

Integrating Information Literacies with Indigenous Paradigms

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Abstract:

In this paper I will examine how information literacies might better support the indigenous world view of the Māori people.

In Aotearoa, New Zealand the written word was acknowledged by the Māori people as a means of enhancing prestige, authority and control, status and influence, power and charisma. This technology saw the creation of 'He Whakaputanga - a Declaration of Independence' (1835) by the Chiefs of the Māori people, Te Tiriti o Waitangi - The Treaty of Waitangi (1840) a partnership between Māori people and the English Crown, and a host of scholarly writings about every aspect of Māori life, customs and lore.

In the modern era, information literacy plays a vital role in negotiations between the two treaty partners. Treaty claims and their subsequent settlement are dependent on the ability of iwi Māori (Māori nations) to provide historical evidence of their customary rights. The Governments' negotiators must also verify this evidence and both parties must agree on the final settlement.

Post settlement requirements include a letter of introduction by the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations. The letter is sent to libraries, archives, museums, galleries and other information repositories and urges that any items or artifacts deemed relevant to iwi Māori are identified and made accessible or available.

My work place, the Archive of Māori & Pacific Sound (formerly known as the Archive of Māori and Pacific Music), was contacted in this manner and in accordance with the request, a research project was conducted, and along the way, an understanding of the role that information literacies play in the settlement of iwi Māori claims with the Government has developed.

Traditional Māori information literacies are embedded and woven in sites, carved meeting houses, traditional canoes, oral histories, song, dance, ritual recitations, tattoos and art forms, clothing and personal adornments. Many of these formats are identified by modern approaches to information literacies like the Māori Subject Headings. However, what happens when the searchable terms that relate to a place, an event, a specific group of people or an entire knowledge base are only partially

recorded or not recorded at all? How could we conduct a search that is part of an integrated system that links artifacts and items, to other artefacts and items in a manner that reflects a different world view? A system that gives context and meaning beyond its ability to be stored, catalogued and accessed?

Māori have a form of introduction that establishes identity and heritage. It is called a 'pepeha' and I propose to discuss utilising pepeha as a method of integrating indigenous literacy into the metadata created by institutions. It is intended that this paper identifies indigenous research issues and the role that our individual and collective institutions can play in promotion and integration of culturally appropriate responses to indigenous paradigms.

Keywords: Māori Subject Headings, Information literacy, Archive Māori and Pacific Sound, ID3 tags.

Introduction

Haramai e tama whakaputa i a koe
Ki runga te tūranga matua
Mārama te ata i Ururangi
Mārama te ata i Taketake-nui-o-Rangi
Ka whakawhenua ngā hiringa i konei e Tama
Haramai e mau tō ringa
ki te kete tuauri
Ki te kete tūātea
Ki te kete aronui.”

Opening lines from the second verse of a lullaby called “Nau mai e tama” composed for Tūteremoana by his great uncle, Tūhotoariki. This song exhorts the infant to grow into the knowledge of his ancestors and take his place amongst their people.

Come now, O son, see what is presented to you
Upon the threshold of your parents abode
Bright is the morning light at the entry of the heavens
Bright is the morning light at the base of the heavens
Upon this earth is implanted all knowledge, O son
Come! Grasp in your hand
The basket of sacred knowledge
The basket of ancestral knowledge
The basket of life’s knowledge.

The transmission of information through song was common for Māori people in pre-European times. The impact of colonisation and integration to a new society lessened this to some degree and Māori people have had to learn new ways of understanding the world they live in and most importantly how to access information in an ever changing environment.

This paper will examine some of the traditional methods the Māori people used to disseminate knowledge and how these practices may be aligned to inform current metadata practices and embedding certain terms in metadata can provide a method integrating the Māori culture with the modern technologies.

Te Ao Māori | The World View of the Māori People

According to Walker (1990), Māori society has three major myth cycles. The first being the creation myth including Ranginui, the Sky Father and Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother. The second being the adventures of Māui the demi god and the final being the adventures of Tāwhaki.

