

The Art of Archives: The (not so) Secret Power of Simon Denny

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Above: Venice exterior canal and doors (2015).

Left: Piazza San Marco with Basilica (1720), St Mark's Square, Venice, during Biennale, 2015, by E J Kelly (2015).

Right: Unlabelled statue in the Marciana Library of the San Marco Square Museum, Venice, Italy (sourced from <http://www.veniceword.com/napoleon.html>).

When I visited the Museo Correr at Piazza San Marco, Venice in October 2015 I noticed an unlabelled statue in one of the rooms of the palace. This seemed strange as everything else was meticulously catalogued. After further research it became apparent that the statue depicted Napoleon as a Roman emperor. Having been placed outside in the Piazzetta after he invaded in 1797, it was removed in 1814. In 2002 it was presented back to the people of Venice but they were not happy to receive it. Because they could not reject the gift altogether, they have left it unnamed and therefore unacknowledged in plain sight.¹

For this statue, Napoleon has been reimagined as a figure from another time – someone with gravitas, an Emperor of old, a benevolent ruler - whereas the people of Venice saw his coming as a barbaric invasion. Despite the classical figure represented, contemporary Venetians have not forgotten their history and have resisted that reading and found a way in which to reject his power.

This is an intriguing introduction to New Zealand artist Simon Denny's Venice Biennale exhibition representing New Zealand. Called 'Secret Power', it is exhibited in the same building, further along in the

'Sissi's bedroom', Museo Correr,
San Marco, Venice (2015).



Bibliothèque Nationale Marciana Venise. In order to reach the library in which the exhibition is housed, one has walked through the beautiful St Mark's square, past the famed Basilica built in 1720 and up the stairs into a former palace, now given to the people as a museum. One walks past busts, illuminated manuscripts, statues including the aforementioned unlabelled Napoleon-as-emperor, paintings and artefacts which are magnificent, overwhelming and just what you would expect to see at a national museum. It is hard as a New Zealander not to be impressed by this display of European history, and proud that a fellow antipodean is exhibiting his work here.

So then to emerge into the Marciana Library itself to find brutally contemporary glass computer server cabinets filled with graphic design cartoons, maps, powerpoint slides and Terminator style skulls seems shocking. The images are based on a Snowden leaked powerpoint from the NSA (National Security Agency of the United States). Denny had the graphic designer, who had worked for the NSA previously, recreate the style specifically for the exhibition.² And yet it makes sense – this is a display of information for its time, just as Napoleon's statue dressed as a Roman emperor and unnamed by the population of Venice is an information rich image, just as the streets of Venice are overwhelming in their displays of goods, so too is 'Secret Power' a rich display of implied, explicit and crude data to be interpreted by the viewer.

The space allocated for 'Secret Power' at the Biennale made explicit its lineage as an analysis of the ways in which we understand information. Within the exhibition hall, his computer servers are juxtaposed with ancient globes of the world sealed in Perspex cases. It reveals the ancient lineage of information manipulation, how the truth of one century (the world is flat for example) becomes ridiculous in another. It demonstrates how those in power seek to conceal or reveal through the gathering and presenting of information.

Images from the 'Secret Power' exhibition at
Marciana Library, Venice, October 2015





Images from the 'Secret Power' exhibition at Marciana Library, Venice, October 2015.





Above: Batman and Snowden cabinet, all items in both the Venice and Wellington version of the 'Secret Power' exhibition. Below: GCSB (Government Security Bureau NZ) logo, cabinet with GCSB logo.





Top left: Detail of fox in acid.
 Top right: The cabinets with the ceiling of the Marciana Library as a print on the floor.
 Right: SPAM made with fox packed in acid.

The 'Secret Power' exhibition has now been partially reconstructed, this time at Te Papa Tongarewa, the national museum in Wellington New Zealand, which has purchased some materials from the Biennale exhibition.³ Despite the fact that only four cabinets are on display, with the addition of images from the ceiling of the Library (which were recreated in the Marco Polo airport at Venice, pasted on the walls and floor), the work is provoking and striking. New Zealand's involvement in the Five Eyes project is made explicit through the inclusion of Edward Snowden leaked documents regarding Operation Ironsand which is New Zealand based, and the New Zealand GCSB (Government Communications Security Bureau) logo is included.

