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Tutuku: Telling the stories of the Māori Showband world through digital innovation

Abstract

In this article I will discuss the development and creation of the *Tutuku* digital archive. *Tutuku* is the name of the digital archive I have created as my nominated creative component for my PhD. *Tutuku* is coupled with my thesis "He Kohinga Kōrero: A selected group of Māori musicians and performers' experiences of the 1960s through the Māori Showband movement".

Tutuku contains people's narratives and experiences, which in turn each have their own mauri or life principle (objectspace, 2020). The narratives could also be described as mana taonga. Mana taonga is a specific Māori curatorial concept that taonga have their own status and power which must be managed and cared for in a culturally appropriate way (Mccarthy, Dorfman, Hakiwai, and Āwhina, 2013, 7). The concept of mana taonga creates the space for indigenous voices to be self-determining in history retelling.

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Tutuku creates pathways for expanding knowledge on many other subjects. *Tutuku* is available as an IOS App and web application located at Www.tutuku.co.nz. The second version will be available exclusively for Android devices in the Future. *Tutuku* will continue on into the future, to be a safe digital space for the sharing of indigenous experiences, culture and histories.

Introduction

The word *Tutuku* is sourced from the Waikato-Tainui dialect meaning the knowledge passed on (Roa, Papa, Boon, and Papa, 2019, 157). *Tutuku* creates a space or avenue for storytelling using technology as a pathway for a broader audience to communicate with this old knowledge in new ways. *Tutuku* contains people's narratives and experiences, which in turn each have their own mauri or life principle (objectspace, 2020). The narratives could also be described as mana taonga. Mana taonga is a specific Māori curatorial concept that taonga have their own status and power which must be managed and cared for in a culturally appropriate way (Mccarthy, Dorfman, Hakiwai, and Āwhina, 2013, 7). The concept of mana taonga creates the space for indigenous voices to be self-determining in history retelling.

Tutuku is the name of the digital archive I have created as my nominated creative component for my PhD thesis "He Kohinga Kōrero: A selected group of

Māori musicians and performers' experiences of the 1960s through the Māori Showband movement".

This article will discuss the development and creation of the *Tutuku* digital archive, and the scholarly literature surrounding museology and digital engagement. This article will not examine in depth the roles of indigenous people in museums and other archival institutions, be it online or physical, as it is outside of the scope. However, literature surrounding museology and digital engagement are framing tools that I have used to better understand indigenous storytelling (Arora, 2021, 122-123). This article will examine the challenges when using digital platforms to tell histories, which will include access to information, how digital storytelling responds to our community's needs and where does te ao Māori sit in the digital convergence of the passing on of knowledge. I will not be discussing the digital architecture or development coding involved in *Tutuku*.

Tutuku **and the Passing on of Knowledge**

Tutuku aims to bring many strands of information about Māori Showbands together into one place as an application (app) suite available in an IOS version on Apple iPhone devices and a web application version on Android phones accessed by navigating to www.tutuku.co.nz. These two apps are connected to an administrator site which houses a bespoke database.

Tutuku uses metadata information about Māori Showbands harvested through Digital NZ from the internet which is then able to be searched through *Tutuku*.[1] This means that rather than having to go to multiple individual websites to search for information about Māori Showbands, a user is able to go straight to *Tutuku* which will access information from all these websites under a single search. The power behind *Tutuku* is the ability to add newly created content and information alongside already available information. I have started to create a selection of informed commentary which will be available alongside the appropriate search results.

Figure 1 below shows a series of images relating to an example of a *Tutuku* creative search. Image number 1 is the default app icon on your mobile device for *Tutuku*. Image number 2 shows an example of a word search using The Māori Hi-Five as the subject. Image number 3 displays a search return of 48 items from five different places, and one of those is from *Tutuku*, which indicates new information I have added to *Tutuku*. *Tutuku* gives the person the ability to quickly search a multitude of websites on a deeper level than an internet search engine would, because of the way the architecture has been designed.

