

# Kingston University London

## Information Services

### The Iris Murdoch Collections at Kingston University Archives and Special Collections

#### New Archives and Special Collections

- This summer a new space was created for the Archives and Special Collections.
- The new Archive will have a new searchroom to sit up to eight researchers, and improved facilities for searching the catalogue and viewing audio visual collections.
- There will also be a new separate space for the collections. This gives us more space, and we can control the environmental conditions and security of the collections better

#### Visiting the New Archives

- The Archives and Special Collections are due to re-open at the beginning of October.
- If you wish to visit we do ask you make an appointment at least 24 hours in advance, which you can do by emailing [archives@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:archives@kingston.ac.uk).
- We ask you not to eat or drink in the Archive, and to use a pencil or laptop to take notes.
- It is helpful if you can let us know in advance, or come to your appointment with, some idea of the records you would like to view- as all records will be issued by a member of staff.

#### Searching the Catalogues

- Iris Murdoch collections here can be split into two categories- Iris Murdoch's two libraries which are catalogued on our library system, and the other collections which are catalogued on our Archives catalogue.
- The web address for the archives catalogue is <http://kuadlib.kingston.ac.uk>. Alternatively you can go to the web page of the library- <http://www.kingston.ac.uk/informationsservices> and on the left of the page there's a link to Archives. Click on that to bring up the Archives' web pages, with a link on the left to the Archives catalogue.
- The catalogue works on a simple search basis. If you click on search you get a search box. If you put your keyword in there, and click search, then you get a list of relevant records.
- The catalogue displays the full archival hierarchy of a record so a researcher can understand where a record came from and how it fits with other records in the collection.
- If you then click on the entry for a record you find the reference number, title, covering dates, and a description of the contents of the record.
- If you click on advanced search you can search by person or institution. For each record we index every individual and organisation that is mentioned. If you're looking for a particular person you can browse the list of persons and organisations, which you can do by clicking on the list illustration, where you get a list of the names come up with birth and death dates, and a summary of the individual. To browse the list you click on the little arrow next to browse. If you then click on a name, a list of relevant records appears.
- To access the library catalogue you need to go to the Library home page, and click on the link. Again, this works on a keyword search basis, if you type a keyword in the search box and click enter, it brings up results from the whole Kingston University library catalogue.
- You can then narrow your search. If you look on the right hand side you can see the heading Sequence, and under that heading the names of different collections. If you then click on Iris Murdoch Oxford library, your search will be narrowed to only books in that collection.

#### New Collections- Denis Paul Archive

- Denis Paul was a correspondent of Iris Murdoch after they met at New College, Oxford. His main passion was philosophy- especially Wittgenstein. After Wittgenstein's death Denis Paul was given the task of editing and compiling his last work

- The Denis Paul collection is vast, and only the correspondence has been catalogued so far. Includes the correspondence with Iris Murdoch which encompasses a wide time span- from the 1950s to the 1990s.
- The letters tell us about Murdoch's thought, she writes a lot about philosophy and theology. We also learn about Iris Murdoch as a friend- she offers Paul support when he has troubles with his personal life. She also refers in passing to numerous of her novels, although she shows more interest in his work than she does in her own!
- Denis Paul had numerous friends, and his correspondence reflects that- other well known philosophical figures crop up such as Isaiah Berlin, Imre Lakatos and Jerry Ravetz. Literary friends included Frieda Hughes and Priscilla Tolkien.

#### **John Gheeraert Collection**

- Another new collection is Iris Murdoch's letters to John Gheeraert. John Gheeraert was a friend, philosopher and author based in Belgium. Their correspondence started in 1991 and lasted almost up until her death in 1999.
- In the letters she discusses philosophy and religion, writing, and her personal interests. As many of the letters were written towards the end of her life they show signs of her Alzheimer's disease. However, the letters are still a fascinating insight into her thought.

#### **Raymond Queneau Letters**

- Letters written from Iris Murdoch to Raymond Queneau, the well known French author, who met Murdoch during her time at the UNRRA in the Second World War.
- The letters were purchased for the University with grants from the MLA/ V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Breslauer Foundation, the Friends of the National Libraries and donations from members of the Iris Murdoch Society and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Kingston University.
- The bulk of the Queneau letters date from 1946 to 1956- the decade in which Murdoch was finding her feet as both author and philosopher.
- The letters give a lot of detail about all areas of her life-the UNRRA, her philosophy and development of ideas, her year in Cambridge and first years teaching at Oxford. She talks a lot about writing, giving hints of early novels which never got published. She also reveals doubts about her abilities as both a writer and a philosopher.
- She also talks about her personal life. It is clear that Murdoch regarded Queneau as a good friend and a mentor, and in 1952 she tried to take their relationship to a new level. However it appears from the letters that Queneau never saw her as more than a friend.
- The letters are a fascinating insight into Iris Murdoch as a young woman, and give tantalizing hints of the author and philosopher that she would become.

#### **Recent Publicity**

- Examples from some of our collections were recently featured in a film made by Open Road Media. Open Road Media publishes e-books and puts them into context by use of other media. One of the authors featured is Murdoch, you can see the pages at [http://www.openroadmedia.com/author\\_murdoch.html](http://www.openroadmedia.com/author_murdoch.html). They currently offer ten novels by Murdoch, and the film they made can also be viewed here.
- Some of the Queneau letters recently appeared in the latest edition of Granta magazine.

#### **Contact Details**

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