, 60.*

Over a hundred governments and municipalities, representing every civilised country, are already supplying it regularly with materials. Ten thousand volumes – the majority of which are not to be found in any other Public Library in this country – are already on its shelves. With the aid of specialists on each subject, it is setting itself to acquire a systematic collection of all available material bearing on the structure and function of public administration, central and local, in all parts of the world. Besides purchasing books, it places itself in communication with governments, municipal authorities, and voluntary associations exercising public functions all over the world, with a view to preserving, cataloguing and indexing, all important official documents, reports, accounts, minutes, etc., not at present collected in any one centre. Special attention is paid to municipal and other local administration. Economics, jurisprudence, and general history form subordinate departments, the dominant central object being always the focussing of attention upon the actual facts and experiences of public administration. Besides serving the needs of the London School of Economics and Political Science, the new library is of course open freely and gratuitously for use by public officials of

every kind, researchers and investigators upon its special subjects, and all serious students.<sup>4</sup>

The Library grew steadily, if haphazardly, through donations and purchases. As a response to appeals and solicitations, government publications (known then as “blue books”) and other official documents arrived in droves. Typically, many of the earliest series tend to be statistics and local government publications of towns and cities in Britain and the continent, such as Hamburg and Amsterdam. Generous donors, both personal and institutional, also donated hundreds of reports and pamphlets on all subjects. Purchases at this time were fewer, due to limited resources available. In March 1897, for example, purchases, to the value of £39.10.2 were reported for ten French, thirteen German, and 63 American titles. Lists of recommended books were submitted to a sub-committee on books by lecturers and others for the Reference Library (i.e. the main collection) and the Common Room library for borrowing.

From 1898 a Lending Library for students was provided within the Common Room and initially contained over 80 volumes of the more important textbooks and standard works, which had been received either as duplicates or donations. It also featured a large

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<sup>4</sup> *The Library*, 9 (1), 1897, 236-7.

collection of facsimile reproductions of manuscripts from the 12th to 15th century to support the teaching of palaeography and diplomatics.

The Library and its growing specialist resources feature prominently in the annual School Calendars as a sure attraction and “selling point” for the School and its academic offering. By 1900 the contents of the Library of Political Science are described as follows, clearly illustrating a focus on primary resources:

- Ordinary text books and works of reference
- Official documents issued by:
  - The British Government
  - The Colonial Governments
  - India
  - Foreign Governments
  - Foreign Colonial Governments
- Official documents issued by the various local authorities of the United Kingdom, and other countries.
- Documents issued by official but not governmental bodies, such as Trade Unions, Banks, Railway Companies, etc.
- Periodical literature
- Tracts and pamphlets and other forms of ephemeral literature

• Special collections, such as:

- The Webb Collection on Trade Unionism
- The Farrer Collection on Finance
- The Pare Collection on Railways
- The Pankhurst Collection on Local Government
- The Solly Collection of Documents
- The Harrison Collection

Most of the named special collections remain in the archives, but the fate of the Pare and Pankhurst collections is not clear.

One library that, surprisingly, failed to come to LSE was an extensive collection of economic literature (around 30,000 volumes) built up by Henry Foxwell, Professor of Political Economy in the University of London. In 1901 it was sold to the Goldsmith's Company, who wanted it to stay in the University of London. Foxwell resisted proposals that it be deposited at LSE and in 1903 it was agreed that it should go to London University, then situated at South Kensington. From there it was transferred to Senate House in 1937.<sup>5</sup> Much later there would be collaboration between BLPES and Senate House in the collection of early economic literature.

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<sup>5</sup> Foxwell subsequently built up a second collection which went to Harvard to form the Kress Library. LSE holds the printed catalogue of the Goldsmith-Kress collection at ZHB75 L84.

Within the first six years Library collections had more than doubled. The Calendar for 1902/03 records:

It is difficult to describe precisely the extent of the collections which the library at present contains. There are about 23,500 entries in the Accession Book and the collection includes not less than 12,000 volumes and many thousands of tracts, pamphlets, and other documents, many of them unique.

It was well, then, that In May 1902 a new building, Passmore Edwards Hall, had opened on Clare Market to house the growing School and Library. A growing collection also demanded better organisation. As a way of managing the collection the Library Committee approved a scheme to bind books in each of the six main subject classes in different colours. Thus, for example, Finance was burgundy, Statistics blue, and Ethics purple. Bindings in these colours are still to be found throughout the Library and particularly in Reserve Books.<sup>6</sup> In addition a new classification scheme was developed and appeared for the first time in the Calendar for 1902/03. Significantly, this coincided with the introduction of the course on Bibliography and Library Administration (see below), taught by Franklin T. Barrett, Borough Librarian of Fulham, and James

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<sup>6</sup> *Minutes of the Library Committee, November 1902. LSE/ MINUTES/10/1/2*

Duff Brown, Borough Librarian of Finsbury. Brown was author of a successful *Manual of Library Classification and Shelf Arrangement* (1898) and pioneer of open access in public libraries. In 1898 he had published the *Adjustable Classification* which he developed further into the better known Subject Classification. It was surely Brown who developed and introduced the new classification for LSE, which “has been arrived at after careful consideration of many systems, but must be regarded as only tentative for the present”.



Passmore Edwards Hall, 1902

In the Clare Market building a Reading Room on the ground floor housed classified sequences of standard treatises and works of reference on open shelves. Pamphlets were similarly classified, but other materials were held in the Reading Room gallery and store rooms in the building arranged "according to convenience" for fetching on request. As an inveterate Library user Sidney Webb was keen that the new library should be an example of best practice and its staff well trained. He clearly had close links with the Library Association, perhaps through Henry Tedder, Librarian of the Athenaeum Club and founding father of the Association. As a Club member Webb would have been very familiar with the Athenaeum's Library. In March 1902 he addressed a meeting of the Association, chaired by Tedder, on the subject of professional education for librarians. The following year the first course in Bibliography and Library Administration was added to the LSE curriculum, and with it (in 1904) came the Library of the Library Association, which remained at LSE until 1920, when it moved to University College.

During 1902 lists of recommended titles were solicited from lecturers and the resulting list of around 500 titles was costed at about £300. It was resolved that the Director and Chairman of the Library Committee should select works from that list to the value of

around £40 and procure them in the most economical manner. At the next meeting of the Committee it was reported that just over £86 had been spent.

The following year would see some significant large donations of official publications. In March 1903 the Treasury sent over 300 volumes of surplus stock from the Stationery Office, among them the Calendars of State Papers. This was in response to a request to the Treasury from Lord Rothschild, President of the School for both the state papers and the "blue books". About the same time London County Council was approached by the Government of the United States with a request to recommend a library in central London where it could deposit its official publications and LSE was recommended. The first consignment, packed in fifty seven cases, arrived some months later and occasioned a shelving crisis! This, of course, was the start of our status as a US Government depository library. In addition documents from New York City administration began to arrive, along with reports from US and Indian railway companies. Finally, at the end of the year, Sidney Webb gave a generous donation of £10, which enabled the purchase of volumes of statutes and census reports.

Offers of exchanges with other libraries were starting to arrive, including a request from Melvil Dewey, Librarian of New York State Library, who asked for



LSE publications. Experience was to demonstrate, however, that exchanges were not in general advantageous or economical for the Library's meagre budget. The most significant development, perhaps, for collections at this time was the arrival of two libraries on deposit at LSE. The Library Association has been mentioned above, and also in 1904 a collection from the British Child Study Association, consisting of around 650 volumes, including serial parts. More deposits would follow later and will be mentioned in due course. LSE was evidently perceived as a desirable place where there was space and efficient organisation and management of collections. For the Library it also meant agreeing terms with depositors for the access and use of collections by members of those Associations.

# Growing by donation and special funding

**Each year the School Calendars published an ever growing list of donors, both of money and of publications. Some were substantial collections. In May 1905 the Library Committee recorded the receipt of one case of official documents from the US and one cart load from the Guildhall Library!**

There was still, it seems, no concept of a collection policy and this haphazard approach sometimes required special attention to be given to specific areas. British parliamentary papers, for example, or “blue books” as they were known were acquired by donation, often from individual Members of Parliament, so gaps and duplicates were therefore inevitable. Some gaps were filled with a deposit from the London Institution in 1904, but it would be some years before there was a systematic approach to collection. Not until 1909 was it resolved to seek a grant from the Treasury for a complete set of all blue books issued. Certain other areas benefited from large donations of funding for specific purposes. One area to receive such a boost was the railway collection, which attracted considerable grants from railway companies and an extra vote of £50 from the School governors. Substantial development of the collection was anticipated with a potential need for a dedicated member of library staff.

Yet another example was the donation of £200 in 1907 from the Trustees of the Constance Hutchinson Fund to “complete one of the sections of the

Library, in memory of the late Henry Hutchinson”. It had been a bequest from Hutchinson’s will that had enabled Sidney Webb to start the School in 1895. The Trustees suggested that the section to be completed should be the subject of Socialism in all its ramifications, both for and against. The Library was therefore tasked with the vast undertaking of surveying the entire literature of socialism, checking against existing holdings and sourcing the desired publications. A survey of the Library revealed just over 1500 titles and it was estimated that there could be a similar number to be discovered from the published bibliographies. Three lists of desiderata were produced and potential donors were identified, both socialists and their opponents. An initial mailing of 100 letters on 1 October 1908 with the first two lists returned 268 items with the promise of more to come. Among those approached were leading Marxists Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein, who both responded positively. The prospect of an influx of hundreds of publications demanded that urgent thought be given to extra shelving to house the collection. It was decided therefore to furnish a room for that purpose to make it a distinctive collection with a suitable

commemorative tablet. The Hutchinson Trustees were approached for an extra £100 to complete this. In reviewing the progress of the project in 1909 it was found that, although the appeals had not been as productive as hoped, they had certainly raised the profile of the Library as a whole both at home and abroad. Further material would continue to be solicited and added to the collection.

In 1907 the library of the Bibliographical Society<sup>7</sup> in Hanover Square hit a crisis of space and no new books had been bought for several years. LSE was now approached as a possible home because of the presence of the Library Association Library. In discussing the matter the Library Committee saw some advantage in taking on this and other specialised collections both for its own students and readers and also in terms of advertisement. There was now a question about the custody of the Library Association collection, but it was felt that library staff benefited from access to the books and also that public librarians using the collection gained awareness of the School and its library. It was noted for example that the 'new libraries at Hackney, Islington, and St. Pancras have been stocked

on recommendations by our staff'. Finally it was suggested that the time had come to organise this work with a scale of payments which would pay for a member of staff to look after these collections.

