# The Helen Zwartz Scholarship 2019

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Earlier this year I was the fortunate recipient of the Helen Zwartz Scholarship, which enabled me to travel to Wellington and work alongside professional staff from the National Library of New Zealand (NLNZ), the Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL) and Archives New Zealand (Archives NZ), and learn from them over a period of three weeks, from Monday 29th April to Friday 17th May 2019. During this time I engaged with most of the teams who work to deliver the many services which are managed by NLNZ. I also spent a day at Archives NZ which was both enlightening and enjoyable.

My experience in Wellington gave me far more than what I had originally sought in my application, which centred on the need for a comprehensive set of policies for our small community archives, a clear collection and appraisal process and information about digital and physical preservation.

**Background**

My background is as a trained librarian, having graduated from Victoria University Wellington in 2005 with an MLIS whilst working part-time for Manukau City Libraries. I started working in libraries in 1997 at Tauranga District Libraries as a part time library assistant, then gained full time work at Manukau City Libraries from 1999 to 2006. I took a break from public libraries between 2006 and 2011, working at the National Library in Auckland. I returned to the Western Bay of Plenty in 2011 as Team Leader of Katikati, Omokoroa and Waihi Beach Library & Service Centres for the Western Bay of Plenty District Council

(WBOPDC). In 2018 I moved from the Team Leader's position to my present role as Community Heritage Co-ordinator *Kairuruku Taonga Tuku Iho* based at The Centre - Pātuki Manawa in Katikati. In doing this I followed my heart and although my wallet carries more coins and fewer notes these days as a result of my choice, I have no regrets. The opportunity to grow this new role, shape and extend the community archive collection into the future and encourage the district to celebrate its rich Māori and Pākehā history as well as introduce this history to our new community members was too good to ignore.

The collection I manage alongside a team of dedicated volunteers is a Community Archive which has two physical locations, one at The Centre – Pātuki Manawa (Katikati Library) and the other at Te Puke Library & Service Centre. Both of these collections were started by women from the area who developed an interest in their local histories and began to gather information and file it. They were local historians, genealogists, research collaborators and friends Ellen McCormack QSM and Christine Clement. Their collections which started life in their homes in lever arch files or manila folders, grew over the years and were eventually transferred to Council facilities when their homes ran out of space and their husbands ran out of patience!

WBOPDC recognised the value of what these local genealogists and historians had gathered and realised that the collections needed to be treated as more than a hobby, and Council is to be commended in acknowledging and supporting the creation of a paid role in 2018 to ensure the longevity, security and accessibility of these collections. The new position coincided with our move into the new premises in Katikati at The Centre – Pātuki Manawa in August of 2018, where for the first time the Western Bay Community Archives (WBCA) was able to welcome our patrons into the archives to do their research amongst the files and resources in the Archives Room itself.

The collections at Katikati and Te Puke comprise mainly information about local settler families who came to New Zealand aboard two ships, *Carisbrooke Castle* (1875), and the *Lady Jocelyn* (1878). These settlers were Irish families from Ulster and they were

Protestant Orangemen. They were led by George Vesey Stewart, a skilled salesman and consummate politician who became the inaugural mayor of the new borough of Tauranga in 1882. He was awarded an O.B.E. in 1918, and is credited with bringing some 4,000 emigrants to New Zealand. Many of these settler families occupied and farmed land in and around what is now known as Katikati (originally Waterford), and Te Puke.

The information held comes mainly in the form of family trees, photographs, diaries, scrapbooks and cuttings from local publications. Members of the community have been very generous in gifting additional material to the archives over the years, and the collections at Katikati and Te Puke have been regularly accessed by researchers, school students, and visitors to the area who have connections to these families.

My role enabled me to promote the archive collection to the community. The scope for the collection was widened and now includes oral histories, the history of businesses and important local events, and information about the continuing development in the district. The district administered by the WBOPDC covers 212,000 hectares, from Waihi Beach, Katikati, Kaimai, Omokoroa, Te Puna, Te Puke, Maketu, and Paengaroa, but does not include Tauranga, Mount Maunganui and Papamoa, which are very ably covered by the Heritage Team at Tauranga City Libraries, with whom we have a strong relationship.

We also work in partnership with a number of community organisations such as the Western Bay Museum, the Omokoroa Historical Society, the Genealogy Group of Katikati and the Te Puke branch of the New Zealand Genealogical Society.

**The Helen Zwartz Scholarship**

This Scholarship is intended for a librarian or staff member working in a public library serving one of New Zealand's smaller communities. The Scholarship is not limited to those who work in an archival environment – eligible applicants must simply have a need for professional development in a specific area. The clearer you are




The Centre – Pātuki Manawa, Katikati.

about what you need, the better the National Library staff can tailor a schedule to suit you.

I was initially encouraged to apply for the Helen Zwartz Scholarship by a colleague and the opportunity was too good to miss. There were areas of our community archive collection which I wanted to know more about how I could change or improve, that I hoped could be addressed by an internship at NLNZ.

The material collected by WBCA comes in a wide variety of formats, be it a personal collection or the archive of a local group, and can come in the form of a cardboard suitcase containing letters, photographs, perhaps a book, and a collection of personal paperwork or financial records along with some 3.5 inch floppy discs. What would be the best way to preserve and catalogue this? This has been a challenge for me, a librarian accustomed to cataloguing single objects.

