

## Getting to know you

Sarah Welland

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

I got a job as an archives assistant at the (then) National Archives, loved it, and a few years' later, became an archivist. During this time, I was involved in many interesting projects, including 'the big move' to the current Archives New Zealand building. After that, I worked as a Records Manager at the Ministry of Justice. While on maternity leave with my second child, I got an opportunity to do some marking for the Open Polytechnic. Shortly after, a job position came up for a part-time Lecturer in library and information studies. I applied, got the job, and have been there since, balancing this role for many years with consultancy work.

### **What is your biggest challenge in your current role?**

One of the biggest challenges in my current role is trying to convince people who don't think they need to know about records and information management to realise that they actually do! Good information management practice is vital for any individual, group, business or organisation, and we need to realise that it's not always just about buying another system or expecting staff to do it all themselves. We also need to raise the profile of records and archives too, because I still come across many people who assume that all information can be found on the Internet or that archives are just old books!

### **What is your favourite archive or collection you have seen and would like to see?**

I tend to appreciate any archive or collection that I can engage with that has suitable levels of description. This way, I can get to better understand the facts around the archive or collection in its wider or deeper context without having to first filter through curated opinions of others. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, I think He Tohu (the exhibition of key and constitutional documents at the National Library) has been done extremely well. I would also love to visit the personal archives and paintings of an ancestor that are stored in an archival repository in England.

### **What do you most enjoy about the work you do?**

As I teach in an online environment, I enjoy seeing people 'get' information management learning how to thoughtfully and appropriately manage records, archives and other information. I saw some feedback from a course participant the other day that said "*The records management course I thought would be boring, however I found it incredibly interesting and insightful.*" This makes it worthwhile!

In many ways I am still an archivist at heart, so I also really enjoy teaching about archives and doing research in this area. There is so much more we can still learn from archives and their use.

### **Can you tell us about where you see current trends in Archives taking us in the next few years?**

I think we are going to see a lot more questioning around the role and purpose of archives, both by people who value them (and want them preserved) and by people who don't (and can't understand why they are kept). I also see the archivist becoming a 'social media influencer' as more people gain their cultural, historical etc. knowledge from social media. Finally, I suspect we will continue to discuss how to keep digital records permanently and authentically - something that has been discussed in various ways since the 1990's. However, we are now talking terabytes rather than kilobytes and have AI, nonfungible tokens (NFT) and blockchain technology to add into the mix!