

President's Annual Report for Archifacts 2024

Richard Foy

In his final Annual Report as ARANZ President for *Archifacts* 2023, Evan Greensides closed his report with the aphorism “*change is a universal constant*”. They were prescient and foreboding words for a 2024 that has seen momentous, sweeping and painful change wrought across the New Zealand public sector under the incoming National/NZ First/ACT coalition government. The severest impacts of these changes have been the cuts to the core public service felt in the form of job-losses, long freezes to recruitment and the cessation of many services during this time of enforced ‘austerity’.

Our Association and its members have not been immune to these changes. Some of us have felt them as public servants, especially IM practitioners, archivists and librarians working for government agencies or institutions affected by widespread job and service cuts, and also as members of the communities who depend upon the narrowing range of services offered by those same agencies and institutions.

Sadly, our sector, and the professionals and institutions that inhabit it, seldom flourish during times of austerity as central and local government—and private non-government organisations—struggle to comprehend the deep meaning, purpose and value of our work in society here in Aotearoa New Zealand. But that’s really nothing new, even in the best of times. Change is a powerful agent and timely reminder for ARANZ to continue its purpose to advocate on behalf of its members and the sector, supporting and uplifting information

professionals—especially archivists and records keepers—promoting the standing of archival institutions, and to arouse the public’s awareness of their importance. Change is a universal constant, but so is adaptation.

Alongside big impactful ‘Change’ as we’re experiencing in 2024, we also live through moments punctuated by smaller, quieter change, and so it has been with ARANZ Council. In February we saw both Evan Greensides and Jennie Hood stepping down from their President and Vice President positions, as well as Danya Anderson departing as our ALERT Newsletter Editor. ARANZ Council didn’t miss a beat with a smooth transition to myself as incoming President, and Michael Upton stepping up into the position of Vice President, and welcoming Rata Holtslag as a new member to Council.

I acknowledge the contributions and service of Evan, Jennie and Danya during their terms, with special thanks of appreciation to Evan and Jennie for their leadership of ARANZ during changing times in our sector.

The role of ARANZ President is an entirely new experience for me, so it has been a relief and a delight to work with the continuing officers and members on ARANZ Council, as well as our regional Branch committees. They’ve smoothed my transition into the President’s position to fulfil my official duties, but more importantly, they’ve helped me get a strong sense of the culture of the Association—who we are and what we’re about—beyond the essential words of the ARANZ Constitution. For all this, I thank our ARANZ Council and Branch Committee members for their patience, guidance and support. They, along with other ex-officio members, do

amazing work as volunteers for ARANZ, giving generously of their time, energy and expertise in serving our members. Thank you!

I'm also pleased to welcome some new members to Council, joining us from July: Paul O'Donogue, Treasurer; Paddy Plunkett, Advocacy; René Swan, ALERT Newsletter Editor, and Alison Day, Records portfolio. Welcome to ARANZ Council!

I've enjoyed engaging with the Otago/Southland and Wellington Branches via Zoom, and look forward to meeting the Central Districts Branch virtually in the near future. The Branches continue to have a vital role in connecting regional members to local communities of support and practice that a national Council couldn't achieve on its own.

The vitality and success of these Branches begs the question: Will we see a revitalisation of the Auckland, Waikato/Bay of Plenty or Canterbury Branches—all currently in recess—as well as other Special Interest Groups? That's something I'd like to explore with members, and especially those from those regions who may be inspired to reestablish their Branches in recess.

In my short time as President, I've been struck by the emerging opportunity to collaborate with adjacent local associations in the wider sector, to amplify our collective voices, and unite our influence around common matters of the day. I strongly believe that working in unison alongside organisations that directly share—or have strong sympathy with—our central interests and values, has enormous potential to scale our influence in a sector that needs strong voices to

be heard and a presence to be felt. The notable organisations adjacent to ARANZ in our sector include (but certainly aren't limited to):

- LIANZA, *Libraries and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa*
- NZHA, *The New Zealand Historical Association*
- NZLLA, *New Zealand Law Librarians Association*
- NZSG, *New Zealand Society of Genealogists*
- Te Pouhere Kōrero, *Māori Historians*
- PHANZA, *Professional Historians' Association of New Zealand/Aotearoa*
- NDF, *National Digital Forum*

We've already begun to connect with these associations in finding common ground and uniting our voices to bring attention to issues of shared interest—such as the impact of recent service changes by Archives New Zealand—for our collective members and stakeholders. Expect to see more working collaborations, combos and team-ups in the future!

In the spirit of collabs, we are very excited for the joint ASA/ARANZ/PARBICA Conference, Opening the Archives, to be held from 22-25 October in Ōtautahi Christchurch. It's the first ARANZ conference since 2018, as the previously planned conference could not take place due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. While the conference will be over by the time you are reading this, I strongly suspect that this year's joint conference promises to be an engaging, rich and inspiring event with very high-quality submissions. We hope that many ARANZ members will attend in-person and help make this conference the success it deserves to be.

Finally, I congratulate and thank the Archifacts Editorial Team of Sarah Welland, Dr Ashwinee Pendharkar and Maja Krtalić, and all contributors, for their efforts in publishing this year's edition of Archifacts. Bravo!