For all its perceived advantages, this piecemeal approach and acceptance of seemingly everything that came along did inevitably lead to an imbalanced collection and, ultimately, to a shortage of space. Then, in 1907/1908, the School received a special grant of £300 from the Treasury for improving the Library. Part of this sum would go to redress the imbalance in collections. Teaching staff were invited to inspect the Library and report on its deficiencies as they perceived them. The Professorial Council then proceeded to suggest that small subject Sub-committees should be formed for selection. For most of them the sum of £10 each was allocated for immediate purchases. In all £500 was allocated, to be spent over two years, "to redress the more glaring inequalities of the collection", firstly as a "collection for ordinary students" (i.e. a teaching collection), and secondly as an "instrument of research". Recommendations for the teaching collection would come from lecturers, but for the research collection it was suggested that a "collecting department" be formed to receive recommendations from the Librarian and students, and deal with them

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<sup>7</sup> *Founded in 1892, the Bibliographic Society is the senior learned society dealing with the book and its history. It is now based at Senate House. Annual Report 1907 in Transactions of the Bibliographical Society, IX, 1906-08, p. 114.*

with the minimum formality and red-tape. It was thought that, initially, one “special clerk” would be sufficient to undertake this work. The new purchases from this exercise would require more shelving (around 160 feet), which would have to be fitted in classrooms.

By 1909 the holdings of the Library were described thus:

- General works of reference, British and foreign.
- Standard works, British and foreign, on economics and political science.
- A bibliographical section. This contains the catalogues of a large number of Libraries (both General and Special), readers’ guides, general and subject bibliographies and reading lists. Also a large number of special bibliographies and lists of references prepared by the lecturers, library staff and students of the School. These are constantly being added to. The collections of the Bibliographical Society and the Library Association which are deposited by the respective societies are valuable adjuncts to this section.
- A collection of 50,000 pamphlets and similar materials for research.
- British Parliamentary Publications (blue books) from the end of the 18th century to date. These are not quite complete, the principle lacunae being between 1865 and 1896.
- Official reports, bearing on administrative, constitutional and economic questions, of foreign government departments and British colonies. The library is greatly indebted to certain foreign governments for the manner in which they have presented practically complete sets of official documents not otherwise obtainable in the United Kingdom. The United States government has made it a Library of Deposit for Congressional documents in London, and has presented a set of documents since 1873 as complete as it is possible to make it.
- Official reports on municipal administration presented by more than 250 municipalities in the United Kingdom, the British colonies and Dependencies, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Holland, Belgium, the United States and other countries. No similar collection of municipal documents has been made in this or any other country.
- Other official papers, such as the reports of the North German Confederation and the German *Reichstag* since 1867.
- The Lords Commissioners of H.M. Treasury have presented copies of the Chronicles and Memorials and of the Calendars of State Papers and other publications of the Stationery Office.

- Special collections of material illustrating particular subjects or groups of subjects. These special collections are unique, for they have invariably been made by experts. The most valuable and extensive of them consists of the materials collected by Mr and Mrs Sidney Webb for their *History of Trade Unionism and Industrial Democracy*, and presented by them to the Library. Professor Borgeaud, of the University of Geneva, collected for the Library a complete set of documents illustrating the working of the Referendum and Initiative in Switzerland. Mr Graham Wallas made a similar but much more extensive collection, illustrating certain political problems of the United States, and during 1898 Mr and Mrs Webb, at the request of the Library Trustees, obtained, in addition to standard works, a large collection of official reports and documents, and other materials bearing upon public administration in the United States and the Australasian Colonies.
- A collection of reproductions of historical MSS. Illustrating the handwriting and formulae of different periods, for the use of students in the History Department. Certain of these may be borrowed for home study.
- Manuscript and other collections bequeathed to the Library by the late Lord Farrar, Rev. Henry Solly, Mr Charles Harrison and others.
- Special Libraries which have been deposited with the London School of Economics for custody and administration – e.g. the collections of the Bibliographical Society, the Library Association, and the Childhood Society.
- The library of the Common Room is available for home reading by members.
- The Railway Collection, containing a large number of reports, textbooks, periodicals, etc., dealing with railway administration and economics. This collection is in course of formation out of funds given by the greater railway companies of the kingdom, and is constantly being added to.
- The Henry Hunt Hutchinson collection on Socialism and allied questions. The collection has been acquired partly by gifts of books and other documents and partly by purchase from a fund provided by the trustees of the late Constance Hutchinson.

In the years that followed more collections were added:

- In 1909 an extensive collection of official material relating to Canada was obtained by the Librarian, John McKillop during a visit to the Dominion.

- In 1910 W.M. Acworth generously gave the greater part of his railway library, consisting of more than 5,000 items, to supplement the Railway Collection, which was considered the most important library of transport literature in the United Kingdom.
- In 1911 the libraries of the Child Study Society and the Royal Economic Society; a collection of economic works in Japanese collected by Sidney Webb during his tour of the East.
- In 1912 a large collection of books, pamphlets, periodicals, wholesale price lists, etc., relating to the tobacco industry of the United Kingdom from the seventeenth century.
- In 1913 the library of the South-Eastern Union of Scientific Societies.

During this period something had to give.

The Bibliographical Society had not been entirely satisfied with the accommodation of its library at LSE and had been seeking another arrangement.

At the end of 1911, with space becoming crucial at LSE, the Society removed its collection to UCL.

The Library Association would remain until 1920.

The remaining above named collections, as far as is known, have long been integrated into overall Library collections, whether pamphlets, archives and special collections, or the main collection.

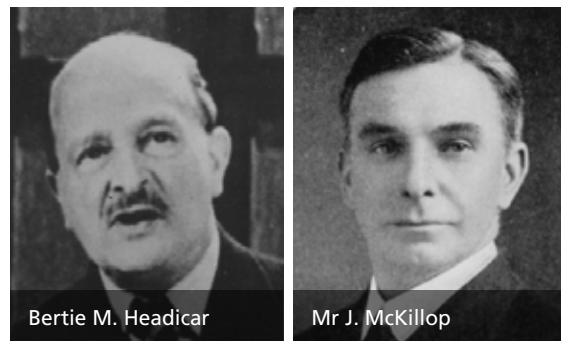




# A new Librarian and the Library Bulletin

**John McKillop, the first Librarian had split his time between School Secretary and Librarian. Much of the day to day work was performed by assistants, often volunteers, who with the advent of the Library courses took advantage of the opportunity to receive some professional training. The first full time Librarian, Bertie M. Headicar, was appointed in 1910 with over twenty years' experience in public libraries in London. He held the post for the next twenty three years, during which he was responsible for some significant advances in collection building and organisation, not least the compilation and publication of a subject catalogue.**

In 1910 the British Empire was secure and flourishing with Dominions stretching from Canada to Australasia, and from India to South Africa. In so far as the Library's collections and the School curriculum were a reflection of the contemporary world, the emphasis and focus was very much on the Empire, its development and progress, and comparison with the Great Powers, America, Germany and France. Commerce, aided by banking and finance, was the key to development, and railways the agent of progress. All were guided and regulated by the principle of law, whether domestic or international. Sociology had been added to the curriculum in 1903 and was taught with a clear methodological edge.



All students had to take a course of lectures in Logic and Scientific Method. Sociology at this time also covered ethnology and comparative psychology. Within that discipline were the germs of what would become separate departments of Philosophy, Anthropology and Social Psychology. In addition to degree courses the School continued to offer evening classes to train leaders of commerce, railway managers, colonial administrators, Army officers, and, of course, librarians.

As yet there was no subject catalogue and the preparation of bibliographies on various topics was seen as the chief means of subject access to the

collections. From early in the Library's history all monographs with bibliographies were noted as such in the catalogue. So important was bibliographic work that in 1910 a supplementary class was organised for librarianship students under the direction of Sidney Webb, the Director of LSE and others on advanced bibliography. The idea was that students would investigate the sources of information available in special subjects or special areas of economics and political science, with prizes for the best bibliography.

From January 1913 the Library published a quarterly Bulletin, which ran for twenty years until December 1933, with a gap during the war years between 1914 and 1919. Each issue contained:

- Additions to the Library (quarterly statistics)
- A list of recent donors
- Some important recent additions to the Library
- A subject bibliography, often compiled by Library staff
- Desiderata (an often lengthy wish list)
- Duplicates available for exchange

The desiderata included specific item requests for the Acworth Transport collection, Hutchinson and Webb Trade Union collections. These collections were not closed and donations were still actively sought in

preference, it seems, to purchases. The list of donors grew year on year, and within each year, donors of money and donors of items were individually identified under the headings:

- British Government Departments
- British Colonial Governments
- Departments of Foreign States
- Local Government Authorities
- Corporations, Associations, and Institutions
- Private Individuals and Firms

During 1913 the Library Committee recorded quarterly additions of just over 1000 documents a week, including some sizeable donations, for example, 1600 volumes on "profit-sharing and co-partnership". The Metropolitan Water Board donated nearly 70 years unbound copies of the Times. The load weighed around 10 tons and had to be transported on two motor lorries. In return for some help in cataloguing its own library, the Board would also donate any duplicates found in that process, which were expected to be "many and important". Some consolidation of British official publications was made possible at this time by a Treasury grant, in addition to the Parliamentary Papers, of several hundred documents from previous years and, for the future, selected items to the value of £10 per year.

Shortly before war broke out came a significant donation from the International Labour Office (ILO) of practically complete files for 1912 and 1913 of about 150 trade union and industrial periodicals, German, French, American, Dutch, Swedish, Italian, Hungarian and South American. It was believed that very few of these titles would be found anywhere else in the United Kingdom. The ILO had been set up in 1901 by the International Association for Labour Legislation, which aimed to give an international perspective to the study and implementation of labour legislation. It is regarded as a forerunner of what became the International Labour Organization. In this respect, perhaps, this early donation marks the beginning of our IGO collections.

The First World War, it seems, in no way stemmed the flow of material into the Library. In November 1914 it was reported that 1000 items were coming in per week, requiring "all the energies of the staff to cope with them. In that one year 14, 501 items were received. When the Bulletin resumed in November 1919 it reported that the Library had grown considerably with over 200,000 documents having been received in the preceding five years.



Interior main Building, c1920s

# After the War

**During the war years the School Calendar had appeared in a much abridged format, without the regular description of Library holdings. That was reintroduced in 1920/21 with mention of two new collections:**

- The World Conferences Library, received on deposit from Mr Gustav Spiller. This was a collection of material bearing on inter-racial problems, containing 634 books and periodicals. Mr Spiller (1864-1940) had organised the First Universal Races Congress in 1911.
- The Edward Fry Library of International Law. Sir Edward Fry was one of the Lords Justices of Appeal and the first delegate of Great Britain to the second Hague Conference. In 1920 The Trustees of his estate chose the LSE as the place to deposit a Library of International Law as his memorial. As a foundation they purchased the library of the late Professor Oppenheim, who had formerly taught at the School. That collection of around 1200 volumes was judged to be the most complete in England. To this were added the Library's existing collection on international law. A special classification scheme, based on Library of Congress was devised by Librarian Bertie Headicar, who also produced a printed catalogue in 1923. This volume contains a copy of the Trust Deed. The books are now interfiled in the JX section of the Main Collection and identified by the book plate. A copy of the catalogue is held at ZJX1245 E21. For many years further purchases were made from the interest on the original capital sum.
- No less important was the start from February 1920 of the donation of publications from the League of Nations.