I had completed a paper in Archives Studies through the Open Polytechnic in 2013, and understood the principles of provenance, integrity of the collection and the importance of keeping the original order, but was still experiencing some challenges in cataloguing

our collections in a way which properly reflected what was there. Preservation of these items to ensure their longevity was also something of a challenge, as I could easily spend the Library's entire stationery budget on preservation materials. I needed to be very careful what I ordered and needed to know what I should prioritise.

And what about those old floppys? Would the information be safe? Would I run the risk of corrupting the old information in transferring it into an appropriate storage medium?

Finally, we needed a more comprehensive but balanced Archives Policy and Procedure Manual which also incorporated all the forms necessary to properly record the provenance and future preservation of the collection. I knew I was on the right track as I had received assistance from other community archives, but wanted to know more without making our policies too onerous.

There was so much to learn. So much to do!

It was with a sense of excitement and some nervousness that I presented myself at NLNZ on Monday 29th April. During the next three weeks I had the pleasure of meeting with members of many teams including Digital Collection Services, Preservation Research, Collection Logistics, Collaborative Services, Digital NZ Services, Curatorial Services, Arrangement & Description, Outreach Services and Public Engagement. I also spent a very happy day at Archives New Zealand being introduced to their collections and services.

The variety of activities I was able to attend and take part in gave me insight into the organisation and how the teams work together to successfully deliver NLNZ's many products and services. I was invited to attend a number of team meetings, and had individual discussions with people who were happy to share details of their workflows with me. I also got hands on experience when I was treated to a lesson in how to properly handle old glass plate images – there were a few nerves with this one! I was also taken to the basement, where all the temperature controlled collections are stored. I never would have imagined that I would be moving cabinets full of photographs wearing a quilted jacket and gloves in a room kept at -2 degrees directly below the streets of Wellington, but there I was!

Members of the Arrangement & Description Team were generous with their time, and very willing to share their expertise and knowledge with me, as I shadowed them while they showed me what collections and items they were working on. I was able to see the process of arrangement & description of collections at first hand which was a highlight for me, as this was knowledge that I was able to take away and put to good use immediately upon my return to work. Receiving a box of treasures from a member of the community is a wonderful part of my job, but describing it was always a real challenge and the A & D Team at Alexander Turnbull Library willingly showed me how they arrange and describe the archives which they receive, and I have been able to be more confident in using our Recollect site templates to create on-line collections which have an appropriate level of information contained within their records. Handling and re-housing the glass plate negatives and also seeing how photographs and negatives are stored enabled me to learn about how to best preserve photographs of all types which for our archives is important, as we receive a great deal of the community memory as photographs. While there is no way that we can afford the quality of housing which ATL use, we can make much better choices about what we do buy.

There are many things which can be learned by reading and taking notes, but for me, it was the conversations with and observations of the people which had so much value. I was lucky enough to meet with representatives from almost every team in the building and they spoke to me about what they did, wanted to know how they could help me with my work. I was given guidance and pointers on what open source software would help me with migration and preservation of digital material, how to best look after our collections given our limited budget, and I was shown around all the collections, the reading room and even saw a demonstration of items from the Rare Book Collection.

It was only when I spoke to the staff that I fully realised the scope of the work for which NLNZ is responsible, and the expertise of the staff who work there. The collegial, co-operative culture at NLNZ meant that relationships across the teams are warm, and this in turn



Western Bay Community Archives - Katikati

enhanced my experience by making it easier to learn, and also gave me an opportunity to give the staff there a glimpse of what the WBCA does and who we are.

Taking our archive out to the community is very much a focus of what I do and the experience afforded me by the Scholarship has given me good reason to be confident in our work. I feel that community archives have much to offer, and I felt that the staff at NLNZ were only too happy to help me where they could with offers of ongoing support and encouragement.

I need to demonstrate to our district's communities that their collections will be treated with respect, and that they will be kept safe over the long term. I would like to nurture long standing, trusting relationships with all members of the community and be able to understand the differing ways that information is stored and be available to help if and when necessary. Our Iwi and Hapu partners need to be better represented in our archive and now as we become a more multicultural community, the community's archive needs to reflect this change, too. In fact, since my visit, I have met with Vicki-

Anne Heikell from the National Preservation Office in Katikati and we are arranging a workshop in 2020 which will involve our Iwi in helping to preserve their precious photographs and documents. While I was in Wellington, both Vicki-Anne and Celia Joe who is involved in the recording of oral histories, were able to give me a great deal of insight into how I can begin to create and nurture a relationship with our iwi and hapū.

Working as a sole charge community archivist in a public library presents a mixture of challenges and opportunities. I am very familiar with public libraries as I have trained and worked in this setting for many years. What this scholarship was able to do for me was expose me to the very best in archival practice to enable me to take what knowledge I could, bring it back to my workplace and put it to good use. Although I cannot hope to match the standards of practice at an institution like ATL, I have had an opportunity to meet and observe the best practitioners in the country and learn far more than I could ever hope to learn out of a book or in a class. It is the people and the conversations I had with them that I will remember and value the most.

My gratitude goes to David Zwartz for giving me this opportunity in memory of his wife Helen.