



Commonweal Reading List: Libraries for Social Change

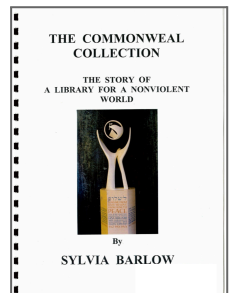
Exploring radical libraries and their role in social change.

Specialist libraries provide a home to the radical histories of struggle, emancipation and liberation movements and counter culture and provide a crucial resource for movements for social change. The books, pamphlets and periodicals within them are a unique resource for activists looking for inspiration and how to campaign effectively.

Commonweal is one such library, but there are many others including the 1 in 12 Library in Bradford, the Working Class Movement Library in Salford and the Marx Memorial Library in London. A full list is on the Radical Libraries Collective <https://rlc.radicallibrarianship.org/radical-libraries/>.

The Commonweal Collection: The story of a Library for a Non-violent World. By Sylvia Barlow (1999)

“The Commonweal Library grew out of the collection of one young person who had the vision and foresight to see the need for a comprehensive unit of easily accessible material for workers in the peace movement which flourished to counteract the dangerous Cold War climate of the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to material on peace issues, the Collection also included writings on environmental, ethical and moral questions pertinent to the fast changing social and industrial world which had evolved since the Second World War.” Sylvia Barlow’s pamphlet about the origins of the Commonweal Collection provides a fascinating insight into the creation and development of a library which exists in order to inspire social change.

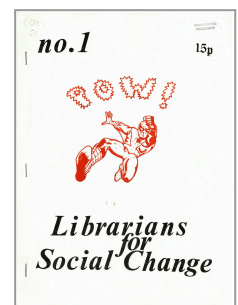


Classification: Jh BAR (Peace Museums, Memorials & Libraries) - check it’s available [here](#).

Librarians for Social Change (1972)

Published in Brighton in the 1970s by John Noyce, a librarian with a *“progressive view of the job - not merely following the status quo.”* In this first edition, articles include a report on the Whole Earth Library at Keele University (broadening the function of a library to include book groups and reader notes), libraries in Vietnam and censorship in libraries.

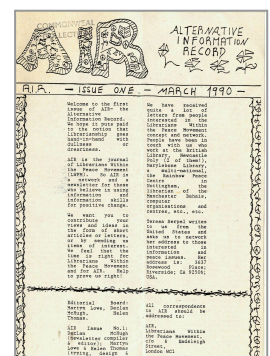
Classification: N (Visions of the Good Society). Periodical - reference only. Approx 10 copies from 1972-1976



AIR: Alternative Information Record (1990) By Librarians Within the Peace Movement (London)

A newsletter aiming to *“put paid to the notion that librarianship goes hand-in-hand with dullness or dreariness.”* AIR was published in the 1990s by the Librarians Within the Peace Movement (LWPM) - a newsletter for those who believe in using information and information skills for positive change. Articles include the experiences and thoughts of those working in libraries, practical tips for archiving, managing files etc, peace research and a “wanted, exchange and free” section for books and periodicals on specific topics.

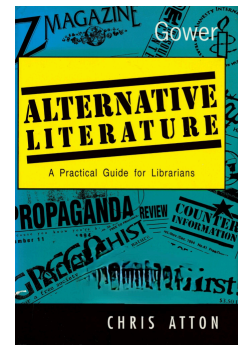
Classification: On (Counter-culture). Periodical - reference only. Approx 6 copies from 1990-1991.



Alternative Literature: A Practical Guide for Librarians By Chris Atton (1996)

This book defines alternative literature as non-commercial, demonstrating that a basic concern for ideas, not the concern for profit, is the motive for publication and that the subject matter should focus on social responsibility or creative expression (or a combination of both). The book explains how alternative literature can be used and appreciated, and explores the concerns and nature of such publications, alongside the principles of collection management whether within a mainstream collection or as a specialist library.

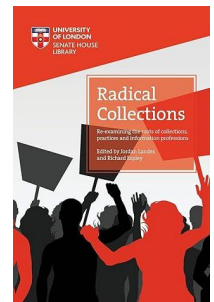
Classification: Ot (Alternative Media) - check it's available [here](#).



Radical Collections: Re-examining the roots of collections, practices and information professions. Edited by Jordan Landes and Richard Espley (2018)

Radical Collections examines the role that archivists and librarians play in compiling collections - do they "curate" history? To what extent are they gatekeepers of knowledge? It also shines a light on pressing topical issues within library and information services to encompass selection, appraisal and accession, through to organisation and classification.

Classification: Jh LAN (Peace Museums, Memorials & Libraries) - check it's available [here](#).



Decolonising the University

Edited by Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial and Kerem Nişancıoğlu.