Altogether the Library now comprised some 520,000 items, including 200,000 pamphlets. To help navigate this huge amount of literature Librarian Bertie Headicar had from 1914 delivered an annual public lecture on "The Contents and Arrangement of the British Library of Political Science". In addition, over the years, library staff had worked on tools, both bibliographies and indexes, to make the collections accessible. Under the leadership of the Librarian work would begin on a long desired, but very ambitious project, the creation of a subject catalogue. It was under consideration in 1921 but, largely due to lack of funds, would not see completion for a decade. Meanwhile the quarterly issues of the Bulletin continued to carry bibliographies on a range of specialist topics, including the Channel Tunnel (1913 and 1929), European Union (1932) and Mothers' Pensions (1924). Sidney Webb himself contributed to this series with a bibliography on Travellers' Descriptions of Great Britain (1921) from 1300 to 1841. These accounts were among sources he and



Beatrice had used to gain first-hand information for research on “workmen’s combinations” and English local government. In addition the range of indexes prepared by Library staff and available to readers was extensive, for example: English local government publications; Canadian and Australian official papers; all references and figures relating to Africa in British parliamentary papers; and the Acworth collection on transport. There were indexes also to over seventy periodical titles, which did not appear in the standard published indexes.

During the first half of the 1920’s there were extensive developments to buildings in Clare Market and Houghton Street which greatly improved Library space. First, it was reported in February 1922 that:

With the conclusion of the building operations at the London School of Economics has come the long looked for relief of the congestion in the general reading room. Three additional reading rooms have been provided, and the Library now possesses a special reading room for statistical books, another room has been set apart as a library of commerce, finance and transport, and a third for a history library and the Edward Fry Library of International Law. The new rooms are all well lighted, heated and ventilated, and readers should now be able to

study in much greater comfort than it has been possible for them to do in the past. Incidentally also, the shelving accommodation in the book stores has been considerably eased and extra provision has been made in the extension of the building for book storage. As a result of these rearrangements the Library will not for a year or two suffer from that horrible ailment – cramp.<sup>8</sup>

Within two years the Director’s annual report was speaking of further impending improvement to the Library with a new wing on Clare Market, which would complete the building project.

As well as lecture rooms and tutorial rooms it will include the Cobden Library of International Trade. With this and other extensions, the Library will be one of the best equipped for its purpose found anywhere; controlled, if necessary, from a single entrance, it will contain a series of connected specialised rooms for Economics and Commerce, Law, History, Political Science, Transport and Statistics, with all the essential books and Parliamentary Reports accessible upon the shelves, with space for more than 250 general readers and ample reserved accommodation for research. The scale of the new Library may

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<sup>8</sup> *Bulletin of the BLPs, February 1922, p.5.*

be judged from the fact that the old General Reading Room with its maximum of 50 readers, which four years ago was all our accommodation for all branches of study, will be available for Law (including International Law) alone.<sup>9</sup>

The building work was greatly aided by a timely grant from a new source of funding, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Foundation. An initial grant of \$115,000 (£26,250) had been received in 1923 for research and 'additional building facilities'. The Library also benefited from the fund with the opportunity at last to start work on the long desired subject catalogue and to re-classify the whole collection according to the scheme of Library of Congress. This wasn't the full Library of Congress that we are familiar with today. For instance, where there was a geographical division it was noted by Dewey Decimal figures in brackets; for official publications as a prefix, for unofficial as a suffix. Thus Education in Great Britain would be 42 (LA21) or LA21 (42). It is interesting that the official publications format remains today for statistics, e.g. 42 (HA155), etc.

Shortly before the new wing was formally opened in June 1925, the name of the Library was changed to the British Library of Political and Economic Science.

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<sup>9</sup> *Report of the Director for 1924/25.*

This came from the Trustees who now delegated management of the Library to the School with the express wish that "the Library be as closely connected with the School as possible [evidenced by the addition of Economic] but yet, at the same time, to remain a separate entity".

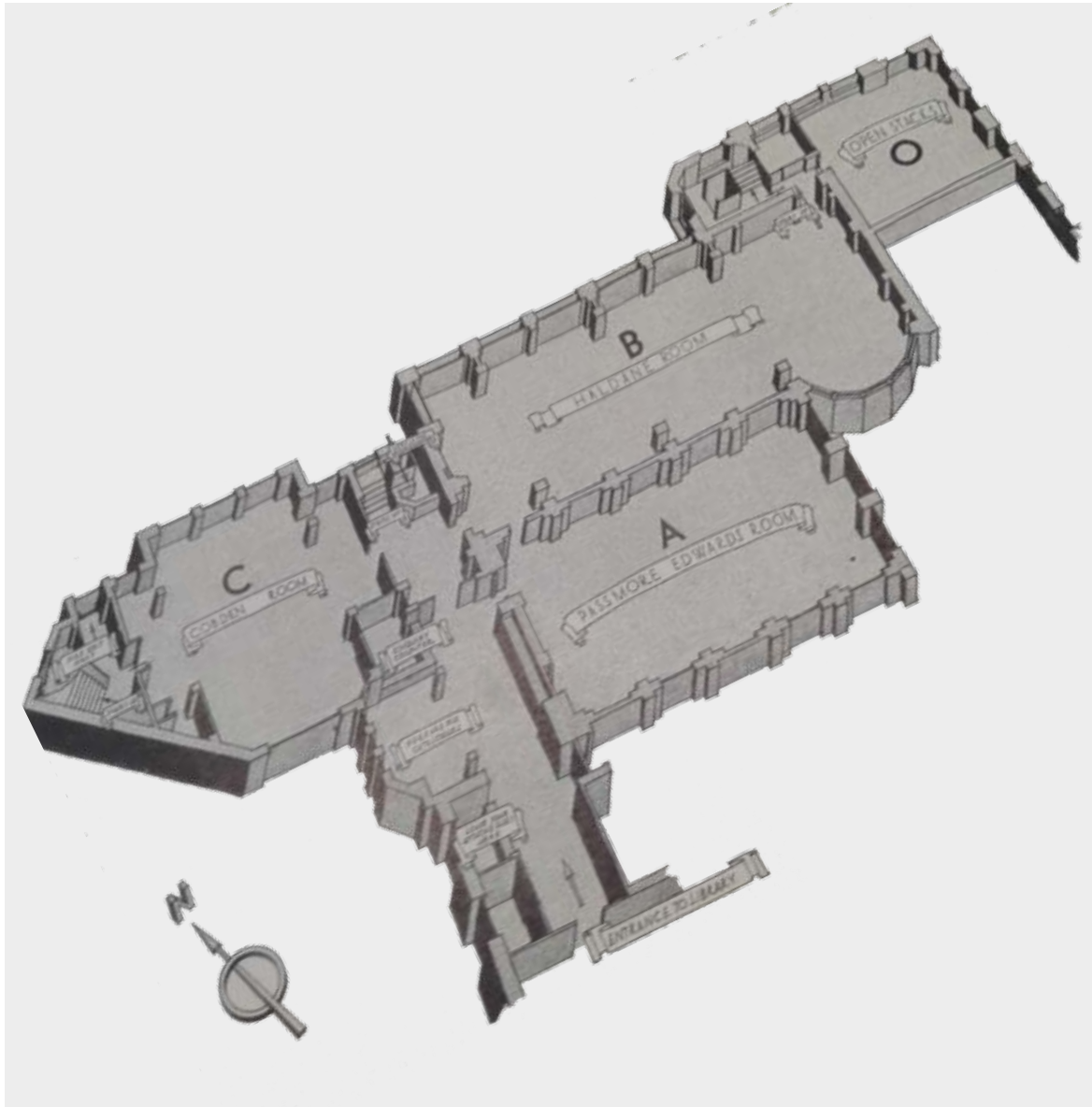
The growth and expansion of the School was recognised by the University Grants Committee, in its report for 1925/26, which laid particular emphasis on Library development. The Director's Annual Report revealed that:

The School's annual expenditure is not merely greater than any other college in London, but is more than that of any other British University except Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow, and Edinburgh; it may be added that the books bought represent only a small part of our annual accessions, since official publications, both national and local, are presented to us regularly from nearly every country of the world.<sup>10</sup>

Three years later the School received a UGC non-recurrent grant of £10,000 with special reference to Library extension.

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<sup>10</sup> *Report of the Director for 1926/27.*



Ground floor plan of the Library in 1934

# Extending buildings and collections in the 1930s

**By 1930 the Library was regarded as “the main laboratory for research in the School”. In the previous seven years reader places had increased from 175 to 368 and Library expenditure from £4,500 to £9,000 a year, but even this was insufficient to meet growing demands. A further timely grant of £60,000 from Rockefeller would make possible a complete and beneficial reconstruction and increase of accommodation. Reporting in June 1932, the Director looked forward in the coming year to the “replacement of the original British Library of Political Science by a new Library building containing below a spacious, and it is hoped beautiful, General Reading Room; above will be the Law Library and other libraries.” The number of reader places would be around 450, and the average space for each reader would increase. The movement of books from one part of the Library to another would be facilitated by a mechanical conveyor, so designed that that it can later be carried under Houghton Street to connect with the new buildings there.**

The reclassification to Library of Congress was finished by 1930 and preparation of the subject catalogue was nearing completion. The final publication in 1931, after five years work, of the first volumes of “A London Bibliography of the Social Sciences” could be regarded as a defining moment in the history of social science information, certainly in the United Kingdom. It covered not only the holdings of BLPES, but also the following libraries:

- Goldsmiths’ Library of Economic Literature at the University of London
- Royal Statistical Society (this library would relocate in 1936 to Portugal Street, close to LSE)
- Royal Anthropological Institute
- Royal Institute of International Affairs
- National Institute of Industrial Psychology

- Plus: parts of the economic section of the General Library of the University of London; the Hume Ricardo and other political collections at University College; and the collection of political and historical pamphlets in the Library of the Reform Club.

Four alphabetical volumes were the first to be published, followed by two supplements bringing the bibliography up to date to 1936. Sidney Webb himself provided an introduction referring, tongue in cheek it would seem, to his reputation for “an infatuation with bibliographies.” A notable feature of these first volumes is the separate recording of every item in the official publications of the central governments of the United Kingdom (including Parliamentary Papers), United States, Canada, and Australia, together with those of the Central and Provincial governments of India.

The Calendar for 1933/34 reveals the layout and contents of the various Library rooms, each identified by a letter.