The first myth introduces the ordering of the universe and how people came into existence. The second establishes our place within the physical world and re-enforces our genealogical link to all of creation. The third teaches behaviours that form the basis of interactions between people and touch on attributes and attitudes that Māori consider worthy of passing on to successive generations. The three cycles also highlight the acquisition of knowledge and its use.

Tangata Whenua | People of the Land

Following centuries of migration across the Pacific Ocean to arrive and settle in Aotearoa, New Zealand, the Māori people organised themselves around kinship groups and the extended family known as whānau.

“Many Māori traditions tell of the Polynesian settlers from Hawaiki, who reached the coast in canoes about 700 years ago. But there are also myths and legends of earlier beings, such as the first human to be created. Through these stories, tribes can trace a long relationship with the land, and with the different regions they live in.” (Royal, 2005, para.1)

The social structure of the Māori people identified with four main groups. These are whānau (extended family), hapū (sub-tribe), iwi (tribe) and waka (canoe).

Over time, when a leader of sufficient prestige, genealogy and skill was born, the whānau would expand their territory using resources over a larger area often including large bodies of water, forests and mountain ranges where they would fish, hunt and gather resources. This new group would become a sub tribe or hapū and take the name of the leader. Eventually a large meeting house, (wharenuī) would be built and this would also be named after the founding ancestor. The fully carved and elaborately decorated wharenuī are called whare whakairo and contain carved images of ancestors of great renown or depict genealogical links to neighbouring hapū and iwi.

Walker (1990) describes waka as the largest social grouping of Māori who all share genealogical links to a common ancestor. This ancestor may have captained the waka on its journey to Aotearoa, New Zealand. He states that they are “comprised of a loose confederation of tribes based on the ancestral canoes of the fourteenth century.” (p.25).

The interactions between members of the same whānau, hapū, iwi and waka are governed by a series of values and principles. One of the core principles’ is genealogy but also includes an element of familiarity. This is called whanaungatanga. The online Māori Dictionary describes whanaungatanga as a “relationship, kinship, sense of family connection - a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging.” It develops as a result of kinship rights and obligations, which also

serve to strengthen each member of the kin group. It also extends to others to whom one develops a close familial, friendship or reciprocal relationship.” (Māori Dictionary, 2019).

The coming of the Pākehā (European) would introduce Māori to new goods, customs and technology that would challenge these bonds.

The Written Word

The arrival of the missionaries had a major impact on Māori society. They brought the gospel and the written word and converted Māori people to Christianity while undermining their myths and customary beliefs.

An agreement needed to be made between the English representatives of the of the colonising settlers and the iwi who controlled vast tracts of land and access to resources. “He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tīreni”, a “Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand” was created in reference to the emergence of a new nation called New Zealand. The Declaration was signed by 34 northern rangatira (chiefs) who were known as the Confederation of United Tribes, at Waitangi in the Bay of Islands on 28 October 1835. 18 additional rangatira were to add their signatures up until 22 July 1839, including two non-northern rangatira.

“Through He Whakaputanga, these fifty-two rangatira asserted that mana (authority) and sovereign power in New Zealand resided fully with Māori, and that foreigners would not be allowed to make laws” (Archives New Zealand, n.d., para. 1).

Te Tiriti vs. The Treaty

The Declaration was followed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi and The Treaty of Waitangi respectively. This agreement in both English and Māori was signed in 1840 to establish law and order for the settlers from Europe and citizenship for the Māori people. The treaty established the Crown representative of Queen Victoria and led to the formation of the Settler Government. The Governor would have authority over their own people and minimise unfair land transactions for Māori.

There were three written articles in both versions of the treaty, however, it’s important to note that the two versions do not say the same thing. There was also a verbal promise to protect Māori customs and religious freedom in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Below are the summaries of the articles of the English and Māori treaties.

English.

1. Māori give the Queen of England control over all Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. The Queen guarantees all Māori, rights to land, forests and fishing and treasured possessions. If Māori want to sell land, they can only sell it to the Queen.
3. The Queen gives Māori the same rights as British people.

This treaty was signed by 39 Māori and gives control to the Crown / Government only.