More playful images also abound, such as the "I'm not trying to impress you. But, I'm BATMAN" handwritten note in a case describing the life of a particular spy. It's hard not to read both the previous Denny exhibition on the police catalogue of Dotcom's possessions seized in the 2012 raids on his New Zealand home⁴ and the Secret Power exhibitions as being about 'boys toys' – quite literally in the case of Dotcom's belongings, and through the inclusion of the 'Terminator' style skull which was apparently an image that was part of NSA materials. There is a coveting and elevating of these materials through their inclusion in the glass cabinets, at the same time as they are deflated by the seemingly random accumulation of sometimes childish images of wizards, eagles, and skulls, as if a group of Bladerunner obsessed teenagers had been given a wad of cash to decorate a mansion and geeked out on everything in a comic book shop.

We tend to think of this surveillance and information sharing as a process of the contemporary moment, but the exhibition venue at the Marciana Library in Venice particularly reminds us that surveillance and information gathering, the conspicuous display of power or the use of naming, mislabelling or not naming as in the case of the Napoleon statue has been occurring since records began. Think Henry VIII's official portrait in a garment covered in small eyes implying that he sees everything his subjects do.

So what does Denny's exhibition do? How does it function; does it call the viewer to action? Does it overwhelm, or simply amuse? In Catherine Trundle's work on Commonwealth servicemen's use of archival documents to both attempt to prove their cases and dismiss official versions of events in which they were (or were not) exposed to radiation while watching the testing of nuclear bombs in the Pacific⁵ she points to a key element which is also at play in Denny's work. In revealing, sharing, in copying and parodying the documents leaked by Edward Snowden

about the Five Eyes network, in presenting evidence of the involvement of New Zealand through the Operation Ironsand display, Denny seeks to reveal a truth. But it is partial, and he is aware of this. One must imagine that as soon as these documents were leaked codenames were changed, material was shifted and moved, facts were recreated in other forms. Hence questions included such as 'How Can I Game This?' or 'I'm not trying to impress you but I'm Batman' which playfully nod to the game of spying, one which is both romantic, but also deeply sinister in its intent and always shifting and changing. What remains true is the extent to which the citizens of the world are being surveilled by covert networks supported by state resources, and that this is more commonplace than most of us can fathom.

Nicky Hager's 1996 book *Secret Power: New Zealand's Role in the International Spy Network* (Craig Potton Publishing) revealed more than the New Zealand government was comfortable with in relation to spying and covert intelligence, given many Prime Ministers have claimed over a number of years that despite having surveillance facilities to monitor signals intelligence we are apparently not beholden to other nations.⁶ Hager's book, for which Denny's exhibition is named, insists that these claims are false.

Denny's exhibition makes millions of databytes legible – by selecting snippets of information he offers the chance to consider a tiny snapshot of the wider picture in palatable form. In an age where people are overwhelmed by information through social media, websites, online fora and computer based work lives, Denny makes tangible some of the leaks which are usually exposed in short term media coverage and then disappear in the avaricious media cycle which seemingly has no time for in-depth investigative reporting.

Nicky Hager, journalist of New Zealand and the world's secret services, is often acknowledged by Dotcom, Snowden, Assange and others for his work in raising these issues, was advisor to Denny's exhibition, suggesting a serious commitment to exposing the surveillance work of governments.⁷ At least for a younger generation, Dotcom, Snowden and Assange have authority as arbiters of information. The fact that some art patrons withdrew their funding from Denny's exhibition at the Biennale once Hager's involvement was revealed is further evidence that Denny's work is not being taken lightly by the establishment.⁸

Perhaps what Denny has done is curate data rather than create a classical work of art, thereby pushing the art world to the logical conclusion of conceptual art which favours the idea over the execution. It is a seductive consideration of our relationship to the archives and

records, the online world and its pitfalls.