### Connected Reading Rooms

<b>A</b>	Passmore Edwards	The Acworth Transport Collection; Parliamentary Publications
<b>B</b>	Haldane	Economic Theory and Applied Economics
<b>C</b>	Cobden	Commerce, Banking, and Public Finance
<b>D</b>	Cobden Gallery	The Hutchinson Collection on Socialism. Works on Political Science, Sociology and Philosophy
<b>E</b>	Gallery of Haldane	Parliamentary Publications
<b>H</b>	History	Historical Sources and Textbooks
<b>I</b>	Fry	Fry Library of International Law
<b>J</b>	Research Reading Room	Official Publications dealing with Imperial Economic Relations and Colonial Administration
<b>L</b>	Law	Law, including the Schuster Library of Comparative Legislation
<b>N</b>	Research Stalls	
<b>O</b>	Open Stacks	Older Textbooks and Early Editions
<b>P</b>	Periodicals	Periodicals (a selection of current numbers)

### Separate Reading Rooms

<b>G</b>	Geography	Geographical Works
<b>M</b>	Research Study	
<b>S</b>	Statistics	Official Returns of almost all countries; Statistical Works, Periodicals and Pamphlets

### Other rooms

<b>R</b>	Reserve Stacks	
<b>T</b>	Students' Lending Library	General Textbooks
<b>Z</b>	Catalogue Room	Bibliography and Reference Works

The division of the Library into open-access reading rooms and reserve stacks was described some years later by Marjorie Plant, at that time Senior Cataloguer and later, Deputy Librarian.<sup>11</sup>

The open-access collection comprised about a hundred thousand “living” works, equally accessible to students and researchers; and the reserve stacks held little used and rare works, pamphlets, and “volumes in danger of being stolen”. The open-access collections were organised by modified Library of Congress classification, but the core of her article focused on the arrangement of books in the store. It is helpful to understanding some of the historical locations, which may still be found about the Library. Every item in the store had a location starting with R (Reserve Stacks). Thus:

- R (O)** Official publications
- R (P)** Pamphlets
- R (O.S.)** Outsize
- R (S.R.)** Strong Room
- R (Coll.)** Special collections

To conserve space and facilitate fetching of reserve stock by junior staff monographs were arranged by

height and designated, from smallest to highest, by the letters U, W, X and Y (none of which could be confused with Library of Congress), followed by a running number. Equally, the article explains the numbering of the early pamphlet sequences, such as items on English history at D (42) / 1, and so on. For small miscellaneous special collections she recommended the use of “Coll. Misc.” followed by a number; and for larger ones “Coll.” followed by a letter or letters (e.g. Coll. G and Coll. E. D.). The key to finding all these varied items was, as ever, the delivery of clear and accurate catalogue records. With the expansion of the Library into various reading rooms there was a need for clear guidance to readers. The first “Readers’ Guide to the Library” was published in 1934 and revised in 1937.

The number of highly qualified senior staff was increased at this time with one assistant librarian being made solely responsible for the acquisition of printed works. This was Eduard Rosenbaum, “an economist of standing and a scholar fully conversant with the economic and social literature of at least five European countries”. He had formerly been Director of the Library of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce. Professor Dahrendorf calls him the “most polymath acquisitions officer in the history of the BLPES”, where he served from 1935 to 1952.

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<sup>11</sup> Marjorie Plant, *The Reserve Store in a University Library*, *The Library Quarterly*, 11/1 (1941), 186-199.



The Library holds a number of his scholarly works on economics and related areas.

Under Rosenbaum's direction, a weekly Acquisitions Committee was set up, new arrangements made for the purchase of foreign books, and special library discounts secured. Help was sought from distinguished scholars in France, Germany, Italy and America in the selection of works from those countries.

In this setting intensive efforts were made, and with much success, to build up an international library truly representative of the social sciences. And not merely in books alone. Many complete sets of important periodicals were secured, and many gaps in existing sets were filled. Special endeavours were made to form collections of early radical journals, of bank reports and economic bulletins, and of periodicals covering particular subjects such as the Douglas Credit System, the New Deal in America, and the rise of Fascism.<sup>12</sup>

Rockefeller money also extended to increasing Library resources and filling gaps, but there was still clearly no overall collecting policy. The Law collections were greatly augmented at this time. Firstly, the Schuster

Library of Comparative Legislation had been deposited in 1926 by the Society of Comparative Legislation and ten years later it was donated outright. It was formed initially by Ernest Joseph Schuster (1850-1924), a noted expert on international law and sometime lecturer in economics at LSE. At the time of its deposit the collection comprised around 800 treatises, 700 volumes of periodicals and several boxes of pamphlets. It was particularly strong in German law, an area in which Professor H. C. Gutteridge believed BLPES held the best collection in England. Both the School and the Library now committed to develop other jurisdictions one by one, starting with Italy.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, a nucleus was also formed of a collection of English legal history in support of a newly established Chair in that subject.

The Civil War Tracts were purchased at this time (1933), a fascinating collection of over 1000 items, many of them rare, but with no obvious link to current teaching or research. The opportunity to acquire them was, it seems, too good to miss. Sizeable donations continued to come in, including 2000 volumes on social and local history of the United States, nearly 200 volumes on the economic history of London, and a significant collection on Publishing and the Book Trade, the beginning of what we now

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<sup>12</sup> *A Retrospect, 1933-1944 in the Library Annual Report 1944-45.*

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<sup>13</sup> *Journal of Comparative Legislation, IX (1927), 265-6.*

know as Coll. G. Like other collections it would continue to be developed with additional donations in succeeding years. In 1934 the extensive library of Edwin Cannan, Professor of Political Economy at LSE, was received, covering economics in Europe from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. It was a period of significant development and the Library Annual Report for 1934/35 noted a record annual intake of 4,549 volumes.

The growing collection called for attention to be given to helping and guiding users. The Library's first *Reader's Guide* was therefore published in 1934 and the introduction states the Library's dual role in terms of, firstly, serving undergraduate reading and, secondly, providing material for postgraduate students and researchers. With no explicit mention of a wider national function the rather nebulous wording of the latter role may perhaps suggest it, while reflecting an approach to acquisitions which was broad and open, if somewhat undirected:

The Library's second function demands the accumulation of material which may serve as a vast reservoir of facts for the independent or more advanced investigator. From its very nature this material can be of interest only to a few, each of whom in turn can be interested only in some small and limited section. Such material may be used

only at long intervals of time, but if it falls within the wide field of the Social Sciences the Library must ensure that it is acquired and adequately preserved, suitably arranged, and carefully indexed and catalogued.<sup>14</sup>

Thankfully, the publication of the London Bibliography greatly assisted the researcher in the navigation of this "vast reservoir". At the same time, further afield, it was also contributing to the Library's international renown. In 1936 a study was undertaken in Chicago of foreign social science scholarship in national and academic libraries.<sup>15</sup> Using a sample of books and journals published from 1927 to 1928, and from 1931 to 1933 in economics, law, political science and sociology, the holdings of thirty three libraries in eight countries were reviewed and compared. England was represented by the British Museum, BLPES, and the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Amongst other things, the study found that in research institutions in Europe social scientists used foreign sources heavily and noted that, "about half of the references assigned by instructors in the London School of Economics, for example, are to foreign publications".<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *A Reader's Guide to the British Library of Political and Economic Science (1934)*, p.3.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Waples and Harold D. Lasswell, *National Libraries and Foreign Scholarship: [notes on recent selections in social sciences]*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

A glance at the School curriculum for 1934-35 reveals some major developments over the preceding years.

- Anthropology and Colonial Studies
- Economics, Analytical and Applied (including Commerce)
- English
- Geography
- History
- International Relations [founded 1927/28]
- Law
- Logic and Scientific Method
- Politics and Public Administration
- Psychology
- Social Biology [founded 1930]
- Social Science and Administration
- Sociology
- Statistics
- Transport
- Modern Languages
- Studies of Modern Britain

In terms of teaching, the focus on the British colonies, particularly India, remained clear; in Economics, regional studies now included Russia and Eastern

Europe; History had lost the previous interest in palaeography, but the focus on Britain and the Great Powers remained; International relations covered the developing international institutions, such as the ILO, diplomacy and British foreign policy. Alongside these was a new Department of Business Administration, overseen by a management committee made up of academics and leaders of business. Within Transport railway studies also continued to be important, again overseen by an advisory subject committee of academics and managers of all the main railway companies. New courses for social workers in mental health had been introduced in 1929/30. Finally, and somewhat controversial, was a new Research Chair in Social Biology, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. Social Biology looked at the natural bases of the social sciences and covered genetics, population, vital statistics, heredity, eugenics and dysgenics.

Unfolding international events were also having their impact on the collections. The Library Annual Report for 1936/37 stated:

The present political and economic changes to so many different parts of the world, each with its attendant flood of new books, pamphlets and leaflets have necessitated a constant watch for material which we might want to obtain and file for the benefit of the future researcher.

One of these events was the Spanish Civil War for which a collection of printed material was initiated. Closer to home efforts were made to collect materials relating to the London Omnibus Strike of 1937.

Towards the end of the thirties Library space once more became a pressing issue as the reports from LSE Director Carr-Saunders show:

- 1937. The Library continues to grow – at the rate of about 12,000 volumes every year; 3000 volumes are bought each year and 3 times as many come by gifts.
- 1938. Intake of material to the Library has beaten all previous records this year, as it does every year.
- 1939. The number of external researchers using the Library had increased by 100 on the previous year, which was seen as a “tribute to the Library”, but a difficulty for staff and students. The most urgent need, however, was for more space for book stacks, with only four years growth.

‘Somewhere’, he wrote, ‘space must be found, and somehow funds must be raised for this special purpose. The library is one of the great possessions of the School, and it is essential that its growth should not be checked. It is increasingly used by scholars and research workers coming from long distances, and it is unthinkable that support will not be forthcoming

to enable an institution of national, and almost international, importance to continue to render its unique service’.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Report of the Director for 1938/39.*



Entrance to old library, c1950s

# The Second World War and after

**One project planned at this time, but wanting the necessary funds, was to place in the Founders' Room a recreational collection of material outside the curriculum, including modern works on art, architecture, travel, biography, etc. It was then, in 1940, that Mrs Charlotte Shaw, wife of G. B. Shaw, stepped forward with a gift of £1,000 for that purpose, the foundation of the Shaw Library. Charlotte had been associated with the Library since its beginning both as a generous donor and an active member of the Library Committee.**

That project was inevitably disrupted by the outbreak of war and the Shaw Library started life in Cambridge, rather than Houghton Street. When the School evacuated to Cambridge the students' lending library went with it, while the BLPEs collection was dispersed. Around 150,000 of the most valuable items, both books and manuscripts were sent to safety in the country. Space in the Library had to be reconfigured to compensate for rooms taken over by the Ministry of Economic Warfare in the School. A depleted library staff, therefore, had to move thousands of volumes to the reserve stacks to make room for others from the Geography and Statistics rooms, now used for other purposes. Their task was lightened, however, by a near halving of the regular receipts of publications due to the German invasion of the Low Countries.

At the start of the war the Governors had agreed that the intake of periodicals should be maintained at all costs. As soon as further funds were made available the Library resumed its purchases of foreign material. For around six months all periodicals were

being received regularly thanks to the support of contacts abroad, only to be cut off when Germany invaded Norway and Denmark, and Italy entered the war. The Library intake was suddenly reduced to the publications of the British Empire and America. In July 1940 the periodical intake was reduced to less than half of what it had been the previous year. During the war years the Library maintained a card index of material not received from continental Europe.

The purchase of books was likewise diminished. For American publications the Library cooperated closely with the library of the University of Chicago, which sent a monthly list of social science publications, marked up according to perceived importance. Only the most important were ordered and, as for the rest, the Governors made an extraordinary vote of £599 for the purchase of American works "at the end of the war". It was recognised, however, that inevitably there could be some permanent deficiencies in the collection. During the session 1945/46 the Library was re-established at LSE and the books returned. It re-opened on 29 October 1945.

