

Getting to know you

Melissa Manapori



Who you are and what do you do?

Kia orana. My name is Melissa Manapori. My father is Daniel Manapori from the village of Tautu in Aitutaki in the Cook Islands. My mother is Judith Manapori, from Waipukurau in Hawkes Bay. I'm part of the Auckland Libraries Collection Management team that oversees the current use of general collections in our 56 branches across Auckland. I also specialise in the collection management of Pasifika materials. In my role as Senior Librarian Pacific Collections, I support all our frontline colleagues with any collection queries and training, rebuying materials where possible, and reallocation of resources to our Research Centres and Special Collections.

I am also one of a small collective of Pasifika Specialists who work within Auckland Libraries and Auckland Councils Connected Communities department with the overall purpose of improving outcomes for Pacific peoples in Auckland.

Can you tell us a little bit about the path that led you to your current role?

Ever since I was young I wanted to be a librarian. I applied for a library shelver job but was unsuccessful as a teenager, so after high school, I did a travel and tourism course instead and went straight into working at Air New Zealand. After ten years of traveling and frontline customer service, I again applied to work for libraries and was successful in becoming a library assistant at Ōtara library.

I then worked at Māngere East, Māngere Town Centre, Pakuranga, and Botany libraries for almost ten years in various roles including Youth Librarian, Adult Services, and Collections librarian.

My current role as a Pasifika Specialist was newly created five years ago and is based in Auckland Central Library. In that time I have focused on improving access to all of our library resources to try to address the persistent and growing inequalities that often more substantially impact Pacific people.

What is the biggest challenge in your role?

Sometimes it can be challenging navigating the different perspectives people have on the world and what people place importance on, so I often find myself being the bridge between these world views.

Another thing is that I love being able to connect face to face and weave people together with the taonga and show them all the resources we have. Covid has interrupted these opportunities, so hopefully with the easing of restrictions, I'll be able to see everyone again soon!

If you could change or enhance any part of your role what would that be?

I'd love to have more time to dive deep into aspects of contemporary collecting for Pasifika in particular, but this would be something that would require further development in my role.

What's your favourite Archive or collection? One you've seen, and one you'd like to see?

I might be a little biased here but my favourite is the Pacific Basement Collection at Central Library that I created. It's the back catalogue of all the Pacific material that Auckland Libraries holds. It largely consists of the last few copies of various items which are for, from or relevant to a Pacific perspective. There are just over 4,000 items, primarily non-fiction with completely updated catalogue records and the majority can be lent.

The goal is to balance both the preservation of the items while at the same time retaining the importance of accessibility. A lot of work and people's time went into its creation and it is one of my favourite achievements during my time in this role.

Do you have any recent notable acquisitions or taonga that you'd like to highlight to ARANZ members?

Auckland Libraries has recently digitised some Cook Islands pepa which are some of the earliest examples of printing in Rarotonga from 1849.

Getting to know you

Our Heritage team is doing a video series that highlights them which will be coming out shortly, as well as other taonga in the Heritage Collections. We also have the Auckland Libraries Talanoa Facebook page where we share a lot of our activities and resources that we think may be of interest to the Pasifika communities in Auckland.

Thank you for the opportunity to share a tiny bit about myself and the work that I do. If you would like to get in touch emailing is best! melissa.manapori@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz