

The Robert Menzies Collection presented to University

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CENTRAL LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

The Robert Menzies Collection was officially presented to the University by Dame Pattie Menzies at a ceremony in the Leigh Scott Room, Baillieu Library, where the collection will be housed.

The collection, which contains approximately 3,500 volumes, is the late Sir Robert Menzies' personal library. It reflects both his public and private interests, and encompasses the law, Australian politics, political biography, education, British History, the Monarchy, the Commonwealth, literature and - cricket.

The collection includes Sir Robert's lecture notes when he was a student at the University of Melbourne, photograph albums of official visits to other countries, Bibles presented to Sir Robert Menzies on occasions such as swearing-in ceremonies, and a fine collection of Australian verse and 18th and 19th Century British and European literature.

Sir Robert's well-known interest in cricket is illustrated by 300 volumes on that subject.

The collection also contains many inscribed volumes. Some of the signatures that appear include those of the Duke of Edinburgh, Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Stanley Baldwin, Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, Nehru, and - Australian fast bowler, Dennis Lillee.

In accepting the collection on behalf of the University, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir David Derham, said:

"...it is not for me to pay tribute to Sir Robert Menzies by speaking about his long life of great service to this country. I do want to remember, nonetheless, that by receiving this Library for special care we are honouring a very great Australian. No other Australian filled so large a place in our national life. And I do want to say that this University and the other universities of Australia will always remember him for what he did to strengthen and to develop the universities of this country.

"He, more than any other person concerned with the affairs of government in Australia, knew and understood what universities are about, and also what they should not be asked to be about. His name appears above the front door of this building, for he opened the Baillieu Library in 1959.

"This library is a very personal one. It says much of Sir Robert's public life, both in this country and in the world of international affairs. We sometimes forget how far away Australia seems to people on the other side of the world. By his standing in the great councils of the United Kingdom, of the countries of the Commonwealth, of Europe, and of North America, Sir Robert brought us all closer to the centres of international affairs and made us all count more than we did before. The marks of that service over more than 40 years can be seen in the books of this library.

"The books are set here in the groupings which they had in his own house. His personal and professional interests can be seen as you browse along the shelves. It is indeed a personal collection, a reader's library, not a collector's collection. To those who knew him at all well personally, the parts which are so strong in English literature and Australian poetry will be of particular interest. His legal professional friends, of course, will know that he parted with his law library proper many years ago. But his abiding interest in the law is still in evidence here.

"This library is a very special memorial for a very great Australian and a University of Melbourne man. This University is proud and grateful to have and to care for it forever."

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