Māori

1. Māori give the Queen of England the right to have a governor in Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. The Queen agrees that Māori keep their independence and keep control over their lands and their taonga. Taonga is everything that is prized or valued including socially or culturally and can be objects, resources, phenomenon and ideas. Māori give the Queen the right to buy land, if they want to sell.
3. The Queen gives Māori the same rights as British subjects.

The Governor promised to protect Māori customs and the different religions in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The Māori treaty was signed by 512 Māori and by the British Governor on behalf of the Queen and the Chiefs of Aotearoa New Zealand maintain Māori authority (Human Rights Commission, 2006).

Once a governing body was established, successive Governments created legislation to alienate the land and ensure an ease of transfer from predominantly Māori ownership to European. By looking at the legislation used over time a picture develops of the approach used to strip the cultural practices and underpinning beliefs of Māori as they are integrated into a European society. Some of the legislation includes but is not restricted to the following.

1. New Zealand Constitution Act 1852. This law was introduced by Government in order to create New Zealand's Parliament. In order to vote, according to Section 7, you must meet these requirements, be male, be at least 21 years of age, own land as an individual.
2. Public Works Land Act 1864. This law was introduced by Government in order to take land as needed for public roading and railways.
3. Native Lands Act 1865. This law was introduced by Government in order to extinguish Māori customary rights to land and required Māori must go to court to register and acquire a certificate of ownership.
4. Native Schools Act 1867. This law was introduced by Government because they wanted to control Māori and teach them Pākehā laws. This was an interim measure to transition Māori to English mainstream schooling.
5. Tohunga Suppression Act 1907
6. Quackery Prevention Act in 1908
7. Seabed and Foreshore Act 2004

Information Literacy

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Western Information literacies

Information literacy allows searches to be conducted in a manner that refines and reduces information down to a few or often a single piece of information. Applying critical analysis to the information, usually using some type of framework to assess its appropriateness for the task at hand or as in this instance, the research being conducted.

Māori literacies.

The oral society of the Māori utilised song, genealogy, speech and prayer to embed information for transmission from experts to novices. The learning aides for this knowledge ranged from geographical features, stars, winds, tides to elaborate tattoos, decorative carving, painting, weaving, hunting, gathering and cultivation of food. Many of the early European scholars were recognised as experts and were seen as people of great standing who through their writing would enhance the prestige of the various iwi.

The Archive Māori and Pacific Sound

The Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound was founded in 1970 with conditional approval and the understanding that the university would not be required to contribute funding. Fortunately, that is no longer the case and although the archive has been part of the Anthropology Department, the Pacific Studies Department and most recently Te Tumu Herenga, Libraries and Learning Services it has managed to overcome its financial hurdles.

The archive now houses audio recordings that date as far back as 1907 and include songs, speeches, functions, openings and gatherings from all around the Pacific and Aotearoa, New Zealand.

The Iwi Settlement Project.

Post settlement requirements include a letter of introduction by the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations. The letter is sent to libraries, archives, museums, galleries and other information repositories and urges that any items or artifacts deemed relevant to iwi Māori are identified and made accessible or available.

The Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound was contacted in this manner and in accordance with the request, a research project was conducted, and along the way, an understanding of the role that information literacies play in the settlement of iwi Māori claims with the Government has developed.

The first challenge was to identify those items within the collection that were related to the iwi. However, searching the database using the iwi name produced little or no information.

A new approach was required as the metadata stored in the archive's database yielded no items. The metadata that had been used to create the records rarely aligned to the search terms that members of the iwi would use.

Searching the iwi websites and discovering the names of key ancestors, songs, places, events, boundaries, sites of significance and social structure was necessary in order to successfully mine the data in the archive. Once this list of new search terms was available more information was obtained and the number of taonga discovered increased.

At the time of writing this paper the report for the iwi is being compiled and it is important that this is also managed with an understanding of the world view that the iwi have and how this affects the way in which taonga are stored and cared for by institutions.

Ngā Upoko Tukutuku | Māori Subject Headings

Ngā Upoko Tukutuku, Māori Subject Headings were created with the intention of aiding in the discovery and accession of Māori items in library catalogues. This has meant that the Māori language thesaurus has grown over time and Māori language speakers have a method of describing material and items.

