

He mahi māreikura: Reflections on the digitising of the Pei Jones' collection

Hēmi Whaanga

Abstract

The astounding growth in digital content in the past decade alongside the proliferation of Mātauranga Māori being made available through this medium has transformed and affected the ways in which we participate and communicate locally, regionally, nationally and globally. These advances have expanded the possibilities for both preserving and sharing our knowledge in non-traditional formats with our people and other Indigenous peoples across the world. This paper reflects on the digital journey of the Pei Jones' Collection from its various origins to its current physical and digital manifestation in the University of Waikato Library.

Background

My involvement with the Pei Jones' Collection first began with a dear friend and colleague, the late Rangiiiria Hedley (of Ngāti Tūwharetoa). I assisted her and a number of other Māori colleagues with the conservation and cataloguing of the books, photographs, kākahu and taonga of one of Māoridom's finest writers and scholars, Dr. Pei Te Hurinui Jones (Ngāti Maniapoto). My role changed from a colleague and assistant to a leadership one when our research team applied for and was successful in obtaining funding from Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga. The funding that we secured was to undertake research, collate and develop ethical processes and appropriately display, in a digital format, the manuscripts, works and collected taonga of Pei Jones. While participating in the transition of Jones' Collection from its various locations in Aotearoa, and then leading the research on the digitisation of the collection, I observed and have been part of, a remarkable and often very complex collaborative process. A critical factor in the success of this project has been the close working collaboration that developed with Pei's whānau and the application of various tikanga. These ethical and guiding principles were applied throughout the project from initial negotiations, subsequent archiving, cataloguing, and development of the physical layout and conservation through to the on-going digitisation of the collection. In the following, I recount many of the observations I noted during this journey.

The Pei Jones' Collections

Dr. Pei Te Hurinui Jones was a noted Māori scholar, advisor to the Kīngitanga, and a respected leader in the revival and retention of the Māori language, cultural knowledge and heritage in the 20th century. During his lifetime, he amassed an impressive collection of books, manuscripts and taonga through his many interactions with foreign dignitaries, chiefs, rangatira, Māori leaders and whānau (see Baksh, 1991; Biggs, 2005; Hurst, 1996; Jones, 1982; Jones, Biggs, & Tainui Maori Trust Board, 2004 and Whaanga & Hedley,

2006 for a biographical sketch of Pei Te Hurinui Jones). Following his death in 1976, his collection of over 30,000 items were split into two parts, with some of the material remaining with his second wife, Kate Huia Apatari and her whānau (approximately one-third), and the remainder being placed with Brian Hauāuru Jones, Pei's son from his marriage to Hepina Te Miha. By the late 1980s, "Brian Jones was considering storing and making available his father's collection of published and manuscript material for future researchers following the scholarly example set by his father" (Wahaanga & Hedley, 2006, p. 8). In 1990, Brian deposited his fathers' manuscripts of approximately 20-30,000 pages with the University of Waikato Library in the light of the close relationship that Pei, the Jones whānau and the University of Waikato had established over the years. The material was collected from Brian's residence at Taupō (Waipahihi), by the late Professor Evelyn Stokes and Jennifer King (then Chief Librarian). A qualified archivist, Salim Baksh, was employed by the University of Waikato Library to carry out the work on a short-term contract to archive and catalogue the materials (Baksh, 1991). In 1994, the collection held by the Apatari whānau was transferred to the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. This significant collection contained 142 folders of holographs, manuscripts, typescripts and printed matter including, various correspondence, drafts and notes relating to Pei's various literary works, subject files on various political matters, some early Kīngitanga papers, whakapapa and other research material.

A digital journey

My first interaction with the Jones' whānau and the various taonga of Pei Te Hurinui began in 2002, following an informal discussion between Brian Jones and Rangiriia Hedley, a relative of Brian and Pei who was an expert in conservation and a staff member in Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao at that time. This conversation centered on the possibility of depositing the remainder of Brian's collection with the earlier collection held at the University of Waikato. For Brian Jones, this part of the collection held many significant memories and taonga. Most importantly, it contained his fathers' prized possessions and memorabilia, such as the books which, provided inspiration for his literary masterpieces, various family photographs and kākahu. A number of taonga including various Ngāti Maniapoto whakapapa scrolls, huia feathers, pendants belonging to King Pōtatau Te Wherowhero, King Tāwhiao, Te Heuheu Patatai, Te Rauparaha and a patu ōnewa used to lay down tribal boundaries were also gifted (see, for a full discussion, Anderson, 2012; Wahaanga & Hedley, 2006; Wahaanga et al., 2012).

