

## The Winchester Research Apprentice Project and the Sybil Campbell Library Collection

The University of Winchester funds an annual 'Winchester Research Apprenticeship' (WRAP) scheme. This is designed to provide some (paid) work experience for one or two weeks for second and third year undergraduates to work with established academics. It provides academics with some much needed research assistance and gives students considering a career in higher education an insight into what their lecturers do when they are not teaching. Academics are invited to 'bid' for an apprentice and in summer 2010 recently graduated Education Studies BA (hons) student Mandy Smith worked with Joyce Goodman and Stephanie Spencer for two weeks on the Sybil Campbell Library Collection.

Apprenticeships have traditionally introduced new recruits into the 'how to's' of the profession *and* to the moral and ethical demands of their work. This is especially true of historical research into the men and women who have shaped our recent past. How do we read their letters? How do we interpret, or analyse, the patchy evidence available in order to be true to the people of the past, as well as telling a story for the present?

The Sybil Campbell Library has great potential both for research *on* the Collection and research *in* the Collection. Part of the material which was, as yet, unexamined was the archive that accompanied the Collection to Winchester and which ultimately will be deposited with the University archives in the Hampshire Local Archives and Record Office.

Part of our intention for the WRAP was to demonstrate how historians begin their research. Mandy's first task was to construct a database with dates and personnel of those on the early Crosby Hall library committee. Much of the historian's job is making sense of a disparate amount of data and usually a rather eclectic selection of sources. 'Sybil' provided a dream opportunity to demonstrate this. Amongst the archive boxes was a file labelled 'correspondence' – to whom? About what? Working through the letters, deciding what categories of analysis to use and then discussing how their contents might fit into a wider analysis proved a useful exercise for all of us. Mandy also looked at the lists of books borrowed from the library at Crosby Hall and worked through the minutes of the library committee. Her final task was to explore the catalogue and suggest areas that might be of interest for future undergraduate dissertations.

This brief reflection offers an insight into ways that we can begin to build young academic careers; or provide added value to undergraduate degrees. The process should be mutually beneficial to the apprentices and to those who devise the projects. It enabled us to begin our work on the Sybil Campbell Collection and provided an opportunity to an excellent student to develop her research skills. Mandy's questions also made *us* stop and think about how we come to acknowledge letters and ephemera as more than interesting 'add-ons' to our data. Future plans include a jointly authored paper on the WRAP project, accepted for publication in *The History of Education Researcher*. The Collection will also be the focus of a paper at the European Education Research Conference in Berlin in September 2011. Above all it seems that for all of us involved in the project it began to highlight the significance of female networks and sociability – it was in addition to the learning process an extremely enjoyable opportunity to spend more time getting to know the Collection and those whose vision and energy created the Crosby Hall Library.