



Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ) President's Annual Report, 2019-2020

Tēnā koutou katoa

It is my pleasure to present the 44th annual report of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand, and my second as President. This year's report will be presented a bit differently from what we are used to in the past years. Instead of the President presenting what happened in the various portfolios, I will give you a general glance at the key events of the year and what we did about them as a Council. Then we will give other Councillors the chance to briefly report on their respective portfolios to members.

Events

Changes in reading room hours

Key events that impacted the lives of our members started with Archives New Zealand announcing changes to their reading room hours. ARANZ Council reacted to this announcement by sending a series of submissions followed by several meetings between the President and the Chief Archivist to explain how such changes in the hours were not helpful for our members, especially researchers who needed regular access to materials for their work. Now the reading room hours have been revised and the Chief Archivist is looking at sustainable access hours to support our members.

The Community Archive

Following the changes in reading room hours was the announcement by Archives New Zealand in March to decommission The Community Archive website. Following this announcement, ARANZ set out immediately to write submissions and the President initiated meetings with the Chief Archivist to find out the issues that have culminated in the withdrawal of the main system that provided a hub of information to users, not only in the archives and records management community but also historical researchers and educators and the wider information industry of New Zealand. When it was clear that Archives New Zealand was not going to rescind its decision, ARANZ Council started to explore options for a future for the Community Archive through a series of stakeholder consultative meetings and discussions. This included discussing with our counterparts in Australia - The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) to see if it was possible to adapt their platform to support The Community Archive of New Zealand.

When this option was found not to be possible, Council resorted to engaging with stakeholders within New Zealand. An initial consultation with key leaders of the various information organisations in our community resulted in the development of a survey to all members and users of the Community Archive to find ideas for the future of the system together. The survey is now out, and we entreat everyone to share their perspective by responding to it to help with the collective decision and action.

ARANZ Conference

The activities for this year have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as we find new ways to communicate and engage with members during this stressful time. One of the main events affected is our Biennial Conference which was scheduled to take place in September in Dunedin. The conference committee, which was based in Dunedin, was well engaged and plans were far advanced in preparation for the conference. The following arrangements were either finalised or nearly completed:

- Arrangements with the Governor-General to open the conference were finalised
- Arrangement of travel and programme for international keynote speakers from the United Kingdom and Australia were finalised
- Sponsorship arrangements were also finalised with the Open Polytechnic, Victoria University of Wellington and Archives New Zealand. These were just a few among the many arrangements made in Dunedin by the Conference committee. But late February, the country went into lockdown due to COVID-19 and everything came to a halt, making the future for the conference this year uncertain. So, the conference committee and Council had a discussion and decided it was better to postpone the conference for this year and see how things unfolded with the coronavirus pandemic. As you are all aware, we are still in various degrees of lockdown and it is still not clear when it will be appropriate to safely hold the conference. The conference committee and Council will meet again during this AGM period to discuss the best dates for the conference and communicate them to you.

Awards

Despite the postponement of the conference, both of our prizes were offered this year. The selection committees for the biennial Michael Standish Prize, which is awarded to an outstanding essay; and the Ian Wards Prize, which recognises an outstanding piece of publishing writing annually, have been very busy working to select winners for the awards this year. The convenors of the panels will announce and present the prizes shortly at this AGM.

Workshops and Seminars

Despite the disruptions this year Council offered some seminars and presentations on archives topics for our members. Prominent among these was a series of presentations conducted by the Education and Training Officer of the Scottish Council on Archives – Mr. Douglas Roberts. Douglas’ presentations focused on how to use drama to bring archives to life, especially for school children. He presented to some members in Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin, and other places through both face-to-face and via Zoom.

Other activities and achievements this year were seen in areas such as advocacy, communication, finances, and branch activities, just to mention a few. As I mentioned at the start of my report, I will leave it to the officers in charge of the various portfolios for these areas to give you an update soon.

Support for Branches

In August 2018 the ARANZ National Council set aside funds for active branches or branches that wished to become active again, and to assist with activities or running events that are in line with the aims of the association. Top-up funds were distributed to the active branches in 2019, being Wellington, Central Districts, and Otago/Southland.

To date, no inactive branches have indicated motions to restart, and no new branches have been formed. In light of this, the ARANZ National Council recognises the need to provide similar financial support to members in areas where there are no active branches.

