

## Audiences and Markets

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### ***Introduction***

Digitisation of resources is great, but for the general audience the real value is added when these resources are interpreted within a context.

This is what we can do with our history exhibitions and – to a lesser extent - the online biographies of the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.

### **Key issues:**

- Who are we digitising for? We assume we have an audience, and web statistics can tell us some things about the users we have attracted.
- Having assumed or decided who our audience or market is, how do we capture and retain that audience for our digital resources?
- We need to hook the audience into our sites and we need to keep their interest. We can do this by adding value to digital resources.
- Two-way relationship with digitising institutions – we get to use a fantastic range of resources to add new dimensions to our online features; and repositories get publicity and attract further use of their digital – and real – collections through referencing – including direct links.
- Digitised resources become accessible to a much larger and wider audience when they are presented as part of – in this case history and biography-based – online features
- Websites can also develop dynamic and interactive relationships with their audiences.

### ***DNZB***

The online DNZB ([www.dnzb.govt.nz](http://www.dnzb.govt.nz)) can be seen as an example of a site which has interpreted a collection of digital texts and images and other material to provide an approach for a general audience as well as a scholarly and educational one. The print version has a reputation for a high standard of accuracy and reliability; it was important that the online version capture and retain the trust of the scholarly audience who had endorsed the printed version.

It also attempts to cater to a Maori-language audience through a bilingual interface – at least as far as the material will support this.

### **Identifying the market and audience**

A key assumption of publicly funded digital content providers – at least those with a ‘cultural memory’ function – is a mandate to supply the educational market, and a broadly general audience. This does not mean usurping the role of educational institutions. Our challenge is to make available material of high quality; but it is not our business to spoon-feed teachers or pupils; nor to follow curriculum requirements closely – these things constantly change.

How best to serve that audience? Consultation with key stakeholders is required.

When planning the online DNZB we consulted

- Ministry of Education curriculum and policy people
- Te Kete Ipurangi education portal staff ([www.tki.org.nz](http://www.tki.org.nz))
- Teachers – through history teachers’ associations
- Curriculum advisers (e.g. people working on the Social Studies curriculum and related online resources at Unitech)

When options were presented the message was clear – digitise the biographies as a priority, put them online rather than on CD-ROM, then add interpretative features – and adding the *NZ Historical Atlas* would be nice too.

### ***Catering to the audience - DNZB***

The DNZB’s ‘interpretative’ features are:

- Front-page ‘teasers’ to hook in the general browser – ‘Born On This Day’; ‘In The News’
- Interpretation of topics and events: ‘Our Land, Our People’ – linked back to biographies
- For the ‘scholarly’ market, and the serious researcher, the Advanced Search functionality provides some pre-defined approaches to content which can be further customised by users.

### ***Catering to the audience – NZHistory.net.nz***

NZHistory.net.nz’s Royal Visit exhibition ( [www.nzhistory.net.nz/Gallery/royal-tour/](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/Gallery/royal-tour/) ) has a number of features which make digital material more accessible to diverse audiences:

- Arrangement of front page to appeal to people with different interests
- Encouraging audience participation by asking for people to send in their memories
- Providing multimedia material both as stand-alone digital objects and integrated alongside other relevant contextual content

- Making large video files available to as broad an audience as possible by providing: high and low quality versions; still shots from film clips; text descriptions of the clips and transcriptions of commentary.

### ***How we know our audience***

Proviso – impossible to know exactly, all we can do is see general trends and make educated guesses.

### **Who uses our site and what for?**

Website logfiles:

- Shows numbers of unique visitors and visitor sessions to the site – over 74,000 visitor sessions for NZHistory.net.nz in April
- Shows most popular pages - the NZHistory.net.nz log file shows top 500
- File types downloaded lets us see how many sound, video and image files are being downloaded
- Country of origin signals how large our international audience is (close to 50% - mostly from USA)
- Search phrases used let us know what people are trying to find.

Other ways we know – emails; word of mouth; electronic newsletter list; the link between popular pages and the school curriculum.

### ***How our audience helps us***

A two-way process – we provide free information and they provide both passive and active contributions to the site content.

- Passive contribution – web stats let us know the popularity of a particular page and what sorts of things people are interested in seeing more of.
- Active contribution – e.g. Royal Visit memories; discussion group; emails for: corrections; additional information; link and subject suggestions.
- Community outreach: at present the DNZB is working with the Alexander Turnbull Library on a co-operative picture search – images of people in DNZB are sought from individuals, and a copy placed in the Turnbull image collection as well as online in the DNZB.

### ***The future***

Through these websites we've generated demand for images and other digital material from collections and individuals.

DNZB is still searching for pictures from institutions and individuals. In some cases we've been a catalyst for digitisation projects, or have helped prioritise collections for digitisation. But our images are not (on the whole) an independent resource – they are duplicates, copies of digital images held in

collections around the country, some of them independently available on the web, some digitally archived within institutions. DNZB and NZHistory.net.nz are obtaining copies of digital images and replicating them on our sites.

Linking to resources would in many cases be our preferred option. But at this stage in New Zealand we are simply unable to do this. In the future we suggest this is going to be the way to go (for an example see PictureAustralia [www.pictureaustralia.org.au](http://www.pictureaustralia.org.au))

Some co-operative digital projects have developed ways to interpret digital resources to audiences, and use co-operative approaches to the development of tools and templates for users and colleague institutions.

SCRAN ([www.scran.ac.uk](http://www.scran.ac.uk)) holds an integrated collection of digital objects from diverse collections. It mediates the browsing and searching experience to its audience through features such as

- 'Search of the Day',
- 'Pathfinders'
- 'Resource Packs';
- detailed feedback/correction forms.
- and an entertaining Caption Competition,

Managed environments assist educational users to find not just a bunch of web resources, but resources which are focussed on their level of interest, their area of interest, and will fulfil their particular needs.

e.g. the UK Resource Discovery Network ([www.rdn.ac.uk](http://www.rdn.ac.uk)) which achieves a further level of integration/interoperability and interpretation through

- 'Behind the Headlines' a RSS feed and a 'canned' search, and
- 'Virtual Training Suites' to introduce users to resources of several subject hubs.

and Renardus ([www.renardus.org](http://www.renardus.org)) – European wide integration and co-operation.

### ***Beyond the 'digitised collection'***

Digitisation of resources should be seen as much more than creating an electronic collection of digital objects.

The goal should be to make those objects available to a much larger audience than would normally have access to them.

By using these digital objects in our history and biography websites we can 'add value' to them and help bring them (and therefore the repositories that hold them) to the attention of literally hundreds of thousands of people both in New Zealand and internationally.

The value added by interpretation, aggregation and the quality assurance of good gateways or portals increases use of digitised resources, helping our audiences and strengthening the case for co-ordinating digitisation activity.