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[1] Digital NZ is an initiative led by the National Library of New Zealand with the aim of making digital content easier to find, share and use.
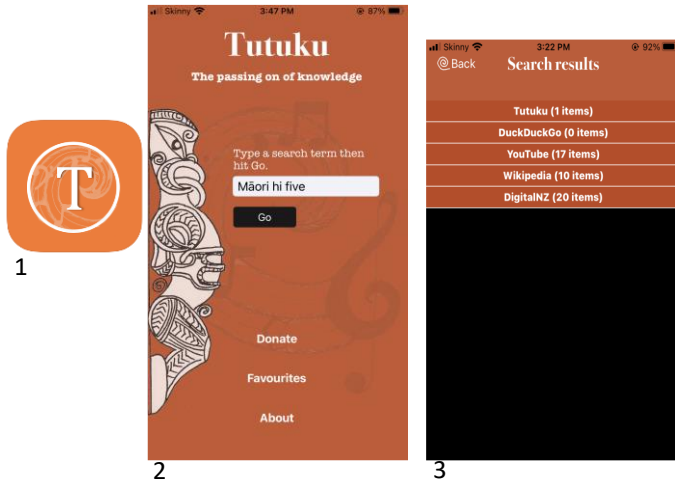
Figure 1. Louise Kewene-Doig, "Tutuku Screens," 2021, Louise Kewene-Doig, Dunedin.

Figure 2 below is an example of the research-informed commentary being created for Tutuku. A normal internet search of The Māori Castaways may return a standalone photograph with little information, but I can create meaningful commentary which sits alongside the photograph giving the reader greater information about the subject. The informed commentary is an addition to the institutional, public and archival information currently available online. At this stage the information used to create the written content is informed by research completed for my PhD thesis.

Figure 2. Louise Kewene-Doig and AppLab, "Tutuku commentary for the Māori Castaways," 2021, Dunedin. Louise Kewene-Doig personal collection.

Anything the app user can see or touch is called the user interface, and for *Tutuku* this is ever evolving. Figure 2 is an example of the user interface in its fourth iteration. The ongoing creation of informed

commentary content about the Māori Showband movement is a future focus of *Tutuku*, which means the app itself must change too.

Tutuku maximises the ability of focused internet searches in relation to the topic being researched. *Tutuku* creates a method of gathering information related to a topic together, thereby reducing barriers to publicly available knowledge, which I discuss later in this article. However, it is sufficient to say here that *Tutuku* reduces one of the greatest barriers to finding more information about Māori Showbands, which is knowing in which archive or database the information resides.

The *He Kohinga Pao: The Exhibition* images in (Figures 3, 4 and 5) are of the stories and histories collected about Māori music history for the local Dunedin community. The exhibition needs to be mentioned in this article as it is part of tool for understanding the link between the Māori Showband world and the public who wanted to know more about these groups. The exhibition was a return of the research gained early on in the journey to the public. The exhibition also informed the final version of the app *Tutuku* and the connection of this research journey back to the local community during celebrations of the 2018 Puaka Matariki Festival.[2] *He Kohinga Pao,* through the

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[2] The Puaka Matariki Festival is a celebration of the unique astronomical event which marks the Māori New Year in Ōtepoti, Dunedin. The community come together to celebrate with

concept of mana taonga, recognises the living relationships between Māori Showband members and the community who wants to hear those stories (Mccarthy, Dorfman, Hakiwai, and Āwhina, 2013, 5-9). The exhibition involved innovative digital storytelling experiences with meaningful connections with the community. I created this through the use of printed text and nostalgia stations. I created the sense of nostalgia by screening the 1966 New Zealand movie musical *Don't Let it Get You* (NZ On Screen, 2018) and using mannequins with digital faces as storytellers. The mannequins were dressed in Māori Showband attire to evoke a sense of nostalgia but had the ability to tell local stories and histories using iPads as their faces. The iPads had short movies of faces, images and sound telling stories. The external boxes placed around the heads of the mannequins had images which related to the Māori Showbands and their connection with local Māori experiences. The exhibition enabled the public to come and engage with the stories and memories through a shared experience. The exhibition was an example of how to increase access to historic information for the general public.