One of the first tasks was to undertake a survey of the collections taking account of readers' needs and provision in other libraries. This was seen as a first step towards a 'reasoned policy of completing them [the collections] and restricting them where possible'. Three areas were initially selected for review: government publications, Slavonic collections and legal publications. It soon became clear that the deficiencies were such that there was little hope of reducing pressure on Library space. The extensive collections of government publications were an obvious choice for review; the Slavonic collections perhaps less so as this was a relatively new area of collection for LSE, but the School of Slavonic and East European Studies had been in existence for thirty years; the law collections had been greatly boosted in recent years by the Fry and Schuster collections.

The government collections had benefited since 1931 from an arrangement made by Sidney Webb, Lord Passfield, as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Material had been coming from the colonies, but it appears that the arrangement was not interpreted consistently, creating some significant gaps. Direct arrangements were now made individually with each colony, although much earlier material was no longer obtainable. The early publications of

the United Nations and other new inter-governmental organisations were also hard to obtain without a degree of effort, if at all. In addition, political changes as a result of the war served to complicate acquisitions from certain countries, where it was often difficult to discover what was being published. It was nonetheless considered that the existing collection was "reasonably representative".

Thanks to the Rockefeller Development Fund the law collections were augmented by a Swiss law library of over 150 volumes and a collection on Russian law before 1917. At the same time to the Russian collections were added around 800 pamphlets relating to the revolutionary movement in Russia and abroad (the Russian Revolutionary Pamphlet Collection), with clear links to the Hutchinson Collection; and materials relating to the theory and practice of Soviet trade, planning and finance. The space issue was very real, but the findings of the review were evidently not sufficient to seriously reign in acquisitions in these areas. There were other relevant collections in London, but BLPES would continue collecting in its own special areas of interest.

Work continued on completing the collections of census material for European countries and was extended to the British Colonies. Gaps were filled in the statistical serials from Germany, Sweden

and Finland. More material was coming from Canada, Australia, Italy, France, Netherlands, and now Latin America. Official contacts in Mexico and Ecuador, for example, gave considerable help in building collections of statistical publications from their countries. Political changes necessitated a great deal of work in some areas. Partition in India, for example, required new approaches to both the Indian government and Pakistan, which were ultimately successful in improving the supply of publications. For the United States the longstanding difficulty in obtaining reports of important Committee hearings was finally overcome through an arrangement with the House of Commons Library.

By 1948 a new edition of the *Readers' Guide* was considered needful. Split into two parts, the *Guide to Collections*, and *Notes for Readers*, it provides a snapshot of the Library as it was, both in terms of collections and physical arrangement. By this time the number of current serial titles received had returned to the pre-war level (4,500) and within four years had increased to a record 7,536. Many of the new titles were government publications identified as a result of the recent review and received as gifts. This had always been a real bonus to the Library, particularly in the post-

war period when periodical prices saw a marked increase. Subscription to new titles, however, continued unabated, and from 1949 to 1953 total expenditure on subscriptions increased from £1,900 to £3,200. Some small economies were made where possible. A review, for example, of anthropological holdings in British libraries enabled the transfer of some titles from BLPES to other libraries.

With regard to books, special provision had been made to fill gaps resulting from the war. For new titles prices had risen by over one third between 1949 and 1951 and remained at that level. Further money was made for book purchases at this time, which compensated for the price rise and enabled a return to something above pre-war levels of acquisition. In addition, some significant materials which would otherwise have been missed were acquired through two visits made by Eduard Rosenbaum to Germany and other countries in 1947 and 1948. Among these were various publications of the Allied Control Commission in occupied Germany.

In the immediate post-war years the School introduced a number of new short courses, continuing the tradition of practically based training for managers in different sectors. Some of these were in areas well represented in the collections, but others such as



mental health were new. The offering in 1947/48 looked like this:

- Business Administration
- Civil Service examinations
- Trade Union Studies
- Railway Studies
- Personnel management
- Juvenile employment
- Mental Health Course for Social Workers

By the following year some of these had gone, including the long standing Railway Studies, leaving only:

- Business Administration
- Trade Union Studies
- Personnel Management
- Child Care Course
- Mental Health Course

# A crisis of space

The early 1950's were marked by an ever more pressing need for storage space for books, noted with concern in successive annual reports from the Director. There were some potential solutions at hand, but none immediate: the building of the Government Laboratory in Houghton Street was due to become available, which might house up to 100,000 volumes; the University of London had offered storage in the tower of Senate House; and the Royal Statistical Society was hoping to vacate premises in the Smith Memorial Hall on the corner of Clare Market and Portugal Street. A short term solution was found in 1951/52, when around 35,000 monographs were transferred off-site to the basement of 13 Endsleigh Street, near Euston. Fetches were arranged daily and within the first year over 1500 items were requested. Realistically, however, it was becoming clear that the only satisfactory solution would be a depository on the outskirts of London.

Meanwhile new acquisitions continued to arrive in great numbers. In 1954 it was reckoned that the annual intake had been greater than for any other year in the Library's history. Notable acquisitions of this period include:

- A collection of 750 pamphlets on the French Revolution.
- A collection of pamphlets on bullion, 1810-1811.
- A collection of books on French political thought from the 16th to 18th centuries purchased from the estate of Harold Laski.
- The rest of the Laski collection, including a collection of English books and pamphlets on politics and political thought from the 17th to early 19th century. Also included, a rare set of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 1848-9, edited by Karl Marx.
- From Marc Wilenkin on long loan his collection of Russian works on law and economics.
- An almost complete set of transcripts of proceedings of the "subsequent" trials in Nuremberg, i.e. of minor war criminals before American military tribunals. Believed to be the only set in the UK.
- Microfilms of parts of German Foreign Office archives, relating to Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, brought to the UK in 1945 and later returned.
- 100 books in Russian on the Decembrist revolt of 1825.
- Over 300 volumes in Russian on politics, economics and local government around the time of the 1917 Revolution.

Interest in Russia was growing. In 1955 Leonard Schapiro was appointed Lecturer in Soviet Studies and from 1957 courses in Russian and Soviet politics and economics became part of the curriculum. The collection of Russian material had been proceeding gradually, but increasingly intentionally, since the late 1920's, but now in the mid-fifties the supply of publications from the Soviet Union became easier and selections for purchase more directed. Exchanges were established with three leading libraries in Moscow and Leningrad to acquire material not available through the book trade or out of print items. Since 1945 a specialist member of Library staff was responsible for developing the Russian and East European collections; from 1956 this was Maria Nowicki, later to become Acquisitions Officer for the Library.

Scandinavia was another area receiving attention. From 1949 the governments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden contributed an annual sum for three years to promote Northern Studies at the School, looking at the economic and social questions of Northern countries. Finland also joined the group to participate for one year. In addition, a grant from the Ford Foundation for international studies enabled the strengthening of collections in some regions which were thought to be weak. Continuing generous help from external sources was a life line for collection

development. The School itself was not flush with funds, but was nonetheless committed to building a world class library collection.

From its earliest days the School has set out to build up a great library of the social sciences, and it has now amassed a collection of over 333,000 bound volumes. To this end it has always devoted a large part of its income; in the session 1951-52, 9.5 per cent of the School's expenditure was on the library whereas the average expenditure on libraries by the universities of Great Britain was only 3.8 per cent of their total expenditure. As already explained the financial situation of the School is not easy during the present quinquennium, but it has been decided that the continued building up of the library should have first preference. Thus this great instrument of learning which draws students from all over the world will not suffer.<sup>18</sup>

In 1954 the Royal Statistical Society finally vacated the Smith Memorial Hall in Portugal Street, which could then be physically joined to the Library to provide additional storage space for books, a room for rare books, and Library staff offices. With some extra space now available, the Library Committee and its

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<sup>18</sup> *Report of the Director 1952/53*

Acquisitions Sub-Committee took the opportunity also to review the policy of discarding materials. The Committee came to a conclusion which offered little scope for space saving:

As the principal collection in the country of research materials in the social sciences, the Library is not able to discard on a large scale, since even the less important materials are wanted from time to time for research, and the items of least individual value are in very many cases not available elsewhere. It is occasionally possible to transfer particular categories of material not in great demand to other libraries which are willing to take comparatively minor publications, to keep them permanently, and to make them accessible; arrangements of this kind have been made in recent years with the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, the London County Council Members' Library, and certain anthropological libraries. Only in very restricted groups of material is it possible to withdraw books simply because they have become out of date; in such cases new arrangements have now been made for this to be done systematically.<sup>19</sup>

Completion of the work of reconstructing the Smith Memorial Hall in the end yielded little space for books at a time when the estimated number of items in the collection rose to over one million. This number was broken down as 314,000 single volumes of treatises, government reports or periodicals; 152,500 pamphlets and 535,000 government publications. The idea of a depository in outer London now gained some ground as the University mooted plans for a development of that kind. In 1957 it was announced that the Joint Storage Library would be built and finally, in 1961, the University Depository was opened at Egham. By the end of the following session, however, the space allocated to BLPES was virtually filled with low use material and, looking forward long term, planning had started towards a completely new Library building.

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<sup>19</sup> *Report of the Director 1954/55*



The Library: Encyclopedias, 1964

# Writing a collection policy

**There was still no written collection policy, except for Law, where the establishment of the Institute for Advanced Legal Studies in 1947 occasioned a statement of collecting policy for LSE in 1951, outlining its selection responsibilities within the University of London. Since 1935 the work of acquisitions had been overseen by Acquisitions Officer Eduard Rosenbaum, whose knowledge of international social science sources was prolific. He retired in 1952 and was replaced by Willi Guttsman, another refugee from Germany and scholar of political sociology, who had been at the Library since 1946.**

In the 1960s several issues came to a head. Not least was that of space, which the Egham Depository had not solved. Research in social sciences was becoming increasingly specialised and the range of publications expanding rapidly. Library budgets struggled to maintain former levels of acquisition, not helped by rising inflation. External researchers from the established universities and the new ones which followed the Robbins Report (1963) looked to BLPES for specialised resources, which their own institutions were unable to supply. Nationally, academic library resources became the subject of investigation by two Committees of the UGC. The first looked specifically at resources for Latin American studies in universities (1962-65), and the second more broadly at academic libraries (1963-67).<sup>20</sup> The latter concluded that “there are serious deficiencies in library provision in the

social science field both at universities and in national collections. Every attempt should be made to assist university libraries to meet their responsibilities in this field”. The place and role, therefore, of BLPES in the national library system became a subject for discussion. It was against this background that the first steps were taken to formulating a written collection policy.

Before moving on to policy and wider issues, levels of purchasing during this period were adversely affected by inflation, particularly foreign books, which were being used to an increasing extent in postgraduate teaching. At the same time some additional funding to support acquisitions was made available by the School or external sources. Some of the most notable developments in collections include:

- Funding from the TUC and elsewhere to strengthen holdings of American labour periodicals.
- Funding to improve periodical holdings with purchase of reprints or second hand volumes of several international communist titles.

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<sup>20</sup> J.H. Parry and University Grants Committee (1965), *Report of the Committee on Latin American Studies*, (London: HMSO) <https://archive.org/details/op1269334-1001>; Sir Thomas Parry and University Grants Committee (1967), *Report of the Committee on Libraries*, (London: HMSO).

