

ADDICTION LIVES: HARRY SHAPIRO

[photo]

Addiction Lives records the views and personal experiences of people who have especially contributed to the evolution of ideas in addiction science. To suggest an interviewee, send a statement of up to 50 words summarizing the person's exceptional contribution to the field to the Addiction Lives Editor: Professor Virginia Berridge, Centre for History in Public Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 15–17 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SH, UK. Tel +44 (0)207 927 2269; e-mail: virginia.berridge@lshtm.ac.uk

INTERVIEW SUMMARY BY VIRGINIA BERRIDGE

Harry Shapiro is a trained librarian and writer on popular music and drugs who has worked in the drugs field since 1979. He began his career in drug information as Information officer at the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence (ISDD), then based in Blackburn Road, West Hampstead. There were four staff, himself, Phil Defriez, looking at input and John Witton and Mike Ashton who produced the output, reading lists, Current Awareness Bulletins and the magazine *Druglink*. ISDD had been set up by Frank Logan in the late 1960s and its Director, when Harry joined, was Jasper Woodcock. The funder was the US Drug Abuse Council. The aim of the organisation was to gather English language material to provide an evidence base for an informed and dispassionate discussion of drugs and drug policy.

The organisation eventually gained funding from the Department of Health and Social Security, which supported but did not interfere in the work it did. The Institute and Harry Shapiro became a regular port of call for journalists seeking comment which was not tied to a particular policy line. It also developed a research unit led by Nicholas Dorn. ISDD produced its own guides and publication, including in the early '80s, one of the earliest explicitly harm reduction texts – on glue sniffing and how to do it safely – which caused a political furore.

ISDD always shared premises with SCODA, the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse, the second-tier organisation which coordinated the drugs voluntary sector. SCODA and its Director, Dave Turner, lost favour with government in the early 1990s when the organisation opposed the loss of central funding for residential rehabilitation. Roger Howard produced a report, *Across the Great Divide*, which eventually led to the Drug Action team structure in England and Wales. Howard became chief

executive of SCODA and managed a Department of Health supported merger with ISDD. The new organisation had the name DrugScope, the brainchild of Harry Shapiro.

However, the wider environment and the drugs field was changing, and this served to undermine the new organisation. Research contracts disappeared and went instead to the new National Treatment Agency, established by the Labour government. Paul Hayes, its Director, was a champion for treatment at the centre of government. The loss of income for DrugScope accelerated because of the rise of the internet. People produced their own materials for drug information and education. The rise of online periodicals meant that visitor numbers to the library fell. The core grant from the Department of Health went down and eventually ceased. The headquarters in Loman Street was sold and the organisation moved on to other more limited premises. The same problems were affecting other libraries and several specialist drugs libraries, such as Trimbos in the Netherlands, closed down.

A long period began during which a new home had to be found for the library. Its sheer size made it unattractive to university librarians but eventually it went to Swansea where David Bewley Taylor hoped to establish a drug policy unit. After some years of storage there, the Wellcome Library showed interest and initiated transfer to that library where it was catalogued as a separate collection.

DrugScope itself came to an end as an organisation in 2015. Harry Shapiro and Jackie Buckle, who also worked for DrugScope, continued to publish DS Daily, a five day a week curated new site, which covers drugs, alcohol, tobacco, gambling and vaping. Harry became a member of a new All Party Parliamentary Group on prescribed drug dependence, which produced a report in 2009.

Among the people who have most influenced him in the drugs field have been Jasper Woodcock, with his vision of what ISDD should be, and Mike Ashton, who has continued the focus on evidence with Drug and Alcohol Findings. Users and ex-users have been important influences -- Bill Nelles, Gary Sutton, also David Turner of SCODA and Rowdy Yates of Lifeline. Griffith Edwards and Bing Spear, Home Office Chief Inspector, are also mentioned.

More recent work has been on tobacco harm reduction, working with Gerry Stimson and Paddy Costall, both of whom see parallels with the early struggles and history of harm reduction in the drugs field.

**LINK TO FULL INTERVIEW, CONDUCTED BY VIRGINIA BERRIDGE,
ON THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF ADDICTION WEBSITE:**

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Shapiro H. (2021), *Fierce Chemistry: 100 Years of UK Drug Wars*. Stroud, UK, Amberley Publishing.

Originally started in the early 2000s during DrugScope days, but abandoned when I realised I couldn't do drugs morning, noon and night – and of course I'm now free to write what I want. The plural 'wars' is deliberate as UK drug wars have raged well beyond just cops v dealers and traffickers.

Shapiro H. (1988), *Waiting for the Man: The Story of Drugs and Popular Music*, London, Quartet Books. Subsequent editions published by Mandarin and Helter Skelter Publishing.

Rejected by some publishers who thought it would never make a book. I'm proud to say it was voted one of the best music books of the 20th century by the BBC Millennium website.

Shapiro H. (2003), *Shooting Stars: Drugs, Hollywood and the Movies*, London, Serpent's Tail.

An overview on how the movies have dealt with drug issues going back to the early days of silent cinema. If there is an award for having to sit through hours of dreadful anti-drug movies aimed at 60s American kids, I claim it. The warning sign of a 'ne'er do well' aiming to seduce kids along a slippery path was apparently anybody in a roll-neck sweater playing bongos, aka 'a beatnik'.

Shapiro H. (2020), *Burning Issues: The Global State of Tobacco Harm Reduction 2020*, London, Knowledge-Action-Change. Available at <https://gsth.org/>.

Shapiro H. (2018) *No Fire, No Smoke: The Global State of Tobacco Harm Reduction 2018*, London, Knowledge-Action-Change. Available at <https://gsth.org/>.

Reports which I wrote and edited but really a magisterial effort by a great number of people at Knowledge-Action-Change and the new frontier in the battle for rational, evidence-based public health harm reduction.

Shapiro's 85 articles for Druglink, covering everything from rehab to raves, are available online at <https://www.drugwise.org.uk/druglink-archive/>.

For a complete list of Shapiro's books on music and other drug-related publications, go to www.harryshapiro.co.uk.