

More than Rubbish: The potential of Māori ephemera

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Ka whati te tai, ka pao te tōrea
When the tide ebbs, the oystercatcher bird strikes

The above whakataukī speaks to the need to at times act with speed to perform a task. It can be applied to collecting archival material. If we do not collect certain material with urgency our chance to preserve it may pass.

This article will discuss ephemera, why we should collect Māori examples of ephemera and how ephemera can speak to aspects of Māori life in a way other archives cannot. Ephemera is defined as ‘material, usually printed documents, created for a specific, limited purpose and generally designed to be discarded after use.’¹ Examples of ephemera include advertising, posters, menus and souvenirs. Ephemera is an important and often undervalued form of archives. Ephemera collections have research potential and often provide a sense of surprise and nostalgia to visitors and researchers.

As a curator one of my responsibilities is to acquire new material for the museum collection. Acquisitions ensure the collection remains current and provide new exhibition and research possibilities. Regular methods of acquisition include donation and purchase. Some of my recent collecting has been less conventional including finding material in op shops, cafes and an airplane. These new acquisitions were placed in the ephemera collection at the Auckland Museum and are discussed here to show the potential of Māori ephemera collections. A close reading of what might at first glance be of little value, can instead give us insight into how contemporary New Zealand views Māori culture.

Mojo café menu

This item was collected from a café in Auckland. It is a menu with food and beverage items in English and te reo Māori. Mojo is a popular New Zealand café with franchises throughout the country. In 2018 for Te Wiki o te Reo Māori, Mojo produced a *How to order your coffee in te reo Māori*

DRINKS / INU

ESPRESSO / KAWHE KUTĒ

Black / Pango	4.0
Short black / Pango poto, Long black / Pango roa, Americano / Amerikano	
Cold brew / Toroi makariri	6.5
Iced espresso / Kawhe kutē tio	4.6

White / Mā

Piccolo / Pikoro	4.2
Cappuccino / Kaputino, Flat White / Mowai	4.5 / 5.5
Latte / Rāte, Chai latte / Rāte kikini	4.8 / 5.5
Mochaccino / Moka	5.1 / 5.7
Iced latte / Rāte tio	5.6
Iced mocha / Moka tio	5.6

Extra / Kīnaki

Decaf / Kawhe kore, Almond milk / Miraka amana, Soy milk / Miraka piri, Extra shot / Hota ano, Syrup / Miere	+0.9
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HOT DRINKS / INU WERA

Hot chocolate / Tiakarete wera	4.8 / 5.5
Lemon, honey & ginger / rēmana, te honi & tinitia	3.9

ORGANIC TEA / TĪ PARALIMU

Zealong 100% pure New Zealand tea	4.5
New Zealand breakfast tea / Tī parakuihi Aotearoa Green / Kakariki	
Pure Oolong / Ōrongo Pū	
Rose & Manuka / Rohi & Manuka	
Mint & Kawakawa / Hoi & Kawakawa	
Lemon, ginger & rooibos / Remana & kopi	

COLD DRINKS / INU MAKARIRI

Iced chocolate / Tiakarete tio	5.6
Iced chai / Kikini tio	5.6
All Good Organics	5.2
Benjer Juices	5.2
Daily Organics Kombucha	6.7
Coaqua Coconut Water	5.0
Hand squeezed fresh orange juice	8.0

SMOOTHIES / MKIRANG

Pear, pineapple, mint, cucumber & spirulina	9.0
Cold brew, activated almonds, dark chocolate & banana	9.0
Pineapple, yoghurt, orange, cardamom, honey & almond milk	9.0
Blueberry, Fix & Fogg peanut butter, banana & almond milk	9.0

BEER / PĪA

Garage Project	10.0
Hapi Daze	10.0
Garage Project Fugazi	10.0

WINE / WANA

Folium Sauvignon Blanc Organic 2014 Marlborough	G 9.5 / B 45.0
Bohemian Pinot Gris 2017 Hawkes Bay	G 10.5 / B 50.0
Bohemian Pinot Noir 2015 Wairarapa	G 10.5 / B 50.0

card for customers. The cards with words and phrases in Māori were popular and adopted by other cafes. Due to this success Mojo made the decision to make its menus bilingual. Menu items include *pango roa* (long black), *rāte* (latte) and *te manu moata* (the early bird special).

Read as an archival document this menu shows the contemporary development of te reo and the need for new words as Māori culture continues to develop. Te reo Māori did not stop at the point of colonisation. Mojo worked with Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (the Māori Language Commission) to produce the menus and had a Māori language teacher train staff in pronunciation. 'We think incorporating te reo Māori into our everyday language is essential and we're lucky to be able to see the same regulars each day which gives them (and us) an opportunity to practice.'²

It is possible to be cynical when observing a business embrace te reo Māori. Or it is possible to view it as a form of decolonization. Change does not come through a single act. Te reo Māori become an official language of New Zealand in 1987 after years of advocacy, protest and work by many individuals and organizations. It might have been unthinkable for many of those who struggled to make te reo Māori accepted to believe that one day it would be so accepted it would appear on such an ordinary object as a café menu.