- A set of Pravda (from 1912) on microfilm, believed to be the only one in country.
- A collection of around 600 books and pamphlets by pioneers of the Rationalist movement.
- A unique collection of birth control ephemera, later to be republished in microform.
- A blanket order for Uruguayan government publications.
- Depository status (from August 1964) for publications of the European Communities.

By 1960 Library holdings were estimated at around 400,000 bound volumes, and the total number of separate items at over a million. The need for some written principles of collection policy was now being felt by Acquisitions Officer, Willi Guttsman. In a document entitled *Memorandum on Principles of Acquisition Policy* (October 1960), he articulated for the first time the “general rules, unwritten but clearly understood, [which] have always determined the selection of new books and periodicals as well as of older material”. “With the widening of the School’s fields of interest”, he wrote, “it seems essential to clarify what our acquisitions policy should be and to have a set of priorities which should guide us”. He recognised that research and publication in the social sciences was expanding, linked to a growing

specialisation in disciplines, and to a developing body of research literature. Acknowledging the importance of the Library as a great collection of research material, he also stressed its importance as a centre of undergraduate reading.

In considering collection policy for the main collection Guttsman first acknowledged the existence of other specialised collections in London and the importance of avoiding unnecessary duplication. Nevertheless, in its own fields of interest and primary responsibility, the researcher should be able to find at BLPES “all the books he can reasonably be expected to need”. Finally, the *Memorandum* addressed the retrospective collection of older material as an important area for attention. The Library had made some progress on this in past years and there was still scope for filling important gaps from the 18th and even 17th centuries, particularly in economic theory and the theory and history of political and social reform movements in Europe since the French Revolution.

In Economics collaboration had been in place for some years with Senate House to develop the Goldsmiths Library of Economic Literature. It was agreed (1958) that Senate House should focus on British works up to 1850 while BLPES would collect early foreign materials on economics, British and foreign material before 1850 in other social science subjects, and all

material later than 1850. The *Memorandum*, it seems, never went beyond the Library and may represent Willi Guttsman's intention to put into words his understanding of collection policy before moving on from LSE, which he did in 1962, becoming the first Librarian of the new University of East Anglia. It was left to his successor, Maria Nowicki to pick up this written legacy and take the formulation of collection policy further, but not until 1965.

In February 1965 the Library Committee prepared a briefing document for an impending visit from the UGC, which presented the library as "the only modern British university library which is also the country's principal collection over a wide field; it may indeed be the largest collection in the world devoted to the social sciences as a whole". The visit would open discussion with the UGC over the Library's unique role and the pressing need for vastly improved accommodation to serve its users.

The document also highlighted the intention to upgrade services to undergraduates and postgraduates in prospect of increasing numbers.

Shortly afterwards the undergraduate Lending Library, now renamed the Teaching Library, underwent a major organisation. Previously a collection to support teaching was not seen as a main priority but, such

as it was, had grown somewhat erratically alongside collections in departmental study rooms, nor had it kept up with student numbers and demand. Material had been added over the years on the recommendation of teachers, but the machinery of liaison was now tightened up. Standing at around 10,000 volumes, stock was doubled by the inclusion of those departmental libraries, a collection of duplicates established for students in the Main Library and around 2600 new titles selected by teaching staff. To match the main collection the classification was changed from Dewey to Library of Congress. Teaching Library staff was increased to include an assistant librarian and a senior assistant. Overall, it was a costly exercise with expenditure on books increased by some 700% and salaries by 340%, but totally justified by the improvement of service to students.

In June 1965 the Library Committee approved the first full statement of acquisitions policy. With it the same meeting also considered a personal statement from Maria Nowicki on *The Principles of the Acquisition of Books for the British Library of Political and Economic Science*, which drew on Guttsman's *Memorandum*. As a guiding principle she wrote "the selection of the material as well as the scope of the whole Library is and should be determined by the actual and potential



research carried out at the School". While the Library aimed at comprehensive collection in its field it could not be regarded as the national library for its subjects. Existing gaps and lack of resources precluded that distinction, but nonetheless the collections served a wide external audience. A written statement of collection policy had to be flexible: "the Library does not acquire books in bulk by categories, but each book as an individual and considered item which may by its very nature be impossible to fit into rigid criteria". In terms of subjects covered the 1965 policy differs little from its later iterations. For that reason I shall focus on some key differences:

- In Law negotiations were ongoing with the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies for a revised agreement for collection of European law. BLPES would retain material relating to its own areas of interest and also responsibility for Eastern Europe. Under this agreement 1400 volumes of mainly German law were transferred to the Institute.
- In Geography at this time material on physical geography was collected to support undergraduate courses.
- In Mathematics there was a perceived need to develop the collection further, particularly in relation to Economics, and in cooperation with academic staff.

Overall the policy was just a written statement of acquisitions and selection practices which had been developed and employed for many years. Three members of staff were chiefly responsible for this activity: the Acquisitions Officer (Sub-Librarian) and two specialist Assistant Librarians, one for government and intergovernmental organisations and one for Russian and East European publications.

In the post-war world changing political realities, whether the Iron Curtain or the newly independent states of the Commonwealth, demanded an assessment of national understanding and research in these areas. For libraries, the need for local and national co-operation in subject and area studies was urged by the UGC as a result of Committee findings, and their recommendations implemented by SCONUL (Standing Conference of National and University Libraries). An important outcome was the establishment of a number of area studies library committees. Following the Hayter Report on Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African Studies (1961) the first such group to be established was SCOLMA (1962) for African studies, followed by ACOSEEM (1964), now COSEELIS, for Russian and East European Studies. In SCOLMA participating libraries were given responsibility for collecting in specific areas. For LSE it was South Africa (politics, economics, and sociology).



Collecting books for readers in the reserve stacks, 1964

In Russian and East European studies there was no apportionment of responsibility at this time but a tacit agreement with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies that LSE would focus on its core of politics, economics and sociology.

The next area group to be set up was ACOLAM, now ACLAIR, for Latin American studies following the Parry Report of 1965. At the start of the sixties the world “woke up” to Latin America in the wake of the communist revolution in Cuba. Recognising the lack of understanding of the region in the United Kingdom and aware of its growing importance in world politics the UGC set up a Committee to investigate provision for Latin American studies across the country. Following its report in 1965 five Centres of Latin American Studies were set up nationally to collect, to develop teaching and research and co-operatively build library collections. Fifteen other libraries intending to develop in this area would receive a capital grant of £1000 and an annual grant of £300 for ten years. Within the University of London responsibility for particular subjects was allocated to individual libraries. BLPES was given responsibility for its core areas of economics, politics and sociology, and received earmarked grants for acquisitions. The focus for teaching was on Latin American economics, social structure and political systems.

The session 1966/67 saw more books selected, acquired and processed than any previous year and use of the Library by LSE members and external researchers increased. The Librarian attributed this to expansion of academic research in the social sciences, which other research facilities were less able to support. He noted that overall library provision in these areas was being “energetically studied”<sup>21</sup> and that demand for BLPES collections was likely to rise rapidly. Two things were essential: first, to increase the scope and intensity of library acquisitions (government publications were particularly singled out) and, second, to develop better accommodation for readers and specialised assistance and information services for external scholars and organisations.

In 1967/68 the Librarian lamented the limitations, arising from lack of space and suitably qualified staff, on the Library’s ability to “fully exploit its collections in the interest of scholarship”. Three quarters of the book collections were in closed access stores and not readily accessible for reading or for browsing. More staff were needed for selection, especially of foreign language books, which were increasingly

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<sup>21</sup> *Two research projects were based in the Library funded by the Office of Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI) under the direction of the Librarian. One, an investigation of the characteristics of social science literature, the other an in-depth investigation into the information seeking practices of social scientists.*

being used in postgraduate teaching as well as being sought by outside scholars. The increasing demands from researchers beyond the School deserved recognition for the collections as a national resource for social science. The establishment of a Committee on National Libraries, chaired by Lord Dainton, offered hopes that the role played by BLPES in national provision of Library resources for social science would receive some consideration.

The Library submitted evidence to the Committee in May 1968 supplemented by data from the earlier OSTI led investigation into the information needs of social scientists, headlining the collection as the predominant library specialising in social sciences, and in terms of size probably the largest in the world devoted to those subjects. Acquisitions policy was only marginally affected by the existence of national facilities (i.e. the British Museum), especially in the area of foreign language publications. The importance of co-operative arrangements with other libraries, particularly in the University of London, was stressed and it was noted that building a collection across the social sciences also brought benefit to researchers in humanities by creating at BLPES, for example, “what has been said to be the best collection in the University relating to history since 1750”. The BLPES was de facto, if not in name, the national

library for the social sciences and was “particularly suited to perform such a function in any national system of library provision”. The submission therefore concluded with the suggestion that the Library should be officially designated as an “outlier library” of the national library service and that it should accordingly be enabled to develop its collections still further; that it should act as a national lending reserve collection for the social sciences; and that urgent consideration be given to the provision of the additional space and finance necessary for these purposes.



Haldane Room, 1951

Dainton recognised the BLPES as the largest special library in London and a national resource, “widely regarded as the world’s most outstanding library in its field”.<sup>22</sup> The Committee also looked at the proximity of the British Museum and the prospects of rationalising collection of social science material in London, but accepted that the British Museum should continue to collect for the benefit of its interdisciplinary readers. Overall, for BLPES, the outcome of the Dainton Report was disappointing in that no proposal was made to exploit more fully the strength and expertise of the Library. What was recommended was close co-operation with the proposed National Reference Library and perhaps other libraries in coverage of primary research material relating to the social sciences. Following on, a Committee on Library Resources was established to investigate library provision within the University in relation to resources in the London area in general and to explore possibilities of increased co-ordination and co-operation.

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<sup>22</sup> *Report of the National Libraries Committee, Cmnd 4028, June 1969, para 295.*



Lionel Robbins Building / BLPES, 1978

# A new library building

At the beginning of the 1970's the following subjects were being offered by the School. Where the 1965 collection policy gives the level of collection it is summarised and added in [ ]:

## **Development Administration**

**Economics** [comprehensive collection of academic literature]

## **Accounting and Finance**

**Geography** (including meteorology and climatology; geomorphology; cartography) [comprehensive in the social and economic aspects]

**Economic History** [comprehensive collection of academic literature]

**International History** [comprehensive collection of academic literature]

## **Industrial Relations**

**Language Studies** (linguistics; French, German, Italian, Russian)

**Law** [partly determined by agreement with IALS and other libraries; comprehensive collection in specified areas]

## **Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method**

[comprehensive collection of academic literature in social and political philosophy, and in logic and scientific method]

**Government** [comprehensive collection of academic literature]

**International Relations** [comprehensive collection of academic literature]

**Anthropology** [comprehensive collection of academic literature for Social Anthropology and regions of the School's interest]

**Demography** [comprehensive collection of academic literature]

**Psychology** [comprehensive collection of academic literature in Social Psychology]

**Social Science and Administration** (including diploma courses on Personnel Management and Social Work Studies) [comprehensive collection of academic literature]

**Sociology** (including criminology and penology) [comprehensive collection of academic literature]

**Mathematics** [a working collection but expansion was planned]

**Statistical Theory and Method** [comprehensive collection in major languages]

## **Applied Statistics**

## **Computing**

## **Operational Research**

Some of the above areas are not overtly mentioned in the 1965 policy and deserve some comment.