Students, activists and scholars discuss the possibilities and the pitfalls of doing decolonial work in the home of the coloniser, in the heart of the establishment. Subverting curricula, enforcing diversity, and destroying old boundaries, this is a radical call for a new era of education. Decolonising the University provides the tools for radical pedagogical, disciplinary and institutional change.

Included here as a key reference book for any work on decolonising, as we begin to look at how the Commonwealth Collection reflects a post-colonial view of the world.

Classification: Rh BHA (Colonialism) - check it's available [here](#).



Books which have inspired readers

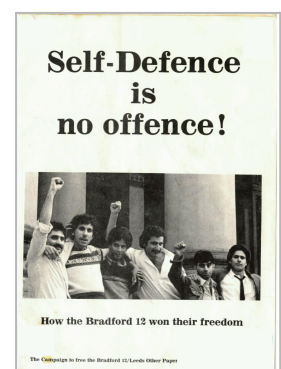
What would you add to your own library for social change? Do you have a favourite book in the Commonwealth Collection? To share a library and or book from Commonwealth that has inspired you in your activist journey email commonwealoutreach@peacemuseum.org.uk. Your suggestions will feature on our website and social media, and also help us to identify gaps in the Collection.

Self-Defence is no Offence: How the Bradford 12 won their Freedom By The Campaign to Free the Bradford 12 and Leeds Other Paper (1982)

A pamphlet documenting the trial of the Bradford 12 and how they won their freedom. Chosen by Fatima Mahmood:

Libraries were central to broadening my horizons and knowledge about the world. I was able to escape into different fictional worlds and also learn more about the politics of the world. From my childhood to now, libraries have been a source of hope and are a great necessity for our society. It is important that libraries are protected and cherished as it is a space not only for reading but to gain access to basic services, seek refuge, and it is an important third space for us all!

Classification: Rb CAM (Racism & Anti-racism) - check it's available [here](#).

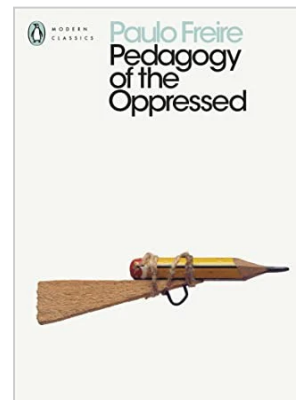


Pedagogy of the Oppressed **By Paulo Freire (1972)**

Paulo Freire is one of the world's leading educationalists. This book takes the reader through the justification for the pedagogy of the oppressed, the banking system of education and education as the practice of freedom. Chosen by Emma Goodway.

Libraries have given me the space to find hope, reflect, unlearn and be curious.

Classification: Kn FRE (Children, Young People & Education) - check it's available [here](#).



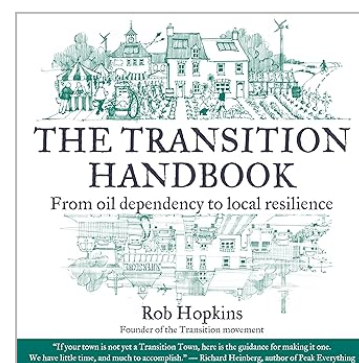
The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience **By Rob Hopkins (2008)**

Chosen by Ben Tongue.

My book of choice is the Transition Handbook by Rob Hopkins - this book is a crucial practical resource for setting up and maturing a community scale response to peak oil, but the approach I think could work well for so many areas of the PolyCrisis.

The Commonweal Collection is such a wealth of resources both written and the connections we make to find the others pushing for the change we need.

Classification: O HOP (Alternative Society) - check it's available [here](#).



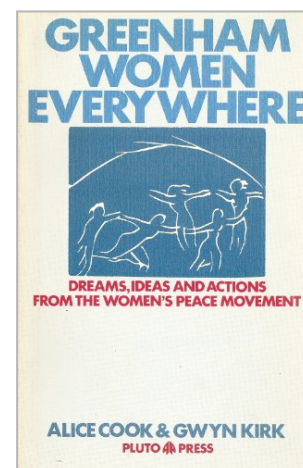
Greenham Women Everywhere: Dreams, ideas and actions from the women's peace movement **By Alice Cook and Gwyn Kirk (1983)**

Chosen by Sue Easterbrook.

Written when the peace camp at Greenham Common had been in existence for 21 months, despite two bad winters and continual harassment by the authorities.

I chose this book as when I read it back in 1983 it inspired me to take part in peace camps elsewhere in the UK. I was delighted to find it in the Commonweal Collection, it still has much resonance at a time when we are seeing the return of US nuclear weapons to the UK at Lakenheath.

Classification: Bo COO (Women's Peace Movement) - check it's available [here](#).



The Commonweal Collection is **free** and **open to the public**.

To find out more, scan the QR code, visit www.commonwealnonviolence.org or email: commonweal@peacemuseum.org.uk



1st Floor, JB Priestley Library, University of Bradford, Richmond Rd, Bradford BD7 1DP.