

Iris Murdoch Conference Talk- Notes

Intro

- Hello everyone. I'm Katie Giles, and I'm archivist for KU Archives and Special Collections.
- Quick run through latest developments and introduce latest IM collections. Hope not to duplicate too much what said 2 yrs ago

New Archive

- Those who visited at last conference will remember the Archive was closed as moving to new space
- Be pleased to know move completed successfully, been in new home over 18 months now
- Many seen new archive and agree much improved over previous accommodation. Those haven't been yet but seen old Archive, new space looks rather different .
- Custom built searchroom- up to 8 researchers, new facilities searching catalogue and viewing AV collections. Better light and sound proof
- Also new separate space for collections, almost double storage capacity had previously. Just as well as added number major new Collections since then!
- Separate storage helps us control environmental conditions and security collections better, helping secure long term preservation records. At end day want records to be around long after we are!
- Also now have collections care area where new Collections sorted and exhibitions prepared, and seminar room where host small groups for talks and research.
- Gallery leading to Archive holds exhibition cases- makes exhibitions available in library opening hours even when Archive closed

Making Appointments

- Ask make appointment at least 24 hours in advance, by emailing archives@kingston.ac.uk.
- Particularly important now, over last 2 years usage increased dramatically and peak times often having to close bookings as room full. Also means more likely see records you want- assign records on first come, first served basis
- Remind not bring food and drink into Archive, and only use pencil or laptop to take notes.
- If plan to visit then helpful let us know in advance some idea records like to view- all records issued by member of staff.
- Can look at catalogues in advance online- come back to in second
- Reminder- if you have any queries, please ask!
- Updates on Archive- please see Archive blog <http://blogs.kingston.ac.uk/asc>

Searching Catalogue

- Reminder- searching catalogues
- IM collections split in 2 categories- libraries catalogued on library system, and other collections on Archives catalogue. Quick look at Archives catalogue and info there.
- Web address catalogue is <http://adlib.kingston.ac.uk> also linked from library and Archive web pages at- <http://www.kingston.ac.uk/information-services>
- Works on simple search basis. If click on search get search box. Put words in, e.g. Philippa Foot, click search, list records come up. Keyword search on title and description. Like Google but more specific
- Number hits. Archive catalogues work on basis of hierarchy, with collection at top, series in middle, and individual files or docs at bottom. Can see the hierarchy at all levels so can always skip to other places within a Collection- this lets you put a document or file in correct context
- Click on entry for record find out ref number, title, covering dates, and description contents. All info need to decide if file or record interests you.

- That's basic search, might want search more specific for needs. Options for advanced and expert searches may want to play with, particularly advanced search for person or institution.
- If looking for particular person good idea to browse list of persons and orgs, by clicking list illustration next to name, and list names come up. Or you can type first few letters surname / institution name
- To browse click arrow next to browse. If pick name like Philippa Foot, list records where indexed appears. Useful if want particular individual as opposed to everyone with same name.
- Remember- number Collections on here not Murdoch related, so need to make note of reference number and Collection name each time find file of interest so can be located by member of staff and issued to you
- New Murdoch Collections being added all the time
- Library catalogue has completely changed since last conference. Web address <http://icat.kingston.ac.uk>
- Again, works on keyword search basis, and now you need to do a general search before can narrow to items in Archive
- So, put in search term, change drop down to Library Catalogue, and click search. In this case going to search Sartre
- See bring up a number of results from the whole of the University library catalogue.
- To narrow, need to look at left hand side of the screen and look for heading LRC Collection
- Under this might see headings for Iris Murdoch Oxford Library, Iris Murdoch London Library, and Peter Conradi Library. If you click on any those (this case Oxford Library) narrow search to books in that collection
- Then click on books that are of interest, bring up description field. Will be a Notes field describing any annotations where exist
- Occasionally get more one version in catalogue- see at top. To find item in Archive, click on View All on Right hand side, then bring list all versions of item. If click on titles will bring up description, and clicking on location will confirm if in Archive or not
- Quick look at both catalogues, before move on, any questions?

Lidderdale Letters

- Newer collections, added since last IM conference. Have been number of Collections and if went through individually be here rest of afternoon- so going to focus on main three
- 1st- Lidderdale letters. Those at last conference might remember letters as were then loaned to us on temporary basis for exhibition
- Pleased say that have now been placed on permanent loan so can make available to researchers in Archives
- Lidderdale contemporary Murdoch's at Oxford, correspondence maintained after war
- Number interesting letters from time in UNRRA and just afterwards, highlights include meeting Jean-Paul Sartre 'funny little man with alarming squint' and her brief engagement and split from David Hicks
- Interesting face- the old friend, comments on getting 'plastered'. Some discussion on philosophy and writing, also mutual friends and his travels (particularly Greece)
- Also other sides of Murdoch's personality- being a fan of Marx Brothers for instance
- Some letters illustrated

Weinberger letters

- Another collection is IM's correspondence with Harry Weinberger. Weinberger was artist whose work Murdoch supported, including finding suitable exhibitions for him and writing introductions for exhibition catalogues, as well as owning some of his art

- Correspondence started 1977 and lasted until 1996. 1 largest Collections of correspondence with around 300 letters in all. Was donated to us by his daughter Joanna Garber.
- The main thread throughout letters is shared love of art, and religious iconography
- Murdoch also shows her interest in lives of those corresponds with, and offers advice and help when Weinberger needs it
- Also talks about both of their work, and travels around the world
- Number other items associated with Collection, including reproduction drawing of Murdoch by Weinberger, and postcard drawing of them both visiting V&A Museum
- More recently taken in 3 drawings by Weinberger of Crete- are discussed in some of the letters and were owned by IM

Foot letters

- Last, but by no means least, come to letters from Iris Murdoch to Philippa Foot. As sure many of you know, Philippa Foot famous philosopher and friend of IM- shared flat in London for while, and after brief estrangement because of Foot's marriage, corresponded and met regularly throughout rest Murdoch's life
- Acquisition of letters supported by National Lottery through Heritage Lottery Fund
- Extensive- around 250 letters in total
- Letters cover many subjects, including their shared interest in philosophy, although mostly Murdoch claiming she isn't a philosopher (awed by PF's talent?)
- Also talk about writing, whether novels going well (usually not!) and how feels about characters- getting attached etc
- Main subject of interest though is genesis of their friendship and how IM acts as friend- through 1940s wartime and awkwardness after P's marriage, 50s estrangement, then rekindling friendship and variety emotions went with that.
- Followed by long distance correspondence as PF moved to USA- IM talks more any other letters read about life in UK at time (presumably trying describe to PF while away) including general strike and hurricane
- Also comments on events in USA that would have impact on PF
- Also mundane parts life- weather, flowers, cleaning etc
- Letters themselves range from short and to point (short postcard) to very long. Seems have habit buying colourful stamps and airmail paper, in some cases sending letter just to send paper it's on (Boy's Brigade)
- Sounds like most authentic of Murdoch's 'masks'- sure be great interest researchers

And finally

- Like take opportunity introduce you to lesser known parts Collection- last time beer coasters
- Today like to introduce you to one of the lesser known parts of Iris Murdoch's Oxford Library- her musical scores
- Well over 100 of these. Many of them inscribed with either Iris's name, or that of Irene Murdoch. Irene was performer before she got married
- Number of classical pieces, as well as Irish songs, folks songs, and popular hits of the time eg by Bing Crosby and Bob Hope
- Also some notebooks handwritten by Murdoch of songs, particularly communist songs
- Shows different aspect of Murdoch's interest in the arts- performance and singing

Questions

- So, anyone have any queries about what talked about today?