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Nota di contenuto	Introduction The First Women Lawyers -- Prologue: Contemporary Questions about Women as Lawyers -- Rethinking the First Women Lawyers: Themes of Gender, Professionalism and Women's Lives -- Toward a Comparative History: Introducing the First Women Lawyers -- 1 American Pioneers: The First Women Lawyers -- A Century of Struggle -- The Context for the First Women Lawyers: New Ideas about Women's Equality and Legal Professionalism -- Constitutionalising (In) Equality for Women Lawyers -- Women's Rights and Professional Identities -- 2 Women Lawyers in Canada: Becoming Lawyers 'On the Same Terms as Men' -- Women as 'Fellow Lawyers' -- The Context for the First Women Lawyers in Canada: Reformist Ideas about Professionalism and Women's Roles -- 'Persons,' Pronouns, and Policy Choices: Judicial Reasoning in French and Langstaff -- Contested Ideas: New Women and Legal Professionalism -- 3 'Sound Women' and Legal Work: The First Women in Law in Britain -- Women's Access to the Legal Professions in Britain -- Eliza Orme: Challenging 'Woman's Sphere' and a 'Gentleman's Profession' -- A Woman in Law in the Public Sphere -- Eliza Orme and the Gender Issue -- 4 Colonies of the British Empire: The First Woman Lawyer in New Zealand -- Women Lawyers in

the Colonies -- Ethel Benjamin -- A 'Rebel [Extending] the Boundary of the Right'? -- 5 The Empire and British India: The First Indian Woman 'In Law' -- A Woman Pleading in a British Court in India: 1896 -- Becoming a Woman in Law in India -- Cornelia Sorabji: 'No Peer Among the Women of India' -- 6 European Connections: Women in Law and the Role of Louis Frank -- La Femme-Avocat and European Women Lawyers -- Lydia Poet, Marie Popelin and Jeanne Chauvin: Louis Frank's Support for Women in Law -- The Context of L'Affaire Chauvin -- Conclusion Reflecting on the First Women Lawyers

Sommario/riassunto

This comparative study explores the lives of some of the women who first initiated challenges to male exclusivity in the legal professions in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Their challenges took place at a time of considerable optimism about progressive societal change, including new and expanding opportunities for women, as well as a variety of proposals for reforming law, legal education, and standards of legal professionalism. By situating women's claims for admission to the bar within this reformist context in different jurisdictions, the study examines the intersection of historical ideas about gender and about legal professionalism at the turn of the twentieth century. In exploring these systemic issues, the study also provides detailed examinations of the lives of some of the first women lawyers in six jurisdictions: the United States, Canada, Britain, New Zealand and Australia, India, and western Europe. In exploring how individual women adopted different legal arguments in litigated cases, or devised particular strategies to overcome barriers to professional work, the study assesses how shifting and contested ideas about gender and about legal professionalism shaped women's opportunities and choices, as well as both support for and opposition to their claims. As a comparative study of the first women lawyers in several different jurisdictions, the book reveals how a number of quite different women engaged with ideas of gender and legal professionalism at the turn of the twentieth century