At this juncture of the journey, a range of hui were held between the whānau, Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao, and Māori staff and key personnel in the University of Waikato Library, to discuss critical issues regarding ethical, cultural and financial implications of accepting a gift of this magnitude. After lengthy negotiations, a contractual agreement was reached concerning the nature of custodial gift. Known as the Whakaaetanga ā-pukapuka mō Te Tiaki i te Takoha o te whakahiatotanga a Pei Te Hurinui (Deed of Custodial Gift Pei Te Hurinui Collection), it carefully considers the act of gifting in addition to the five broad

areas identified during the initial discussion stages:

- i. Te Takoha me te Whakaaetanga (Gift and Acceptance),
- ii. Te Tiakitanga (Custody),
- iii. Ko te Whai Wāhi Atu (Access),
- iv. Tiaki (Care), and
- v. Inihua (Insurance).

Of importance is the conceptualisation of Te Tākoha, in this application, which considers the possibility that, if at any time or for any reason, the terms in which these taonga were gifted changes, then the gift must be returned to the whānau (Whaanga & Hedley, 2006).

A small room was provided and named Mahi Māreikura after the title of Pei's manuscript, Te Tuhi Māreikura, a work dealing with the Māori account of the creation based on priestly lore of the Tainui people (Jones, 2013 a & b). From this base, we sought to establish and develop a culturally appropriate process to display and conserve his works and taonga within an academic institute. We considered the mana, whakapapa (genealogy), relevant kōrero (history), and usage, of each object in relation to the central subject, Pei Jones. We then arranged the collection, so far as the room size and shape would allow, according to the layout of a whare puni (an ancestral meeting house). Thus, for example, visitors, guests, or, in this case, researchers, students or family members, are called to enter through Te Tatau (the doorway) to explore and to grasp the knowledge which has been taught/ handed down and housed on Te Tara Nui, the right-hand side designated for manuhiri. The taonga are also defined and arranged in terms of these principles as they are located at the back wall; an area normally designated for rangatira and their photographs. In approaching the collection in this manner we challenged many of the practices and ethical procedures currently followed in libraries, museums and archives (Whaanga & Hedley, 2006, p. 13). Institutions normally split up a collection and their associated taonga according to their classification system and the various items are shelved or stored according to subjects and subdivisions within those subjects. In establishing Mahi Māreikura it was agreed by all parties that no part of collection would be separated. Our goal here was to ensure that the collection would remain as one for perpetuity and that any future students and researchers would experience, visualise and be inspired by the same books, writings, and taonga that inspired Pei to produce his many masterpieces.

During the developmental stages of the project, Brian Jones discussed the possibility of providing digital access to the collection for whānau members, scholars and researchers. In honouring this request, we applied for and were successful in obtaining funding from Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga. We first established an advisory group of key stakeholders whose membership was based on Pei's:

whakapapa (genealogy) links, representation from Pei's whānau, his close

association with Kīngitanga, Tainui, Ngāti Tūwharetoa and the University of Waikato, representation from Māori academics at the institution that the collection was gifted to, and representation of the University of Waikato Library who administer and care for the collection. (Whaanga, et al., 2015, p. 533).

This group consisted of the various key personnel that were also central to the development and establishment of 'Mahi Māreikura'. The advisory group was formed to address areas of concern regarding the management, conservation, care and display of mātauranga Māori and taonga Māori in a digital context. Its key function was to establish protocols and procedures, as well as providing valuable guidance and advice. Three broad themes were identified from the hui held with key stakeholders: kaitiakitanga; contextualisation of information; and content development which also provides control across multi-layered access points (Anderson, 2012; Whaanga, et al., 2012; 2015).

Kaitiakitanga, in the context of the Pei Jones' Collection, was based on the experience of mauri (life principle, vital essence), mana (control), tika (be correct, right, just, fair), tapu (be sacred, prohibited, restricted), and noa (be free from the extensions of tapu, ordinary, unrestricted) of the collection and the protocols of kaitiakitanga (guardianship or preservation). The digital medium created a different level of connection, which brought with it a different wairua. In response to this, the advisory group suggested establishing a working guide of kaitiaki values, which would provide guidance on representation, provenance, context and the digitisation of the collection.

The group identified the 'contextualisation of information' as an extremely important aspect of the digitisation process. They noted that in order to maintain the integrity of the collection it requires an appropriate context with which to work from. As large portions of the collection are based on whānau, hapū and iwi knowledge, provenance was strongly emphasised as an essential component in the maintenance of integrity of the collection. A number of possible strategies were suggested including timeline diagrams, templates based on Pei's cosmology charts, diagrams and themes within the collection, which could be used to symbolise the content of the collection (see, for a full discussion, Anderson, 2012; Whaanga & Hedley, 2006; Whaanga, et al., 2012; 2015).