Where in the past we may have "... readily mock[ed] fetishisms of the historian's craft",⁹ it is also true that "... there remains the shared conviction that access to what is "classified" and "confidential" are the coveted findings of sound and shrewd intellectual labours".¹⁰ While it is tempting to view access to the archives or leaks of huge tons of metadata on surveillance and spying as still being "feats of male prowess"¹¹ (after all, those who have leaked the information most publicly are all male) Denny's work does have the value of bringing concerns that citizens have about covert monitoring of populations to the surface in an engaging manner. Simon Denny's exhibition suggests, and in fact insists, that New Zealand has a presence and, it could be implied, more culpability than formerly assumed in current surveillance activities around the globe. Taking that exhibition to the Marciana Library in Venice boldly reinforces this view and supports the notion for Denny as a Pākehā artist trained in the European tradition and working in Berlin, that in an interconnected world, not only our surveillance practices and our record-keeping practices, but New Zealand art itself has relevance in the most classical Eurocentric settings.

Endnotes

1. <http://www.veniceword.com/napoleon.html>
<http://correr.visitmuve.it/en/il-museo/layout-and-collections/neoclassical-rooms/>
2. Schaer, C. 'NZ at Venice: Under surveillance'. 11 October 2014 NZ Herald online.
3. Press Release Te Papa o Tongarewa 5 September 2015 <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/about/press-and-media/press-releases/2015-news-and-media-releases/te-papa-acquire-simon-denny-secret>.
4. 'Dotcom' is a well known figure in New Zealand who started the website Megaupload which was found by the US to be illegal. He moved to New Zealand, and 'warrants were executed by New Zealand police on the properties of Dotcom and his associate Bram van der Kolk in January 2012, resulting in the seizure of some 135 electronic items' (Quilliam, R. *NZ Herald* online, 23 December 2014). Denny's exhibition at the Adam Art Gallery Wellington in 2015 displayed recreations of the items as listed in the police inventory.
5. Trundle, C. 'Searching for Culpability in the Archives: Commonwealth Nuclear Test Veterans' Claims for Compensation'. *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 22, No. 4, December 2011, pp. 497-512, Routledge.
6. The 1977 changes to the Secret Intelligence Service Act in NZ caused protest among citizens concerned about the SIS's increased powers to watch citizens. Successive Prime Ministers including National Party's Sir Robert Muldoon and then Labour's David Lange insisted however that New Zealanders had no cause for alarm that an intelligence base was running at Tangimoana, north of the capital city of Wellington (for example 'Tangimoana – run for New Zealand' article in *Evening Post* 13 June 1984, 'Tangimoana questions go unanswered' *Evening Post* 22 November 1984.)
7. On Monday September 15th 2014 Dotcom held a public meeting at the Auckland Townhall he called 'Moment of Truth' at which Edward Snowden and others spoke via SKYPE, stating that Hager's work was vital (Bennett, A. 'Dotcom's Moment of truth: NSA has Auckland facility' Monday September 15 2014, *NZ Herald* online).
8. 'Hager's appointment attracted some criticism by Biennale patrons such as Dame Jenny Gibbs, who diverted her funding, saying she did not support his involvement.' Herrick, L. 'Hager in Venice for art project' May 2, 2015, *NZ Herald* online.
9. Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance' *Archival Science* 2: pp. 87-109 (footnote 13 p.90).
10. *Ibid*.
11. *Ibid*.

Introducing Two Datasets: Alexander Turnbull Library's new offering of descriptive and name authority records

Nicola Freat

This paper outlines the contexts under which the Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL) is releasing two new datasets into the research environment, and invites their use.

These datasets are titled 'Turnbull Unpublished', and 'Turnbull Names'. The first contains descriptive metadata for all the Library's unpublished collections, and the second includes metadata for all the names indexed for those collections. Both datasets meet appropriate international encoding standards and at the time of writing (February 2017) will be into their fourth monthly iteration. This paper builds on a National Digital Forum (NDF) presentation at the time of their first release,¹ discusses the reasons, challenges and expectations for these datasets, and the manner of their release.²

Enabling discovery by all is a key Library goal because discovery and use justify resources put into acquisition and preservation. The creation of these datasets continues an approach since the Library began in 1920, following the bequest by Alexander Turnbull of his 55,000+ items, namely, that collection and preservation of primary collections is only of value if they are discoverable and useable by those interested. The 'items' now number in the millions and the Library has kept pace with technological advances for their communication – from typewritten cards to lists in *Archifacts* to topical publications to the provision of searchable databases, through to online and federated equivalents and tools. This latest offering further extends the accessibility and potential of the collections. It also integrates with broader efforts to make government information more readily available and transparent, for example the Cabinet encouragement that "all Public Service departments ... commit to releasing high value public data actively for re-use, in accordance with the Declaration and Principles, and in accordance with the NZGOAL Review and Release process."³ The National Library of New Zealand (NLNZ) published its Use and Reuse Policy⁴ in 2014, which included a statement on metadata.

