

# The Lesbian Archive and Information Centre Timeline

Revealing the hidden history of British lesbian women.

## 1995: Public Cash Saves 'Priceless' Archive

The Lesbian Archive and Information Centre (LAIC) was established as the Lesbian Archives Collective in 1984, receiving grant funding from the Greater London Council. After the withdrawal of this funding due to the dissolution of the GLC, the LAIC found itself in financial difficulties and without a permanent base.

The Lesbian Archive and Information Centre contains the UK's largest and most significant collection of materials about lesbian lives, histories and achievements. This particular article appeared in the 'Pink Paper' on 21st April 1995, a few weeks after an appeal announcement in the same paper.

This is the first time that Glasgow Women's Library is mentioned as a possible guardian of the archive and Adele Patrick remembers reading about the archive's trouble and thinking that the 5th floor of the Library would be a good place for it. She says "I remember a mixture of feeling excitement and trepidation, because I thought we could do it, it would change our lives but I wanted to pursue it because I didn't want anyone else to get their hands on it".

The collections were sent to Glasgow in September 1995 to be housed in the upper floor of the Glasgow Women's Library. In 1996, LAIC accepted the archives and library of the Camden Lesbian Centre and Black Lesbian Group as a complete collection.

'Pink Paper' article about the LAIC's financial difficulties, 21st April 1995.

## Public cash saves 'priceless' archive

BY VICKY POWELL

**The Lesbian Archive**, the country's biggest collection of lesbian material, has been saved from closure after help from sympathisers and supporters.

Volunteers at the cash-strapped archive in central London launched an urgent appeal in February for help to pay this year's £7,000 rent and prevent the centre's closure. And now supporters have donated enough cash to pay for the next few months' rent, so the public will still be able to visit the archive - home to thousands of priceless lesbian books, magazines and other documents.

Centre director Hilary Bird declared that the anticipated closing date at the end of April would not happen after donations from a number of lesbians. She specifically thanked Pink Paper readers for their kindness and generosity.

"We've had a huge amount of support from women and quite a few donations," Bird enthused. "And just last week we got a cheque for £400," she said. But she was unable to specify how much was raised as cash was still coming in.

The centre's financial problems began last year when Camden Council stopped pay-



Saved at last: public cash keeps Lesbian Archive open

ing the rent for its room in the London Women's Centre, after the centre went into private ownership. The archive - founded in 1984 - has been dependent on public donations since 1989. It has also been turned down for charitable status, as it is aimed exclusively at women.

The archive houses over 1,000 books, and 3,000 magazines, films, photographs and newspapers, and is home to a 1928 original of *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall.

Meanwhile, the archive is also negotiating the possibility of moving to bigger and better premises which have been of-

fered by two universities. It has also been offered space at the Glasgow Women's Library.

"It looks very likely that all the material in the archive will stay in one place. We had worried that it would be split up. All we want is for it to be looked after properly and to ensure that women have access to it," Bird added.

However, Bird stressed that while the archive had escaped closure, the future remained uncertain and she re-issued the earlier appeal for donations and subscriptions.

● Donations can be sent to LAIC, BCM 7005, London, WC1N 3XX.