So, in March, the ARANZ Council approved that a one-off financial stimulus of \$2000 would be available to members who are not in an active branch area, to assist with activities and events which are in line with the aims of ARANZ. The funds will be allocated proportionally based on membership representation in the area. Applications can be made by requesting an application form from the Treasurer.

Collaboration

We still believe that effective collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders will reap the most benefits for our members. We will continue to have conversations with relevant associations to explore avenues for collaboration to provide the best support for our members. We are aware of the varied nature of our membership base and so we plan to explore every collaborative opportunity to meet the needs of every member of the association.

Through a collaborative initiative, ARANZ was given a free stand at the LIANZA conference in Auckland to promote our association to their members and other conference attendants. It was interesting to note that most LIANZA members did not know that there was an association like ARANZ, let alone knowing what we do to contribute to the information society of New Zealand.

ARANZ also offered support to the New Zealand Conservators of Cultural Materials (NZCCM) in their bid to host the 29th International Institute of Conservation’s (IIC) biennial Congress in 2022.

In the coming year, we will continue to work on our collaboration with other information associations to reap more benefits for our members.

The Year Ahead

I want to take this opportunity to briefly outline some of the things we hope to achieve in the coming year. What members want from their Council and the association is very important to us. Last year we used a membership survey to gather the views of members about the direction we want to take for a professional body like ours. Your responses to the survey were great, giving us confidence in the direction we want to take for the future. We are using a similar survey to gather views on the future of The Community Archive and we would appreciate your response to it.

We are still interested in the initiatives around clubs, societies, and community archives. Some Council members have been playing key roles in some smaller groups and societies, such as CRIMS (Canterbury Records and Information Managers Support Group), Auckland Heritage Archive Group, Information Management Group in Auckland, and the School Archives Group, Wellington. Council will continue to support members involved in these groups to make them more vibrant and hopefully leading to the strengthening of Branches. The President visited some of our branches both face-to-face and through video conferencing to interact with members to help build these initiatives. This will continue in the coming year.

We are developing strategies to encourage research and work reflections among members. The area of research development is one of the key priorities of this Council. We believe that when members develop research interests, reflect on their roles, and write down something, however small it may be, we can improve the number of submissions to *Archifacts*. We will also have interesting competitions for our awards and hence develop a lively association. One strategy that the Michael Standish selection panel for this year suggested is to amend the criteria for articles to include the description of genuine, hands-on issues in archival, research, and records management practices. This will encourage many up-and-coming professionals who do not have extensive skills and experience in publishing to submit an article.

We will continue to interact with students in the various Archives and Records Management programmes as a way to attract new and emerging professionals into the association. We have a regular session to give guest lecturers in the INFO 520 – Information professions and networking course at Victoria University about the roles and benefits of the association to create awareness for the students. Last year, I attended and this year I presented twice. We hope to continue this next year. This will open opportunities for the long-term future of ARANZ to stay

relevant not only to our existing members but also to new and emerging professionals.

Since I am also involved in the teaching of archives and records management programme at the Open Polytechnic, I will continue to promote our association to students and potential members and encourage Archives and records students at the Open Polytechnic to endeavour to share some of their research projects as articles in *Archifacts* journal, with the hope of developing students' interest in the association.

Acknowledgements

To finish I would like to congratulate all the members of the outgoing Council for their commitment and energy this year. Despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, Council members still made themselves available for discussions through online platforms and still got all their work done effectively. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes that the membership doesn't often see. Sometimes, the going gets tough, tiring, and frustrating but the kindness and understanding among Council members made the support for one another and working-together an enjoyable process.

So, I'd like to thank our Vice President, who also doubles as the Advocacy Secretary, Kathleen Stringer; Treasurer, Susan Hanham; Secretary, Tiena Jordan; Membership Secretary, Chris Meech; Webmaster and Social Media Coordinator, Sean Connelly, who also functions as the Helpdesk for Council's shared drive and email account issues; *Archifacts* Editor, Katrina Tamaira; *ALERT* Editor, Nina Whittaker; Branches Liaison Officer, Evan Greensides; General Advisor and Book Reviews coordinator, Stephen Innes. We also appreciate the support of all past Councillors, ex-officio members, and people who are not on Council but who provided invaluable support and advice behind the scenes.

Ngā mihi

Dr Eric Boamah
President, ARANZ,
25 September 2020