It is relatively straightforward to load a dataset to data.govt.nz, once the dataset has an address.⁵ In computer terms these are relatively small zipped files, even though they contain metadata records for c240,000 Names and c80,000 Finding Aids, cover huge and/or various collections, and include content and context information added by staff through generations of donation, acquisition, and use.

However, to merely throw more metadata online would not satisfy the needs of the new types of researcher who will make use of these datasets. For example, two digital scholars commented recently: “feedback from digital researchers on collection delivery [includes] calls to achieve greater transparency in the nature and extent of the digital offering by clearly indicating which metadata is made publically available and where, assess the data offered, be aware of advances in digital humanities research in topic modelling and how these relate to archival bias and outline the nature and scope of various data sets so that they can be combined. In all instances metadata delivery needs to take into account both human and computational use cases.”⁶ The Turnbull metadata has recently been re-shaped behind the scenes to form datasets complying with four key international standards, and the channels through which it will flow are sustainable and can be assessed against what is already known or can be discovered about researchers’ needs.

The four key standards with which the ATL metadata complies are: EAD or Encoded Archival Description (2002); EAC-CPF or Encoded Archival Context – Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families (2010), the Unicode character set, and the Creative Commons licensing model. In each case the decision on a standard has also affected the Library’s workflows, and these organisational aspects will continue to play out over time. Hopefully, they will facilitate more and better arrangement and description, leading to more and better metadata, and therefore richer and more inclusive engagement with the collections. This engagement may provide further community information which will add value to the collections. The remainder of this article deals in more detail with these four standards in relation to the Turnbull’s two new datasets.

‘Turnbull Unpublished’, the name given to the dataset for descriptive metadata on the collections, complies with the Encoded Archival Description standard. EAD is an encoding standard developed initially by the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and maintained now by the SAA and The Library of Congress (LC). It built upon the International Council of Archives’ General International Standard for Archival Description (ISAD(G)), but quickly transcended guidelines about the creation of printed finding aids and developed into an xml encoding standard against

which finding aids for the internet could be measured. For the Alexander Turnbull Library, the creation of an Arrangement and Description team in 2011 and its adoption of this standard significantly assisted harmonisation of practice. The previous TAPUHI system (1991-2015) had formalised differences in approach based on format – at the most extreme, requiring staff to re-accession parts of multi-format collections by type, and requiring researchers to follow complex textual information in order to reconstruct them.⁷ The requirement to map metadata to EAD, and the realisation that this could be done, was the beginning of a reassessment of how common descriptive requirements could be brought together again. For example <extent> in EAD may include cm, mm, time in minutes, linear metres, numbers of reels of tape (of different sizes), digital size, and more. Tags concerning language usage may incorporate English, Māori, Danish, French and so on, but also no linguistic content. The values may be linked to other international encoding agreements or controlled vocabularies, which will make the resulting finding aids easier for the Library to validate, for computer-based instructions to share and understand, and for researchers to navigate. Efforts to harmonise descriptive practices which were formerly spread across separate TAPUHI ‘accounts’⁸ clarified the Library’s own metadata and allowed it to be checked and relocated if necessary. ‘General Notes’, for example, had been used differently at different times – in the course of the data mapping project which led to these datasets, the Library was able to assign metadata to its appropriate EAD tag, which meant that it would automatically be published in the correct part of a finding aid. Data migration also enabled the Library to begin key thinking about its multitudinous permission statements, which feed into tags for Access Restrictions, Use Restrictions, and Copyright. From these, delivery processes could be streamlined. Other international standards are referenced within the metadata – for example repository, language, and language code. It is one of the advantages of EAD that this referencing can be wrapped into each finding aid and therefore retained within the dataset.

There may be many varieties of EAD globally, so three particular characteristics of the Alexander Turnbull Library’s dataset deserve mention. Firstly, the dataset complies with EAD 2002, as this was available ‘out of the box’ with the system purchased⁹. The metadata therefore contains some elements which have been deprecated in the recent revision of EAD3. Secondly, at present, the Turnbull dataset does not include the online addresses for the many born-digital objects or digital surrogates which are surfaced through the Library’s National

Digital Heritage Archive (NDHA) viewing channel. This is because the Arrangement and Description on which our metadata is based, is carried out on the original objects, not on their later online presentation or performance. The relevant EAD tags 'digital archival group' and 'digital archival object' therefore contain the PID reference which refers to the unique identifier within the digital repository. Future development may address this within the metadata, or future users may develop a tool which maps the dataset's PID to an online version.¹⁰ Thirdly, the dataset reflects several legacy systems knitted together, and there has been limited effort to re-integrate format-based separations. For example, if a collection originally contained manuscript and photographic and ephemeral and map components (in analogue or digital form), each would have been described to the in-house conventions, and there should be textual links allowing their relationship to be traced. These textual links are still present; there are no live internal links as yet.

'Turnbull Names' is the title given to the dataset for records covering the names referenced in metadata on the Turnbull's unpublished collections. These records comply with the international Encoded Archival Context – Corporate Persons and Families (EAC-CPF) standard. This dataset contains information about all the people indexed in some way in relationship to the unpublished collections, the nature of that relationship (e.g. as Creator, Donor, or Subject). It also provides links to the descriptive records, or the other entity records, to which the term relates. The Library considers that this dataset has great potential for digital researchers, not only across the Turnbull's collections but also in potential relationships to other research tools.

It has taken considerable work to ensure that this Turnbull Names dataset complies with EAC-CPF, because the standard requires definition as a 'Person', a 'Corporate Body', or a 'Family'. Previous 'Name' records had not included such a field, and had indeed grown over the years to include names of horses, ships, electric stoves, works of fiction, and other 'entities' incapable of creating or donating records. Data migration rules coped with the bulk of this (e.g. at their simplest – 'Firm' = corporate body; 'Mrs' = person, etc.) but it was a considerable data clean-up project to clarify around 40,000 names which had still to be migrated as 'Other'. In early 2017 Arrangement and Description staff are still working through some 4,000 remaining 'Other' records, which are not included in the dataset. Most of them will probably be re-cast as Subject terms. This sort of re-structuring of metadata behind the scenes has little crowd appeal, but is essential if ATL metadata is to be available for tools which enable comparison, disambiguation, or add value in the

wider online research environment. At the same time, potential users of this dataset must remember that the metadata is derived very specifically from the Alexander Turnbull Library's core business and resources. Thus, the dataset does not include every name in the unpublished collections' content (because the Library has not had resources to index everything). Nor is it a biographical dictionary, because staff are concerned primarily to contextualise the material held at the Library – not to research and write a whole-of-life essay. Nor do the records contain all personal information, because the Library is concerned with issues of sensitivity and privacy.

The third standard to which these datasets comply is the Unicode character set. Previously, the unpublished collections' computer system TAPUHI did not have the capability to communicate (i.e. enter as text and reliably store, search, print etc.) characters other than a-z/ A-Z and basic punctuation. This did not enable respect either for the content of the unpublished collections (which cover many languages and their diacritics), or for their donors and researchers. The software behind these two datasets has recently been upgraded to enable staff to reliably enter Unicode characters, and enables the public to receive consistent results whether they search with or without diacritics. The Library is using this new capability for new records, but has not applied diacritics retrospectively across legacy metadata because this requires considerable thinking about the implications and documentation around such a change (as well as the resource to undertake it). The first steps, however, will be to add macrons over 2017 to the system versions of Ngā Upoko Tukutuku / the Māori Subject Headings list, and of the Iwi / Hapū list. This will align these terms with other instances of their use online. Additionally, staff will consider how to bring macrons in legacy Names into line with current practice.

