

Three who shaped LSE Library collections

*LSE's **Library**, the British Library of Political and Economic Science, opened in November 1896. In a series of posts celebrating LSE Library's 120th anniversary in 2016, Graham Camfield remembers three Acquisitions Officers who shaped the collections the Library has today.*

A history of LSE Library collections would fall short if it failed to mention some key personalities, who have helped shape them over the years. At the beginning material came in from numerous generous donors who gave varied collections large and small, comparatively little was acquired by purchase. By 1934 the Library and acquisitions had grown to an extent where the appointment of an Acquisitions Officer to oversee collections was considered needful. It is interesting to note that the first three to occupy that post were all from continental Europe bringing with them wide language skills and a non-Anglo Saxon perspective. Among their lasting legacies is a rich collection of core material in almost all European languages formed over nearly fifty years.

Eduard Rosenbaum

Eduard Rosenbaum was the first to be appointed and served in that capacity until 1952. Like numerous others at that time Rosenbaum came to LSE as an exile from Germany, supported by the Academic Assistance Council. Highly qualified, with a doctorate from the University of Kiel, he had worked as Director of the Library of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce and taught economics at Kiel and Hamburg. A Library annual report describes him as “an economist of standing and a scholar fully conversant with the economic and social literature of at least five European countries” and, in Professor Dahrendorf's words, he was “the most polymath acquisitions officer in the history of BLPES”. The Library holds a number of his scholarly works on economics and related areas. England in 1940 wasn't a safe haven for German exiles and Rosenbaum found himself one of many interned in the Isle of Man but was released the following year through the intervention of J M Keynes. Returning to LSE he oversaw library acquisitions through the difficult years during and following the war.

Willi Guttsman

Rosenbaum was succeeded by Willi Guttsman, who had also left Germany for England, aged 19, before the war. He had been imprisoned by the Nazis, lost both parents in the Holocaust, and was also interned. Having graduated from Birkbeck with a degree in Economics, he worked as a library assistant at LSE from 1946, where he took a part-time MSc in Sociology. Another example of the scholar-librarian, he would later write important historical studies on the British ruling elite and German social democracy. In 1960 in a document entitled *Memorandum on Principles of Acquisition Policy* he articulated for the first time the “general rules, unwritten but clearly understood, which have always determined the selection of new books and periodicals [at LSE]”. He left in 1962 to become the first Librarian of the new University of East Anglia.

Maria Nowicki

Maria Nowicki was the next in post. With a Master's degree in Law and Economics from the University of Lwów, she had been politically active in Communist Poland before coming to England in the early 1950s. She worked first in the British Museum Library while taking a part-time Masters' degree at LSE before starting at BLPES in 1956 as Assistant Librarian in charge of the Slavonic collections which she energetically developed over the next four years. Two years of superintending the Reading Rooms developed a deep knowledge of the information needs of LSE Library users, which served her well as Acquisitions Officer from 1962. Maria Nowicki was responsible for drafting the first written collection policy, which has formed the basis of collection decisions, with some amendment, until the present. She retired in 1981.



Library Staff , c1970s featuring Maria Nowicki

Contributed by Graham Camfield (Collection Development Manager, LSE Library)

June 1st, 2016 | [LSE Library](#) | [1 Comment](#)

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