

Editorial

The stories in this issue have a serendipitous link concerning our design history and the ongoing project to foster in this country distinctive and indigenous design. We lead off with an appropriate article for a publication produced in December. Peter Gilderdale examines the birth of the New Zealand Christmas card. In 1883 a Dunedin newspaper commented on the folly of sending back to the 'old country' Christmas cards that were made there. But if we were to produce our own cards what would be appropriate designs to represent New Zealand at Christmas. The answer can be found in some lines of verse, or is it doggerel, printed on an early local card:

"Summer scenes and flowers are ours at Christmas time,
Not wint'ry frost and snow, as yours in Northern clime."

Although the author notes that New Zealand cards struggled to compete with the flood of imported cards some local examples were marked by elaborate and well-constructed design.

Crude and direct were the design features that marked the bulletins, pamphlets and cartoons by those supporting the strikers during the 1951 Waterfront Strike. Patricia Thomas looks at the text, typefaces and imagery that were used to portray the strikers' position against what they viewed as "police thuggery, fascist regulations and the international pirates that called themselves ship-owners". Thomas examines this underground media to "form a picture of one side of the story of what was, arguably, the most disruptive and divisive 151 days in the history of the New Zealand labour movement".

The value of design has often been contested. The influential twentieth century British designer Gordon Russell was clear on its importance. He stated in a *Times* supplement produced for the 1951 Festival of Britain: "Quality has three facets: workmanship, material, and design". He went on to lament that: "In many trades the first two are better than the third". In his article on the historic emergence of 'design thinking' in New Zealand, Alan Young notes among other markers, the importance of the Festival of Britain in underpinning the idea that 'good' design was based on wide-ranging research.

Research in the United States was pivotal to the success of Robert Laidlaw. In 1909 this twenty-four year old hardware salesman launched New Zealand's first mail order business. It was closely modelled on the American business of Aaron Montgomery Ward who pitched his catalogue to the rural household promising cheaper goods if they paid cash. The article about Laidlaw's 'new way' of shopping looks at the mail order catalogues he produced as 'Laidlaw Leeds' and later the 'Farmers' Trading Company', as media that tell us something of the age that produced them. In particular it focuses on how they reflected changing norms when addressing the female audience.

It is the contention of the authors of our next article that printed matter and artifacts in libraries, archives and museums can be 'reinvigorated' by using the potential of 3D printing and interactive technologies. They propound that these emerging technologies are influencing "the shape of society, how we interact with the world, how we learn, how our activities create new knowledge and how we can contextualise old knowledge in new ways". The projects they are undertaking are a collaboration between the National Library of New Zealand and the Victoria University of Wellington School of Design. They show with examples from the First World War, early waterfront reclamation in Wellington and other archive material how 3d technologies can free the library user from the limitations of text and two dimensional images.

Nan O'Sullivan asserts in her article that it is critical we revisit design's history from a less Eurocentric perspective. In this country's case she believes that the early recognition of the use of nature's harmonies to achieve beauty in aesthetics by Maori and Pacific peoples has been either forgotten or, perhaps, conveniently ignored. She draws on work undertaken by first year design students who, having identified their own cultural affiliations, make patterns from the individual cultural symbols they have designed. They have then sought to express these as collective and complex group identities.

All the content in this edition speaks to our identity as a nation and the role our use of design, archives and our media play in forming that identity. Importantly as well, this edition demonstrates how our 'back stories' are central not only to our understanding of who we are but also how we might design or shape our future.

Alan Cocker