The 'control of content, and the development of multi-layered access points', were discussed at length by the advisory group (Anderson, 2012; Whaanga, et al., 2012; 2015). A number of possible strategies were suggested in relation to content development such as a model based on the crowd sourcing of the information where whānau assist with the development and control of content including the editing, proofing and checking of the content, in addition to being part of the control and management of content, that is, identifying important information and content that may need to be embargoed. The goal here for whānau, hapū, iwi "is to provide the procedures in which they can control their own knowledge and information and are full participants in the decision-making process" (Whaanga, et al., 2015, p. 534).

In conceptualising a digital space for the collection, we investigated the potential

of a model based on Tainui kaupapa, Kaupapa Māori and tikanga. The model proposed by members of the Advisory Group is based on Tāwhaki's ascent to the highest heaven to collect the baskets of knowledge:

Similar to Tawhaki's ascent to collect the baskets of knowledge, the development of digitization processes is a process of trial and error. At times there will be successes in terms of the ethical and technical challenges and at other times a reformulation of the task is required in order to advance . . . The consolidation of that knowledge base is an essential part of the journey. For example, on arriving to the highest heaven, Tawhaki collected the baskets of knowledge and the stones of consolidation (both formal and informal), and on his return he consolidated these forms of knowledge as mauri . . . (Whaanga, et al., 2015, pp. 535-536):

Incorporating these aspects, the guiding principles provided by the advisory group, and in particular, the control of content and the development of multi-layered access points, the concepts of knowledge consolidation, and the contextualisation of information, posed a number of technical challenges for the research team. In response to the challenge of ensuring that the whānau were full participants in the decision-making process and the development and control of content, we chose to use Greenstone Digital Library software as our platform. Produced by the New Zealand Digital Library Project at our institute it has been developed and distributed as an open source, multilingual software in cooperation with UNESCO and the Human Info NGO Belgium over the past 17 years (Witten, Bainbridge & Nichols, 2010), Greenstone is issued under the terms of the GNU General Public License. This license agreement guarantees the freedom to share and change all versions of a program to a broader audience. As a research team, we considered it appropriate and advantageous to use software developed by our institute and used to create similar repositories, which contained mātauranga Māori. We also considered it beneficial that any developments, frameworks and protocols implemented in this project could, potentially be shared at no cost with other iwi, societies and communities in Aotearoa and further afield. To enhance the repository features we developed a range of enhancements and software (Whaanga, et al., 2015, pp. 536-543):

- A Māori language macronizer (see <http://community.nzdl.org/macron-restoration/jsp/en/about.jsp>.)
- A spatial hypermedia browser and editor (see Scrivener, 2012).
- A Digital Library toolkit (see Cader, 2012).

The Māori language macronizer provided a quick mechanism for us to add macrons automatically to text produced by OCR on scanned documents. This feature greatly enhanced the consistency of the reproduced text we were working with. The spatial hypermedia editor provided us with a method to test and trial the various ways in which

we could contextualise the spatial relationships that existed between the taonga and their historical and contextual significance to Pei. The Digital Library toolkit provided an enhanced functionality framework with which to manage the digital versions of the collection (Cader, 2012; Scrivener, 2012; Whaanga, et al., 2015). We aimed here to address the systems functionality and user experience. We also developed a proof of concept model based on the crowd sourcing of the information to edit, proof, check and embargo content. During this phase of the project, we felt it was critically important to implement a *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face) approach to these technical developments. For example, we worked closely with our computer scientists and programmers to stress and highlight the importance of the historical, cultural and spiritual link (both tangible and intangible), of the taonga and manuscripts to Pei.

Conclusion

In this brief paper, I have recounted some of the decisions we collectively made in the conservation, cataloguing and digitising of the many remarkable taonga, books, photographs, *kākahu* and manuscripts of one of Māoridom's finest writers and scholars. In accepting this taonga, we applied a range of *tikanga* and formulated a number of procedures to safeguard that not only the *mana* of the collection would be cared for, but also Pei's *mana* would be ensured throughout this journey. Thus, we developed deeds based on our notion of custodial gift and established a room formulated on the layout of a *whare puni* where the taonga were arranged according to their *mana*, *whakapapa*, relevant *kōrero*, and usage, in relation to the central subject, Pei Jones. We setup an advisory group of key stakeholders based on Pei's many *whakapapa* links with representation from Pei's *whānau*, the University of Waikato, and University of Waikato Library who administer and care for the collection. We developed a digital repository with a range of features that provide mechanisms for Pei's *whānau* to be central to the decision-making process where they can control, edit, proof, check and embargo content. All of this I believe was undertaken to preserve Pei's *mana* and to share his knowledge and scholarship with future generations. Many members of the initial group that first met to discuss the acceptance of this taonga continue to work on the premise of sharing Pei's work with the world. We recently released Pei's Shakespearean translations of 'The Merchant of Venice, Julius Caesar and Othello' where we retyped, edited and digitised his original manuscripts 71 years after he self-published *The Merchant of Venice* to a limited audience (Jones, 2017 a & b).

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