Air New Zealand sick bag

Sick bags were collected from the seat pocket of an Air New Zealand plane. It has the words 'sick' in a variety of languages including the Māori sentence *E mauui ana ahau* (I am sick). Underneath this is the byline *However you say it, it all comes out the same – If affected by motion sickness use this bag not your carry on.* A sick bag is an unusual and unexpected item to be archived but I would argue it too has historic significance.

The use of te reo Māori on this ordinary object shows a greater use and acceptance of te reo and demonstrates the value of te reo Māori for a business. Air New Zealand has a long history of using Māori design and language as a part of their brand. They have used the koru as their symbol since 1973 and Māori culture has featured in their advertising, uniforms and branding. Air New Zealand's use of Māori culture has at times been challenged. In 2010 academic Rawiri Taonui criticized Air New Zealand's new uniforms which featured Māori iconography and were designed by a non-Māori designer, commenting they were 'obviously drawn by someone who doesn't appreciate the culture or understand the deeper symbolism'.³

The use of Māori imagery and language undoubtedly appeals to an international audience who might see Māori culture as exotic so there is clear business case for a company such as Air New Zealand to integrate Māori culture into their brand. Every Air New Zealand passenger is greeted with the words '*kia ora*' and the company has recently introduced a '*waha tohu*' pin for fluent Māori speaking cabin crew to wear. 'We recognise that Māori culture is an especially important part of New Zealand's identity. We are committed to further weaving Māori culture and language into the fabric of our business'.⁴

One of the strengths of ephemera collections is that they can show us attitudes toward Māori culture at different points in our history. These depictions have not always been realistic or positive. For future researchers this Air New Zealand sick bag could be seen as one of a variety of ways a major New Zealand company used Māori culture and language to sell their brand. As an archival document it records that sometimes this company got it right and sometimes wrong. It shows te reo alongside other languages and a 'sick' sense of humour.

Pamphlets produced by Gender Minorities Aotearoa

Another example of recent ephemera material in the collection are pamphlets produced by Gender Minorities Aotearoa. These were found at Aunty Dana's, an op shop in Wellington that raises funds for gender diverse and gender fluid people. These pamphlets provide advice and support to people who identify with diverse sexualities, sexes and genders as well as their families.

Throughout time there have always been people with diverse sexualities and genders however this has not been well captured in archive collections. The virtual absence of people with diverse sexualities and genders in archival collections contributes to their invisibility from history. Scholar and takatāpui advocate Elizabeth Kerekere states takatāpui have always been a part of Māori society and she describes intersex people as the 'modern day embodiment of tipua – magical creatures who could change gender and form'.⁵ Kerekere notes that gender specific terms in te reo Māori were rare until colonization made them necessary. For example, the pronoun *ia* is gender neutral and is used in speech or a written sentence for *she, he, her, him* and *it*. By heeding the advice in these pamphlets and decolonizing our language, we would become a more inclusive society.

These pamphlets show that ephemera can be more accessible and democratic than other forms of archives. Because they are cheaper to produce and less official than books, magazines, or other archives like government documents, they record voices less represented in archive collections. The very fact these archives were collected from an op shop speaks volumes.

Conclusion

Inherent in the definition of ephemera is that it is not produced to last for a long time. Ephemera is often made of low-quality materials and on a small scale, however this does not make them rubbish. In some respects, it is the temporal nature of ephemera that makes it so significant. Ephemera is a record of trends, fashion, humour, business practice, events, and changing attitudes. Ephemera collections can have significant research potential and can also create feelings of nostalgia for viewers.

In future years documents and records from Government agencies will make their way into archives. These will show how policy, decisions and legislation affected Māori individuals and communities. The papers and digital archives of many Māori academics, authors, artists and politicians may also be collected by archival organisations. These will show how a variety of Māori individuals have contributed to their professional fields and therefore a Māori way of seeing the world. In addition to these examples of Māori archives it is important to collect ephemera. These ordinary objects – pamphlets, menus, posters, and sick bags - speak to aspects of Māori life in a way other archives cannot, often inadvertently giving voice to those who might otherwise never be heard in the archives. Ephemera can show inappropriate and incorrect depictions of Māori culture and language or show evidence of the commercial potential of Māori culture. All three of the examples discussed in this article show that increasingly non-Māori organisations are embracing responsibility for the survival of te reo Māori alongside Māori organisations.

This article began with a whakataukī that speaks to the need to at times act with urgency. The oystercatcher has a limited time to collect its kai when the tide recedes. Many of the examples of Māori ephemera that are in archive collections would not exist today if someone had not seen their future potential and acted to collect them. We should continue to collect Māori examples of ephemera alongside other Māori archives before our chance to preserve them passes.

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Endnotes

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