- The teaching of Development Administration began as a diploma course in 1965/66 and included the study of social and economic policy in developing countries. In this respect it was covered by collection for Economics and Social Science and Administration. It is worth noting also that numerous international development organisations, whose publications we have collected, originated in the 1960's, for example UNCTAD, the Asian Development Bank and others.
- Accounting and Finance is, perhaps, a surprising omission. Some of it would be covered by Economics.
- Computing and Operational Research had been part of the curriculum since before the 1960's as subjects allied to mathematics and statistics.

Early in 1970 a solution to the long standing problem of space emerged with the opportunity to purchase Strand House from W. H. Smith. Several years of planning and fund-raising now ensued to make this a reality, a new library building with sufficient space to house all material onsite, and mostly on open access. With this hope on the horizon acquisitions still struggled from lack of funds until assisted by a

timely additional grant, which enabled completion of some periodical sets and purchase of a large amount of older Russian literature in reprint form. It was also noted that intake of current Soviet literature had seen a record year, rising by 25% over the previous year. Non-recurrent supplementary grants were helpful, but the ideal had to be stable, sufficient and assured funding to ensure that a systematic acquisitions policy could be maintained, especially for foreign language materials not collected elsewhere. This was particularly necessary if the Library was to meet the expectations of its "para-national" status with more precise collecting responsibilities at national and University level. By July 1973, when the new British Library was formally established, it was becoming clear that our comprehensive collection policies, designed to fulfil the "para-national" role, were becoming increasingly impractical.

Accordingly, the Librarian wrote, the Library Committee has begun a systematic review of the present statement of acquisitions policy, aimed at drawing up a more precise and realistic document that can give useful guidance on priorities to book selectors in times of rigid economy; the aim being to produce the maximum response to the academic programmes of the School and the needs of the whole social

science community consistent with the resources which the Library can realistically expect to have at its disposal.<sup>23</sup>

The Library had just experienced a “time of rigid economy” when almost no orders were placed for two months and a very cautious acquisitions programme pursued in the ensuing year: priority was given to books in English; expensive titles requested for personal research were limited; a reserve was built up for future purchase of some expensive microfilm sets in anticipation of further financial difficulties; and some careful reductions were made in the number of Russian acquisitions. Financial constraints would continue to impact acquisitions during the early 1970’s with book prices in England rising between 16% and 19% and depreciation of currency contributing to even higher rises abroad. The focus of acquisition had to be on what was most needed to support teaching and research in the School, but the consequent drop in coverage of foreign publications hit an area where the Library made a significant contribution to national provision. The freezing of vacant posts also had impact on the overall work of the Library, particularly on coverage of Western European government publications.

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<sup>23</sup> *Library Annual Report, 1972/73, p.2.*

The move towards increased cooperation between libraries led to the designation of BLPEs as a “back-up library” of the national inter-lending system based on the British Library Lending Division (BLLD) and, within the University of London, to the production of a Union Catalogue of Serials, which could assist libraries pressed with the need to cancel periodical titles, and to an extension of the subject sub-committees. The Library made a decision at this time to cancel a substantial number of subscriptions to release funds for book purchase, and to reconsider its coverage of periodical literature in the light of the availability of copies from BLLD.



HM Queen Mother at the formal opening of the new library in the Lionel Robbins Building, 10th July 1979



By 1975 the purchase and occupation of Strand House took a real step forward with the decision of the UGC to contribute towards the conversion, supplemented by a generous contribution by the University. Completion of the work was planned for January 1978 and the new Library was to be operational at the start of Michaelmas term. At the same time the adoption of the UGC's new norms for library provision posed a potential threat to the future growth of the Library. Under the norms a steady state library was proposed, whereby the floor area was determined mainly by student numbers and growth beyond that would be accommodated by relegation of less used stock to BLLD. There was some flexibility for "special situations" and it was hoped that the unique character of BLPES and its "para-national" function would be taken into account. Meanwhile the fund raising efforts brought to the fore some high-level recognition and praise for the Library. Leaders of the three main UK political parties regarded the Library appeal as a "matter of national importance"; and from Sir John Hicks, Nobel Prize winner in economics, who gave the greater part of his prize to the appeal, "we do have what is probably the best economics library in the world".

Preparations for the move included the start, in 1976, of the huge task of reclassifying reading room and reserve stock into full Library of Congress. With a dedicated team and assistance from cataloguing staff it was expected to take six and a half years. Overall, work on the move inevitably impacted library services, but acquisitions saw a small rise, in part due to a focus on improving holdings in statistics, mathematics, computing and operational research. That this was needful underlined what the Librarian called the "basic dichotomy of the library's responsibilities as a "para-national" library for economics, politics and sociology and as the working library of a School teaching a much wider range of subjects," a position which was affirmed, with qualification, in a further iteration of the acquisitions policy in 1976:

In Economics, Politics and Sociology the aim is to acquire comprehensively all materials likely to be needed for research – an aim which, needless to say, can never be completely attained. For all other subjects studied at the School, the aim is more modest – to provide, in addition to all materials currently required for teaching, a selection of relevant but less continually used material such as one would expect to find in a good general academic library, special attention being given to reference material.

In all subjects with which it is concerned, BLPES is playing a due part in LRCC's efforts to achieve rationalisation by cooperation between the libraries of the University; and regard is also paid to the existence of other major special libraries in London, on which we rely heavily for the support of highly specialized research in the School in fields outside our "para-national" responsibility.

Since before the War, no substantial named collections had been added to the Library. Now, thanks to an anonymous donor, the School was able to purchase the library and papers of Professor Imre Lakatos, who had died in 1974. The collection of around 2500 monograph titles some short runs of periodicals covered his interests in the history and philosophy of science. Around the same time came an agreement to present to the Library, at some future date (1979), the Penguin Book collection of Hans and Tanya Schmoller, believed to be the most comprehensive collection in existence. Tanya Schmoller was an LSE alumna and although there was a connection to the Book Trade collection (Coll. G) it was never a comfortable fit and hardly used. Some years later it was sold on to a library abroad.



Library card catalogue, 1978

# The 1980s: *debating the national role*

Through the summer of 1978 collections were moved from all locations: external stores, open reading rooms, and closed basement areas, known to staff as the “tennis court” and “battleship”! The new Library opened for business in September that year and was formally opened on 10 July 1979 by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. Within three more years the task of re-classification was completed on schedule. For the first time the Library was almost wholly open access (95%), arranged in browsable subject order and with all collections on the one site. As LSE student numbers increased so did the volume of visiting British academic researchers by 145% and course students from other institutions by 246%. The financial position remained difficult and continued to demand rigorous control of expenditure and a hold on new posts. Funds were necessarily devoted to developing library automation and enhancing support for taught courses. In the early 1980's, therefore, the changing library environment called for a further close look at library services across the board and collection policy in particular. At the same time another aspect came to the fore, which would influence further discussion of the Library's role. The historical relationship of the Library to the School came under scrutiny now that for some years the School had been sole Trustee. The complex administrative structure concerned with Library affairs was simplified by the formation of the Library Panel which would be responsible for the School's exercise of its sole Trusteeship.

Library Annual Reports during this period reveal the pressure on funds and a general downturn in acquisitions. Figures showed that the intake of monographs was down 30% on that of a decade earlier with a sharp decline in the proportion of foreign language titles. Periodical subscriptions were also under review; during 1982/83 365 titles were cancelled and only 57 new ones placed. There were, however, some notable collection highlights:

- The Schapiro collection on Soviet affairs and politics together with related material from the Department of Government.

- From rationalisation within the University the transfer of 11,000 items of US Congressional Reports from Senate House.
- An additional grant of £20,000 towards the end of 1981/82 enabled the purchase of research material on microfilm, including Russian Revolutionary Newspapers and the Gertrude Tuckwell collection on women, industry and trade unionism.

It was clear that the collection policy which the Library had sought for many years to implement with the best intentions was no longer sustainable. At a

special meeting in November 1983 the Chairman of the Library Committee stated that “available funds were no longer sufficient for every traditional Library purpose.” The dilemma for the Library, recognised for many years but now more acute, lay in the conflict of its “para-national responsibility” and support for School teaching, and “in the incompatibility of what it could do and what it ought to do”.<sup>24</sup> In brief, some key points from this meeting were:

- That an institution of LSE’s international repute needed to have a library of comparable repute. The Library’s para-national repute undoubtedly attracted internationally known academics, and had contributed hugely to the success of Library Appeal.
- Uniquely good collections should be kept up and strengths should be built on.
- Foreign language coverage should be maintained.
- The range of the social sciences was much wider than when the School and Library were founded. The sum of the School’s research activities was not necessarily equivalent to the “para-national” role which the Library had tried to maintain.

The Committee picked up the discussion the following February with a revised discussion paper on a new acquisitions policy. This stressed that resources for

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<sup>24</sup> *Library Committee, 23 November 1983.*



Student in the library, 1981

previous comprehensive coverage in core areas had always been finite. It was noted that around a half of material received still came as gifts, which was a huge saving on the acquisitions budget but required considerable staff resources to manage and maintain it, resources which were not available for purchased material. In the light of contemporary work in the social sciences the division between “core” and other subjects was judged to be “both illogical and impractical.” And finally,

Both principle and present resources suggest that the basic overall policy of BLPES, applying to all types of material, should contain three elements of equal importance. It must support the

continuing research needs of the social sciences as studied at the School, within the framework of cooperative arrangements for the provision of research material within the University. It must continue to acquire such materials as is possible in English (and, as far as resources permit, in the better known foreign languages) on the principles which were used more widely for BLPES book selection in times of greater real resources and different emphases of demand. It must support the teaching of the School.<sup>25</sup>

All this deliberation about the role of the BLPES was to have a positive outcome. At the end of the 1984/85 session the Library Panel acknowledged that substantial increases in real terms were required to re-establish a satisfactory base-line for the book budget, thus demonstrating the School's intention to maintain and enhance BLPES as a great research Library. Recurrent funding for books and serials was therefore increased by 14.3% and two non-recurrent grants followed. Thanks to this, the following session saw a reversal of the downward trend in acquisitions with a 35% rise in monograph purchases. In this context, Librarian Chris Hunt recorded his view "that the needs of the School should come first in all

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<sup>25</sup> *The Library: a new acquisitions policy, Library Committee, 22 February 1984.*

decisions about Library policy, and that the national role of the Library can best be fulfilled by first giving a superlative service to members of LSE"<sup>26</sup>. A further outcome of the discussions between the Library and the School over selection policy was that acquisitions staff and teachers began to talk to each other and formal structures for liaison were, for the first time, under consideration.

By 1985 it was acknowledged that library space was filling up once more and plans were approved to install mobile shelving across the entire basement. It was estimated that this would give sufficient expansion for a further decade. The upward trend continued the following year with an increase across all categories of material, including official publications and official serials. For the first time, the number of current serials numbered 13,400 titles. While purchases and subscriptions continued at a high level it was noticeable that governments which had previously sent their publications free of charge were now seeking payment. In its first formal Academic Plan in 1987 submitted to the UGC the School declared its intent that the Library "should remain one of the major research collections within the British university system" and committed to maintain the increased level of acquisition "to the maximum extent

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<sup>26</sup> *BLPES Annual Report 1985/86.*

consistent with the financial situation". In addition the UGC, from 1987/88 for three years, gave special grants to university libraries to support research collections with the purchase of additional books and periodicals, although BLPES fared less well than some other libraries.

