GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Hollie Tawhiao

1. What is your name and what do you do?

E wehi ana ki ngā atua, ko koutou ngā kaitiaki mō mātou. He mihi ki ngā kaimahi o Archifacts, ngā mihi nui ki a koutou. Tēnā koutou, ko Hollie Tawhiao tōku ingoa, ko au te Kaitiaki Mātangireia i Te Iho o te Manawataki, i te University of Waikato. I am Hollie and I work as Kaitiaki Mātangireia at the University of Waikato Library, recently renamed Te Iho o te Manawataki, the heartbeat.

My role spans the care for special collections, archives, taonga, and all aspects of collection management and development. I also support our Poutiaki Taonga with the university art collection, archives and exhibitions. My special focus is on Māori and Pacific materials and their accessibility and care, both physically and digitally.

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

I found my way into a PGDip in museum studies after a Māori art history paper in my undergraduate degree introduced me to repatriation and taonga care. I had a young family so I could not relocate to Australia to study conservation and needed to be able to study via correspondence. When I completed my diploma with Massey, my kaiako at that



time, Dr. Susan Abasa, introduced me to people in the GLAM sector and set up various placements for me. This is how I began a three-year stint volunteering with Cerys Davidson at the university. During that time, I also began working part-time with Te Pūkenga | WINTEC as the manager of Ramp Gallery while continuing to work with the university on a casual basis. In 2022 a newly created full-time position was advertised to care for the newly created Mātangireia collection which included the taonga and manuscripts of Dr. Pei Te Hurinui Jones. Since beginning my role my interests have diversified significantly, as every portion of the Mātangireia collection, and our university collections, have presented new challenges and considerations that move beyond simply "liking the stuff". This has helped grow my knowledge and skill set exponentially.

3. What is your biggest challenge in your current role?

Removing the usual suspects such as finances, changing user needs, cataloguing language, data sovereignty, Te Tiriti responsibilities, suitable space, poorly documented "mystery collections", and broader institution politics which include frameworks that do not always align with indigenous worldviews and community expectations, one key challenge at present is a rise in extremist views that have caused trepidation in how our library staff can promote and develop our collections. A rise in bigoted propaganda from external groups in our library and campus, as well as push back against diversity initiatives both formally and informally, have negatively affected our staff and their sense of safety.

As a challenge this directly impacts our ability to honour our responsibilities to our users and communities. We are a university known for our Māori studies, we are situated on Waikato land, our stakeholders include five hapū, and our student body is heavily multi-cultural. It compounds our existing challenges as most recently we had been cautioned against having a te reo speaking section because it could be seen as Māori favouritism. To put this in perspective, the Waikato cohort of the full immersion language programme Te Tohu Paetahi had a record breaking 200 students enrolled. This is coupled with the 100 enrolled at our Tauranga campus. To support their learning Te Iho o te Manawataki has followed the lead of Auckland University Library and implemented "Kōrero Corner" for those wanting to practice their reo. Further, inspired by lanyards at Te Tuhi art gallery, we have cards available for users to choose their level and converse with staff from beginner to expert throughout the whole library. This initiative is directly in support of our provided papers and yet it is still perceived as favouritism. Please note we have not yet been challenged on our full new e-sport section nor our whānau room for parents, both of which were also responses to user needs.

To reiterate how this is a challenge, it seeps into all aspects of my role, especially as the kaitiaki of what is our "Māori, Pacific, and Aotearoa" collection. This is further exacerbated by a bureaucratic system that struggles with open and candid discussion on how to respond and manage the various aggressor tactics of people and groups that wish to enforce their ideals. It is very difficult to execute any new initiatives, processes or collection development plans fully when we have to anticipate if it will be worth the potential pushback of offended extremist groups. I would much rather be worrying about the best way we can include our broad communities more fully and authentically in our collections.

4. What is your favourite archive or collection you have seen or would like to see?

I would like to see a full inventory of my father's work and photo catalogue as many of the pieces as I could into a digital collection. This is thousands of pieces, scattered across the globe. I have been so fortunate to view GLAM spaces across the world but my wants in this space are actually pretty humble because the way I connect with the pieces that directly relate to my family is the foundation of why I love material culture and my work. However, to pick a collection that is my favourite at present? Probably mine at the university. Not as a "fake plug" but genuinely because I have spent so long learning this collection it has become like an old friend with little easter eggs we get to discover over time.

5. What do you most enjoy about the work you do?

Researching the collections. It is rewarding to connect the collection to our communities, but hiding in a backroom for days or weeks on end, connecting threads of information across a collection, is where I find peace. The unfortunate thing about being in a middle management role is that I am unable to do the hands-on side of the mahi as much as I'd like.