However, there are some gaps in the meta data field that the subject headings that do not cover. Not all terms in the Māori language are included in the thesaurus. This includes people, place names, ancestral names, geographical markers and sites of significance and sacred places such as mountains, rivers, streams and lakes, as well as many traditional meeting houses who are also named after ancestors. This is partly covered by the Iwi-Hapū Names List which was created to find standardised terms for iwi and hapū in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The list groups hapū and iwi into waka and regions, although these are by no means a complete list and are only related to material held within libraries and collections.

Pepeha

Pepeha are used to share information about iwi, hapū and whānau with an economy of words and a set form. This set of phrases may vary from place to place but in essence, they identify the links between a person and their wider community. Pepeha can include metaphor, motto's, slogans, people and places. This is how Māori establish connections with the world and the people in it as described below.

Ko Whakapūnake te maunga
Ko Te Wairoa Hōpūpū Hōnengnenge Matangirau te awa
Ko Ngāti Kahungunu te iwi
Ko Takitimu te waka
Ko Takitimu te marae
Ko Ngāi Te Apatū te hapū
Ko Te Apatū-o-Te-Rangi te tangata
Ko Kahungunu te tipuna

Whakapūnake is the mountain
Wairoa, full of lumps unevenness and spite is the river
Kahungunu is the tribe
Takitimu is the canoe

Takitimu is the ancestral house
Te Apatū are the sub-tribe
Te Apatū-o-Te-Rangi is the local ancestor
Kahungunu is the great ancestor

The expression above is an introduction used by Māori to express their familial connections, ancestry and links to geographical features near their traditional homelands. It is usually spoken on formal occasions to inform the listeners of potentially shared genealogical links and in this example lists the mountain, river, waka, iwi, hapū and ancestors. Under the current system employed by the Māori Subject Headings not all of these terms would be included as searchable terms.

When audio recordings are digitised, it is possible to add the same information to the digital copy, to create a record for a digital taonga that carries its own pepeha. Showing where it is from, when it was made, and potentially, what other taonga it is linked to within the collection and in other places. This is possible by utilising ID3 tag technology.

ID3 tags

ID3 tags are used to embed metadata or tag data on digital files such as mp3's. These tags are supported in popular software from iTunes, Windows Media Player, Winamp to MusicMatch and are compatible with players like iPod, Zune, PSP, iPhone, Toshiba Gigabeat and Sony Walkman. These devices allow a person to organise music using different headings like artist, track number, title, album and genre.

Utilising an ID3 tag editor enables the use of headings that will align to indigenous world views. The tags can be altered to display new fields that can potentially include waka, iwi, hapū, whānau, ancestors, mountain ranges, streams, rivers oceans and lakes. This will enhance the end users experience while acknowledging the cultural aspects of the recordings.

The recordings will no longer exist in isolation but will now carry its own pepeha and Māori language speakers and Māori world thinkers will be able to instantly connect with and recognise the importance of these taonga.

Conclusion

In dealing with a collection of material from Aotearoa, New Zealand and the Pacific, it is important that places like the Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound adopt a system that shows a level of culturally appropriate care and stewardship. This system should recognise the inherent value of taonga and incorporate practices that acknowledge and enhance the mana (prestige) of taonga. These mana enhancing behaviours are known as manaakitanga and will inform the work done in places like the Archive and display the level of regard for the taonga housed within.

The nature of the interactions between end users and the taonga in question are determined by the institutions which, while not established with cultural behaviours in mind, may still provide a method of connecting people with taonga. When Māori people approach institutions like the Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound it is predominantly after making a connection at the familial level with taonga in the collection, usually after searching the database and discovering a genealogical link to a performer or composer.

Recognising that ‘mana taonga’ is an important principle and acknowledgement that many of the taonga do not exist in isolation and have relationships that go back through time, and with our help, forward into the future. Whanaungatanga when applied to people is based in genealogy and when applied to taonga, the taonga become gifts as they are shared across generations. It is necessary in light of these concepts and values that practices are observed that identify the relationship that these taonga have with people and with each other.

It is vital that future information literacy allows Māori language users the opportunity to connect with their taonga in a manner that encompasses their unique world views.

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