

## Getting to know you ...

### Regular feature profiling New Zealand's archive community

Helen Brown

*Archive Team, Tiaki Taonga ki Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu*

*Ko Aoraki te maunga.*

*Ko Waitaki te awa.*

*Ko Whenua Hou te moutere.*

*Ko Taieri te whenua.*

*Ko Ngāi Tahu te iwi.*

*Ko Helen Brown tōku ingoa.*

*He Kairangahau matua Tiaki Taonga ki Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.*

Today, through a process of both osmosis and serendipity I find myself working as a Senior Researcher in the Archive Team at Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (TRoNT). After completing a degree in English literature at the University of Canterbury in the mid-1990s I had amassed a decent library and was well equipped to read and analyse novels, but little else. I put my degree to good work in a pea factory! and working for a feminist community organisation before getting a job at Christchurch City Libraries in the Aotearoa New Zealand Room as a 'Reprographics Assistant' (a glorified title for a photocopier operator). Significantly, this role also involved assisting library customers to access resources on microfilm and fiche, including historic newspapers, birth, death and marriage records, and more obscure indexes such as the memorably named, 'Drownings in the Avon river, Christchurch, 1850-1900'. In this setting, among the genealogists and historians who frequent such places, my love of history took hold, leading me down a more certain career path.

When Haneta Pierce, the sole Māori Resources Librarian then working at the library realised I was Ngāi Tahu, she took me under her wing. I became her first assistant. Together we worked with Ngāi Tahu kaumātua and library colleagues to develop an online resource

about local Ngāi Tahu history called Tī Kouka Whenua (<https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/ti-kouka-whenua/>). It was a project well ahead of its time, incorporating text, images, oral history interviews, and mapping before GIS applications were readily available. It also brought Ngāi Tahu history into the public domain in a readily accessible digital format for the first time. Tī Kouka Whenua has been expanded and updated over the years but many of the photographs and much of the text remains as it was when first written twenty years ago. Several of the kaumātua interviewed for the project have now passed away. Place-based history and oral history have continued to be an important part of my work ever since.

The Ngāi Tahu Archive Team is dedicated to working with and for Ngāi Tahu communities to help preserve our history, protect our tribal knowledge, reclaim our heritage, and assist in maintaining and promoting our identity. Ngāi Tahu mana (authority) over Ngāi Tahu knowledge is central to the team's work. All of our projects are undertaken by Ngāi Tahu, for Ngāi Tahu, and with Ngāi Tahu people. The Archive Team, in its current form, was established in 2012 but the Archive itself dates back to 1978, when it was established by the Ngāi Tahu Research Fellowship at the University of Canterbury. While physically housed at the University, the Archive remained the property of Ngāi Tahu and access to it was at the tribe's discretion. The motivation for its establishment was to preserve and protect tribal archives and make them accessible to Ngāi Tahu people – both scholars and the 'flax roots'. In 2012 the Archive was reinvigorated through new leadership at an operational level. An Archives Manager, Archives Advisor, and Senior Archivist were appointed and an Archives Advisory Committee (known as Te Pae Kōrako) was formed.

The Archive Team is currently building 'Kareao' an online archive database that will be launched later this year. Named after the ubiquitous black vine with tough, supple stems that meanders its way through the lowland forests of Te Waipounamu, Kareao is an apt metaphor for the database which will lead the user from one point to another, linking, connecting, and ultimately taking them in myriad directions of discovery. This publicly accessible database will provide unprecedented access to the Ngāi Tahu Archive which includes manuscripts, photographs, maps, biographies, oral histories and audio-visual material. The records we are creating in Kareao are 'Ngāi Tahu-centric' – wherever possible, they privilege the Ngāi Tahu creator, informant, or source rather than the Pākehā collector or author. While Kareao's primary audience is Ngāi Tahu, it will also be of interest and relevance to the wider community.

