**Women and Science**

Books Reviewed:

[Women and Science](http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/women-and-science) [1]

Issue:

[61](http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/61) [2]

Reviewer:

[Geoff Brown](http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/geoff-brown) [3]

Editors Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

0

*Women and Science* is a commendable and committed attempt to set straight the record of women's scientific achievements. Starting with the premise that everyone knows Madame Curie but could not name many other female scientists, the book takes a chronological and wide approach covering contributions from Hypatia, mathematician of antiquity, to Kathleen Lonsdale, twentieth-century professor of chemistry. Focussing largely on the achievement of British women (both amateur and professional) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the text examines their work from popularising and data-collecting to experimental and theoretical discoveries in such specialised fields as X-ray crystallography. By examining the reasons for the differing opportunities available to women at different periods in history, the author shows how social conventions have lead to a variety of restrictions and prejudices. She curbs any incipient complacency in the reader by a final chapter on 'Lost Contributions 1950s-1980s'. The text uses an effective mixture of description, biographical detail and quotation. The achievements of Hildegard of Bingen, medieval writer on astronomy and medicine, are nicely placed alongside Martin Luther's assessment of women: 'Take them from their housewifery and they are good for nothing.' Black and white illustrations - using contemporary portraits and rather dim photographs of twentieth-century women scientists at work - produce a dull, grey effect, but this lack of visual impact should not deter schools from making a useful addition to their library shelves.

Running Order:

2

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Links: