EDITORIAL

By Sarah Welland



Haere mai, welcome to the 2025 issue of *Archifacts*.

I have been thinking about the whakataukī "*kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua - I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past*"[1]. I have been wondering whether the last year has demonstrated that this may be easier said than done, particularly for those of us with some form of responsibility for heritage records and archives.

I suspect that for many of us, our ability to listen to the echoes of the past while surveying the horizons of the future continues to be compromised by a working context influenced by the whims of other agencies, groups and individuals who may not always understand what we do. While the results of this can vary and occasionally be positive, I am concerned that this state can also result in the continuation of what Cuellar and others have called "archival debt". That is, "the myriad issues we now grapple with as a profession, including harmful or inadequate description, performative or competitive collecting, languishing backlogs, failure to recognize staff potential, shortsighted fund management, neglected constituencies, a lack of documentation, and poor project management…"[2]

Most of us probably know of situations like this. The never ending back-log. The meetings where people speak on our behalf. The constant demands around doing more with less. The same old tired 'jokes' about digitising everything.

It can get pretty tiring.

Which brings me (quite unapologetically) to *Archifacts* and why it is so important.

While it is not a 'professional journal' in the strict sense of the word, *Archifacts* is a key voice for all of us involved in recordkeeping practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. Each issue provides a variety of ideas, examples and voices, giving us the much-needed sense that we are not alone, that the issues we are facing are also faced by others, and that solutions can, and do, exist. It can also help us (to quote Richard Foy in his thought-provoking *President's Report*) to work together as a team and carry out "*our* work and *our* calling". *Archifacts* can provide some welcome insight into *why* we are doing what we are doing (beneficial or otherwise) and *how* we can change things for the better.

The 2025 issue is no exception. Eamonn Bolger's article *Records Appraisal and Disposal of Government Records 20 years on from the Public Records Act 2005: A Review of Progress* makes sobering reading, as well as a timely example of how lack of traction in Archives New Zealand can create ongoing impact on recordkeeping practices in government agencies. On a more positive note, Rauhina Scott-Fyfe demonstrates the ongoing value provided by a new archivist role in *A Relational Approach to Digitisation: Hocken's Kāi Tahu Digitisation Project and the Beattie Papers – A Case Study*, while Stephen Clarke addresses how our intellectual capital has a key part to play in the ethical management and use of AI in his article *Ethical AI, RIM and the Role of Ontologies*. We also have Alison Day discussing the merits of inclusive cataloguing in their review of the book *Inclusive Cataloguing: Histories, Context, and Reparative Approaches*, and Lachy Paterson and Anne Jackman introducing the important role of *The Preserving Local History and Educational Trust Te Pupuri I Nga Hitori o Te Rohe Trust* in their article *Accessing the Pictorial Supplements of the Otago Witness*. Particularly, how the Trust helped with the digitisation of pictorial supplements for uploading into its *Recollect* site. The benefits of using Recollect as an archives-focused content management system are also discussed by Abigail Warne in Abigail's *Review* of Recollect as a Content Management System.

However, discussion of systems and ideas cannot exist without the people behind them – often quietly passionate advocates of good recordkeeping practice. We lost one of these stalwarts in 2025 with the death of Lindsay Fergusson. Kathryn and Brad Paterson's *Obituary* for Lindsay outlines just how much he contributed to archives and recordkeeping in this country, and in doing so,

they provide a good example of why we as professionals should never abandon hope in the face of what seem to be a continuing stream of louder voices, bigger demands, and dogged ignorance. This ability to keep going is also clearly demonstrated in our *Getting to Know You* articles where Hollie Taiwhao and Will Hansen introduce themselves.

I hope you will enjoy this year's issue – one that has been brought about not only by the willingness of the authors of the articles to provide content but also by the hard work of co-editors Maja Krtalić, and Alison Day, and the support of the ARANZ Council. As you will see, this year's issue has a different flavour to that of 2024, but I consider both issues a testimony to the work that so many do to ensure that our records and archives are managed appropriately.

Keep walking backwards.

ENDNOTES

1. Rameka, Lesley, "Kia Whakatōmuri Te Haere Whakamua: 'I Walk Backwards into the Future with My Eyes Fixed on My Past'", *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, vol 17, issue 4, 387–98, 2016, available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1463949116677923

2. Cuellar, Jillian, Audra Eagle Yun, Jennifer Meehan, and Jessica Tai, "Defining Archival Debt: Building New Futures for Archives." *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*, vol 10, issue 1, 2023, available at https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/jcas/vol10/iss1/8.