In addition to the material held in the Archive, we are actively researching, identifying, and digitally repatriating archives of tribal significance held by external institutions. The result will be a rich database that provides access via a single Ngāi Tahu portal to a distributed collection of archives and taonga of tribal significance held across multiple institutions including government, university and privately funded archives and museums in New Zealand. In time, items held in overseas collections will also be added. Where technically possible, Kareao may link directly to the external institution where an item is held; in other instances, it will display (or otherwise make accessible) a digital copy of the item, acknowledging the relevant external institution as the holder of the original.

Concurrent with (and prior to) the work being undertaken on the development of Kareao, we have been working with Ngāi Tahu communities on other history and memory projects including the Ngāi Tahu digital atlas, Kā Huru Manu (<http://www.kahurumanu.co.nz/>) which was launched at our annual tribal hui in November 2017. This project draws upon mātauranga (knowledge) dating back generations and utilises the latest GIS technology to record and map Ngāi Tahu stories and place names onto a virtual landscape. It is the culmination of more than a decade of dedicated work by Ngāi Tahu marae communities, kaumātua and TRoNT staff. Similarly, a sense of living, breathing history is being conveyed by another key project, *Tāngata Ngāi Tahu*, which explores our tribal history through the lens of biography. A first volume of fifty biographies of Ngāi Tahu people was published in 2017 with a second volume due for publication in 2020.

The biggest challenge our team faces is time – we have so many ideas, aspirations, and goals we want to achieve! Our greatest privilege and opportunity is working with and for Ngāi Tahu communities to actively compile and interpret our collective memory, and make it more accessible to our own people.

Kareao will be launched online in November 2019.

**Mishelle Muagututi'a**  
*Documentation Team Leader*

**Who are you and where are you based?**

Tēnā koutou. Mālō le soifua. Ko Mishelle Muagututi'a tōku ingoa.

I am of Samoan, Tongan, Tahitian, German and Irish descent. My parents' villages are Vailu'utai ma Ulutogia, Samoa. I was born and raised in Otautahi.

I am the Documentation Team Leader, Preservation Team, Collection Services Group at Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision: The New Zealand Archive of Film, Television, and Sound, Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua Me Ngā Taonga Kōrero.

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

I have always had an interest in social history, art, film and storytelling. I am a graduate of Film and Pacific Studies and have a Post Graduate degree in Museum and Heritage Studies from Victoria University of Wellington. A trusted former colleague directed me to my current role.

**What is your biggest challenge at your archive/ in your role?**

The most significant challenges presented are comparable to other archival institutions. We are near capacity regarding storage in our vaults, and I am one of only two archivists who specialise in our area and serve our collections and communities. We regularly have to remind people of our archive practice and the importance of our methods pertaining to the care, longevity, and value of our paper-based artefacts and objects, while also dealing with the relative obscurity of our collection.

**What is your biggest opportunity for your archive/role?**

The opportunities are infinite in my role and within the archive. My colleague, Senior Archivist Tracy White and I are not only naturally curious but protect and maintain a plethora of curiosities supplementary to our nation's vast audio-visual history. In the near future, as we prepare to move to the National Library building in Wellington, we look forward to working alongside the other archival institutions, and we hope this will lift the profile of the work of all our archivists and the taonga in our care.

**If you could enhance or change any part of your services or role, what would that look like?**

A 'wish list': an increase in services, which would require as part of our team a dedicated collection developer; a curator; and photographic specialists; more space - purpose-built storage, a photographic lab and museum-grade area to display some of our current and newly acquired curiosities.

**What is your favourite archive or collection with the highest use?**

Supplementary material to Len Lye's films including still images and the animated, experimental puppet The Peanut Vendor. There are many favourites. We have the Jonathan Dennis Library, a dedicated research facility (research, books, and periodicals) which we share with Information Services Group, named after the very first director and sole archivist of our predecessor the New Zealand Film Archive. We are fortunate to be able to provide access to our collections for the general public in this purpose built area.

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

Not recent, but notable is the collection of audio interviews of New Zealand personalities in the moving image and sound industries. An accessible and useful medium for researchers, the subjects' families and the general public.

