

GREER ARCHIVE COMES 'HOME' TO MELBOURNE



Germaine Greer



Germaine Greer with
Margaret Jackson
AC (L) and University
Librarian Philip Kent (R)

In a letter to Germaine Greer about her book *The Female Eunuch*, a librarian once wrote, "It is exciting to see things stirring, even in the small lumber and mining towns of the northern Ontario wilderness. As a librarian I'm going to make certain your book reaches those outposts of rebellion".

We know this because that letter has been preserved – along with enough other letters, manuscripts, drafts, and even university comedy skit scripts, to fill more than 150 filing cabinet drawers – in the Germaine Greer Archive, recently purchased by the University of Melbourne. The collection will eventually be catalogued and digitised to ensure scholars everywhere can continue to learn from the internationally renowned author and academic.

As Greer herself said, "Everything else is opinion. At a certain point you actually need documents".

This major acquisition will, according to University Archivist Katrina Dean, add significantly to the feminist archives the University of Melbourne has been collecting since 1974.

"The Greer archive contains the complete works of the Australian academic and public intellectual over six decades. It's an extraordinary record of the life and work of one of the most important Australian thinkers of the 20th century," she wrote on theconversation.com.

University Librarian Philip Kent says there was enormous excitement and pride among the University Library staff at the news.

"The Archive is significant as it covers even more than Professor Greer's world changing work in feminist thought. It evidences

her deep scholarship and thorough research methods into female writers from the early modern period for example," Philip said.

Katrina travelled to Greer's home in Essex to view the collection early last year. This was followed up by a visit from Philip with the University's Provost Professor Margaret Sheil in September. They found a treasure trove of items, ranging from drafts for *The Female Eunuch* to letters exchanged with an eclectic range of people including prime ministers, celebrities and writers, and even scripts and music from The Cambridge Footlights.

Though Professor Greer has talked of it as numerous "drawers of rubbish", Philip says the archive really represents "a rich vein of social history on social, sexual and intellectual challenges and changes".

The purchase of the collection, with funds raised by the University through many generous donors including Margaret Jackson AC, is particularly special to the University because it was there that Greer studied for her first degree. This connection has also delighted the Professor, who said at the launch that she was almost too moved to be able to speak about it.

Fundraising for the acquisition isn't yet completed and there are many long hours of sorting and digitising ahead once the collection actually arrives in Australia later this year.

"The true impact of Germaine Greer Archive and its use in scholarship, learning, teaching and public engagement will be reaped for many years into the future," says Philip.

"It is a good fit with our extensive special collections and has already raised our profile as a safe home for other valuable collections."