From this time on the total of monographs received reached a level of around 20,000 a year, which would become a benchmark for several years to come. The number of new serial titles received also rose year on year: 295 in 1987/88; 300 in 1988/89, and so on. Publication of social science material showed no sign of slowing down and, in addition to printed materials the first electronic resources were becoming available. In 1987/88 the Library reported the purchase of its first CD-ROM of the Public Affairs Information Service database. It was predicted that by the end of the following year some ten CD-ROMs would be received. An online searching service, mediated by Library staff, had also been implemented. The electronic revolution was beginning to touch all aspects of Library work and the last years of the 1980's were occupied by major changes to library services linked to implementation of a new library management system Libertas.



Cataloguing room, 1978

# Towards the Centenary

**The 1990s would be a decade of huge and significant change. It was pivotal in starting to tilt the balance between print and electronic information sources and for the planning of the biggest redevelopment in the Library's history.**

At the outset, preparing to meet the challenges of the new information environment the Library developed its first Strategic Plan (1990) which laid out priorities for the coming five years and posed the pertinent question:

What is the role of the traditional library at a time when electronically delivered information is steadily increasing in quantity and significance, when at the same time the number of books published continues to increase?

The decade that followed would see rapid advances in the development of information technology, not least the first access to the World Wide Web. At the national level, the Funding Council's Libraries Review Group (Follett Review), which reported in 1993, looked at the impact of information technology on libraries and in particular the potential it offered to support research and scholarship. Following the review a substantial amount of funding was made available to support the additional costs of specialised research collections widely used by researchers particularly in the humanities.

The Library was subsequently successful in bidding for funding (£1.3 million for four years) for projects which would improve access to the pamphlet collection, historical statistics and archives, while at the same time implicitly acknowledging their national importance. Initially catalogue records for historical pamphlets and statistics were created or upgraded, followed by preservation microfilming and finally digitisation of selected pamphlets in 1996/97. A series of printed guides was produced for pamphlets relating to Social Policy, Labour, Industry, Transport, and International History, and for historical statistics a general overview and a guide to Transport statistics. While access to historic printed statistics was invaluable the availability of data in electronic format was increasing and to that end the Library appointed the first Data Librarian in 1997 tasked with developing a data library, a relatively new concept in the UK. Working with data users in the School a data support strategy was developed.

The Strategic Plan of 1990 was accompanied by a revised collection policy which avoided explicit



mention of previous comprehensive collection and assumed three levels of collecting activity.

1. In Politics, Economics and Social Studies to research level.
2. In Anthropology, Geography, History, Language studies, Law, and Philosophy selectively to research level.
3. In Mathematics and statistical theory, History and philosophy of science to support level.

This was at best a set of general guidelines for everyday selection decisions and within two years the first steps were taken to expand and refine collection policy in liaison with each academic department, a process which would take some years to complete.

With the published output of monographs showing no sign of decreasing, the level of monograph acquisitions remained consistent at around 20,000 volumes per year. The processes of acquisition had changed little over many years with orders being typed from marked up lists and bibliographies, but from 1995 the process of selection began to change with a first step towards a customised order approach. A selection plan was set up for material published in North America to be sent directly by the supplier according to a prepared profile. After trialling for a year it was extended to cover the United Kingdom

also, and later to publications from France, Germany and Spain. While making time for staff to engage in other important tasks it was at the same time a step towards distancing them to some degree from the selection process and collections.

Outside of the regular acquisitions process some are opportunities opened to acquire significant material. Two major collections in London relating to international affairs needed to make space, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House).

- First, in 1991/92 a large amount of material (over 1200 items), mainly of the 19th century and including many government publications and statistical series was received from the FCO on part gift, part deposit basis. In addition there were monographs, largely from the 20th century, on European and Middle Eastern history, and around 300 pamphlets relating to former colonial territories and the Commonwealth.
- Next, in 1992 Chatham House was looking to make space by disposing of its pre-1950 imprints. It was an opportunity too good to miss to fill gaps from this period, particularly the inter-war years, in the area of international relations and politics. Thanks

to generous funding from the Montague Burton Trust the Library was able to purchase this collection of around 12,000 books and approximately 2,000 pamphlets and government documents. Books are identified in the Main Collection by a book-plate acknowledging the Trust.

Finally, following historic changes in East Germany material was acquired in 1992/93 from a library of the Communist Party (PDS) in Chemnitz, including a complete run of Neues Deutschland, the Party organ, from 1946 to 1990. More generally the supply of material from Russia and Eastern Europe had suffered from the fall of communism and took some while to recover.

As the Library celebrated its centenary in 1996 preparations and planning were in hand for what was to be a major redevelopment of the building. Over the summer of 1999 a complete decant of collections took place with seventy per cent going to nearby Southampton Buildings and the rest, mainly low use material, to a store in South London. It was at this time that the category of Reserve Periodicals was created, serial titles which were non-current and in most cases had ceased publication. Split over two sites the collections were nonetheless accessible and for the Library it was business as usual, but it was not surprising that monograph acquisitions dropped by

28 per cent on the previous year. Over a period of around eighteen months the interior of the Lionel Robbins building was completely redeveloped and re-opened in 2001 with an eight percent increase in floor area and a potential fifteen years expansion.



Books on mobile shelves

# The last two decades: collection management and collaboration

**One item that did not long survive the move and redevelopment was the card catalogue in its wooden draws and cabinets. Fortunately the retro-conversion of the cards into digital format had begun in 2000 and was completed three years later. LSE thus became one of the first libraries in the UK to provide access to all of its historical print collections through its online catalogue. The amount of digital content available was growing rapidly, particularly e-journals which increased from 4,600 titles in 2002 to 15,000 in 2005, but the importance of the print collections was in no way diminished and the need to actively manage them in the new space was clear. Over the next few years some important initiatives were undertaken to better understand the condition and extent of the collections.**

Firstly, attention was given to their physical condition by participation in the National Preservation Office National Preservation Survey between 2001 and 2002, LSE being the only lending library at that date to have taken part. Examination of a sample from across the collections showed that 91.3 per cent of Library holdings were in good or fair condition, but work was needed to improve and maintain certain areas. Next a comprehensive stock measurement exercise was undertaken to discover the amount and location of shelving space available for expansion. Finally, from 2005, the ongoing management of collections and space became the responsibility of a newly appointed Print Collections Manager. The same year the national and international significance of the Library collections was recognised by the award of designation status from the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). Two years later came recognition from HEFCE as one of six National Research Libraries.

Space and collection management had become a concern for many UK academic libraries and collaborative collection management schemes appeared to offer a possible solution. The breadth and richness of LSE collections have made the Library a natural choice for such collaborative ventures. Thus LSE was one of twelve partners in a pioneer collaborative scheme for Russian and East European Studies, COCOREES, which ran from 1999 to 2002 to test feasibility and create tools which could be extended to other areas. The success of COCOREES led to a further project, CoFoR (Collaboration for Research), a ten year collaboration between most of the major Russian and East European collections in the UK.

In 2002 a Concordat was signed with the British Library with a focus on collaboration in collection development, preservation and improving access for researchers, specifically in the area of Western

European government publications. Country by country audits of the collections identified complementary strengths, gaps and areas of overlap. Not unexpectedly, in very general terms, the chief strength of LSE was found to lie in statistics and the British Library in legislation. In 2007 Oxford Social Sciences Library joined the partnership. As an aid to researchers details of the collections were mapped and made available on the British Library website.<sup>27</sup>

One of the most successful and productive collaborative schemes has been the UK Research Reserve (UKRR). Targeting print journals, UKRR has sought to enable space savings across UK academic libraries and to ensure long-term access to low-use titles by the co-ordinated management of holdings. LSE joined the scheme in 2011 and since then has been able to free up over 1000 linear metres of shelf space. Access to all titles withdrawn is assured through the British Library and other UKRR partners, while the Library has likewise retained significant titles in the core social sciences. Since 2010 new journal titles have been acquired in electronic format only and increased access to secure digital archives of past issues has enabled further significant space savings.

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<sup>27</sup> *British Library Collection Guides*: <http://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/west-european-government-publications>

The digital revolution is opening formerly closed print collections to new audiences and offering new approaches to research. Starting in 2007, ten years after the initial digitisation of several thousand pamphlets from our collections, a further opportunity came to participate in a JISC funded collaborative project to digitise over 20,000 pamphlets from the 19th century with a focus on politics and government. One of seven partner libraries, LSE contributed 6,000 items to the collection, which has been made freely available to UK educational institutions.

During this period a number of notable donations from institutions and individuals helped to fill gaps and further develop certain areas, for example: the Independent Television Commission (media studies), the Tavistock Institute (organisational theory, human relations and industrial relations), the Work Foundation (management and employment relations), the Institute of Bankers (banking and finance); and from LSE academics John Watkins (philosophy), Charlotte Erickson (economic history), and Larry Epstein (economic history).

By far the largest and most significant collection to be acquired in recent years is the Women's Library. Founded in 1926 as the Library of the London Society for Women's Service the collection focuses on all aspects of women's lives in Britain and the

Commonwealth. The opportunity to acquire this unique resource for LSE was too important to be missed. In spring 2013 after months of planning the collection, comprising over 60,000 books and pamphlets, 3,500 periodical titles, printed ephemera and press cuttings, and 5,000 objects including posters and banners, was moved from its former home. Such was the scale and scope of the material that new spaces had to be developed to house it and a reading room for researchers. The Women's Library together with complementary LSE Library collections offers unique and extensive resources for research in women's and gender studies.

The day to day acquisition of print materials across all areas of interest has continued as normal, in line with the collection policies created in the mid-1990s. New research interests have emerged and, following consultation with departments, the Library received additional support to develop the collections in areas such as bioscience and related medical social policy, and climate change. Consequently collection policies and profiles have been reviewed and updated to take account of these and other new directions. Observing the recent course of LSE research, two interesting trends may be noted, firstly an evident rapprochement between the social sciences and certain areas of the natural and life sciences, and secondly a

move from a national to a regional and global focus. In very broad terms, both have implications for the development of print collections: the former favouring access to recent scientific literature best provided in the digital environment, the latter rather more reliant on printed material from those regions of interest. Where print has ruled for a century the digital revolution is gathering pace, but for certain disciplines with a leaning towards humanities (history, politics and law, for example) the acquisition of printed material is likely to remain important for the foreseeable future.

The potential, however, for new technologies to unlock and provide wide access to formerly closed print resources is being increasingly demonstrated in the development of digital collections. The rich resources outlined in this history, held in the pages of primary sources and scholarly literature collected over many decades, await the attention of future generations of researchers. The next chapter of this story will be to critically evaluate and assess LSE's nationally and internationally recognised print collections, to identify those that are unique and distinctive, for both further development and, where possible, to make them openly and widely available for new avenues of teaching and research.



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