## Moata Tamaira

### **Who are you and where are you based?**

Ko Tongariro te maunga  
Ko Taupō-nui-a-Tia te moana  
Ko Ngāti Tūwharetoa te iwi  
Ko Te Heuheu te tangata  
Ko Moata Tamaira toku ingoa  
I'm a Christchurch-based web librarian  
at Christchurch City Libraries



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

Like many people I fell into libraries, though I think it was always on the cards – I was a student librarian at primary school and always an avid reader. Prior to starting in a part-time role as a library assistant at Christchurch City Libraries in the early 2000s I'd worked in retail and hospitality. I didn't realise it at the time but that was quite a useful background to have when it came to working in a public library.

At the time I didn't really have a career path in mind, I just wanted a job and I thought libraries would suit me. From there I went full-time and then got the opportunity to take a stab at a reference librarian (Māori) role which I did while studying by distance for my MLIS. An opportunity to temporarily join the Digital Library Services team came up, creating, editing and publishing web content on the library website and I found I really loved it, so when a comparable role came up at National Library in the Aotearoa People's Network Kaharoa team I went for it. I was there for 5 or 6 years, then had a baby and as I was nearing the end of my parental leave a permanent role became available back at Christchurch City Libraries as a Digital Library Web Content Manager and I've been doing that for the last 4 years.

### **What is your biggest challenge at your archive/in your role?**

Time. Always time. I quite often feel like if I could only clone myself I might actually get all the things done that I'd like to. At the time I took this role the library web team had six full-time staff. Now it's four. But the workload hasn't really diminished at all so it's really an exercise in

prioritising on a daily basis and accepting that I can't actually do everything.

**What is your biggest opportunity for your archive/role?**

I love public libraries and the role they have in unlocking the potential of anyone who walks in the door. We have this amazing opportunity to make people's lives better. I see my role as sharing our amazing, useful, potential-unlocking resources with the community and making what goes on in libraries more visible to more people.

**If you could enhance or change any part of your services or role, what would that look like?**

I'd love to increase the diversity of content we provide on our website. We have a couple of staff members who create content in Korean and Chinese aimed at their communities but I feel there's probably scope for more of that sort of thing. The challenge is in having web content that engages with as much of the Christchurch community as we can because library services are for everyone and our web content should reflect that.

There is some te reo and Ngāi Tahu content on our website, specifically Tī Kōuka Whenua (<https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/ti-kouka-whenua/>), which focuses on the Māori history of places around Christchurch and Banks Peninsula. We also have good coverage of our bilingual signage and some audio files to help with te reo pronunciation. I'd personally love for the whole site to be bilingual. It would be a major project and would need some serious funding, and it would make publishing content more complicated, but I personally think it would be worth it.

**What is your favourite archive or collection with the highest use?**

The Discovery Wall at Tūranga (our new central library building) and the associated website <https://discoverywall.nz/> are both amazing resources where you can sort of go down a heritage image rabbit hole. I was always someone who was interested in local history but since the earthquakes a lot of this imagery has an added poignancy to it and like a lot of people I am not immune to nostalgia – far from it. The Christchurch Star archive of newspaper images, which is still in the process of being digitised, is certainly a big part of what makes the Discovery Wall such a rich experience.

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

Tūranga. The whole building is a taonga, but in particular the bluestone mural on the outside of the building, Tūhura by Riki Manuel and Morgan Mathews-Hale is stunning. It celebrates migration and references Paikea's whale, and though it's making specific references to Ngāi Tahu history, I think the idea of journeying and migration make it a very inclusive work that anyone can relate to.

Christchurch City Council worked in partnership with Ngāi Tahu hapu Ngāi Tūāhuriri via Matapopore Charitable Trust <https://matapopore.co.nz/> in every stage of development of Tūranga. The building, the names used, and the artworks form part of a local cultural narrative. I'm really proud of the end result. Tūranga is a magnificent building. I'm equally proud of the spirit of the partnership that was entered into and the commitment to that process that resulted in such a wonderful building.