Last but not least, the datasets consist of metadata created by the Library, and are therefore Crown Copyright. (N.B. It is crucial that staff and users understand that this is completely separate from permission requirements covering access and use / reuse of the *content* of collections, which is of course still covered by the appropriate metadata about that collection/item). Crown Copyright means that this metadata can be made available under a Creative Commons licence, as is preferred for government information. The licence is CC4.0 BY, meaning that the datasets may be used with attribution, for commercial and non-commercial purposes.¹¹ To date, the chief expressions of interest have come from individual digital humanists or software developers¹², however one interesting potential use may be through commercial services which

would re-surface Alexander Turnbull Library metadata about unpublished collections, alongside other resources.

Requiring that the Library's systems have the ability to deliver to these standards created a vigorous framework for the recent data migration and IT project. The chosen vendor already delivered a basic EAD 2002 report 'out of the box' and now delivers an EAC-CPF report also. The new system Tiaki will deliver datasets regularly (at this stage, monthly), and they can be validated against international tools¹³.

At this early stage, the datasets will be available through two delivery channels – the NLNZ's ftp site and the NLNZ's webpages. One pilot user has expressed a preference for OAI-PMH delivery, another has suggested GitLab – the Library will be exploring these options too.

These are interesting times, when 'authority' is increasingly challenged, and balanced, by individual or 'community' or 'popular' perspectives. In such circumstances to publish an 'authority set' requires clarity of purpose, and some contextualisation. As this article has indicated, the new datasets service caps five years' effort to modernise the Library's arrangement and description approach. Standardising descriptive metadata in order to generate these datasets has immediate benefits for digital researchers, and has positioned the Library well for networking, partnerships, and development. In the next stage, the Turnbull is very keen to see how clients will use the datasets and how the research and archival communities will benefit long-term, to have interesting new conversations and partnerships, and to keep reporting what is discovered.

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Endnotes

1. The datasets are available via www.data.govt.nz
2. Note: the Library uses several other controlled vocabulary indexing terms to increase the collections' discoverability. All of these are included in the EAD dataset as terms, however the Turnbull does not intend to share these as datasets in the same way. This is because they are either selections from externally managed authority lists, or do not have international standards against which they can be validated. The Library hopes to develop partnerships which will make linking to external datasets easier in future.
3. <https://www.ict.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/open-government/declaration-open-and-transparent-government/>, retrieved 3 February 2017.
4. National Library of New Zealand's Use and Reuse Policy (<https://natlib.govt.nz/files/strategy/Useand-reuse-policy.pdf>).
5. Other steps, in this Turnbull Datasets instance, have included: covering Metadata in Policy statements, a Privacy Impact report, the addition of a LICENCE.txt file, advice on culturally sensitive metadata, text for the web pages, and measures to ensure regular refreshment and validation, and that users are now monitored.
6. Melinda Johnston and Thomas Kontges 'Increasing metadata usability for the New Zealand Cartoon Archive at the Alexander

- Turnbull Library', in *Alexandria: The Journal of National and International Library and Information Issues* 2016, Vol. 26(2) 91-106.
7. See John Sullivan's blog on the National Library of New Zealand's website for further background on the transition from TAPUHI, <https://natlib.govt.nz/blog/posts/tapuhi-takes-a-bow> retrieved 2 February 2017.
 8. TAPUHI 'accounts' consisted of Manuscripts (including Music), Photographic Archive, Drawings Paintings and Prints (including the Cartographic Archive, digital Cartoons, and Ephemera), and Oral History and Sound. There were additional tools shared across these accounts, for consistent Name, Place, Subject, Iwi/Hapu, and Genre records.
 9. Emu, from KE Software, now part of the Axiell Group.
 10. This is considered relatively straightforward as the PID is included in the address.
 11. Approval was confirmed as "Tiaki Metadata and Tiaki Datasets are released on a regular basis under a CC BY licence", internal document, 19 September 2016, National Library of New Zealand
 12. E.g. "The first dataset I intend to process is "People Australia"; a collection of biographical sources and published by the National Library of Australia's "People Australia". Hopefully soon after I will be able to add a related dataset from New Zealand." From Conal Tuohy's blog at <http://conaltuohy.com/blog/oceania/>, retrieved 2 February 2017.
 13. For example <https://validator.w3.org>.