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different events and activities during this period (Puaka Matariki Dunedin, Dunedin Puaka Matariki Festical 6-22 July 2018, https://matarikidunedin.co.nz/, accessed 14 Feb 2019).

Figure 3. Rickie Kewene, He Kohinga Pao: The Exhibition, image A, 2019, Kewene-Doig personal collection.

Figure 4. Rickie Kewene. He Kahinga Pao: The Exhibition, image B, 2018, Kewene-Doig personal collection.

Figure 5. Rickie Kewene, He Kohinga Pao: The Exhibition, image C, 2018, Kewene-Doig personal collection.

Access and Barriers

Leading museology scholar, Wayne Modest, advocates for community-driven approaches to collections that meet the needs of its communities (Basu and Modest, 2014, 20-21). Collections must promote social inclusion, create empowerment of marginalised communities and bridge cultural, political and social divides (Basu and Modest, 2014, 2). Archives, therefore, should be accessible and empowering for their local communities, especially when it is their histories that are being held and represented in the collection. Accessing information

held by collections should not be difficult for these communities.

Archival knowledge exists within various systems of power, for example, a university, library or museum. These institutions are caretakers of knowledge and if there are no cultural restrictions surrounding these items then it should be easy for people to access these institutional collections. I use the term cultural restrictions, or safety, to encompass the following: the spiritual dimension, tikanga (correct procedure) and mātauranga of treasured items (Tamarapa, 2015, 13). Cultural safety sets the parameters of accessibility of objects within a collection or archive. However, institutions are also gatekeepers of this knowledge and set rules that inhibit easy access to it.

Institutional knowledge, as shown in (Figure 6), is caged in its preserved glass-box structure and chained through copyright protection. In some cases, copyright protection converts historically significant items such as photographs into a commercial commodity. One example of this commodification of culture is Māori Showband archival footage that is only available if purchased from a website (POND 5, 2020). The cultural knowledge contained in the video is therefore only available to people who are able or willing to pay for it. Copyright has not shown any favour to indigenous cultures. The challenge is to develop copyright in ways that create equity for indigenous

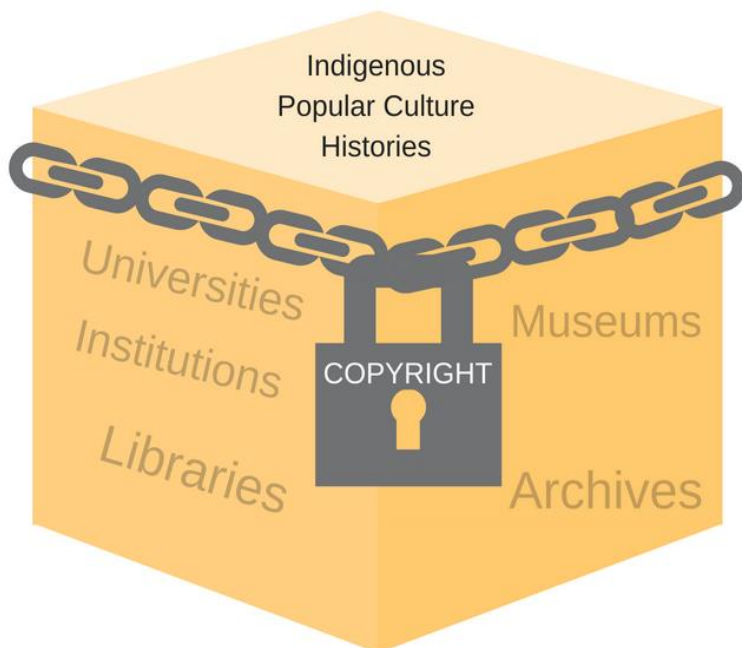cultural requirements and expectations (Greene, 1999, 357-358).

Figure 6. Louise Kewene-Doig, Barriers to Accessing Indigenous Popular Culture Histories, 2020.

Accessibility to archived items within institutions varies widely depending on the particular organisation. The terms and conditions are determined by institutions instead of being developed from within a specific cultural lens. Viewing access can only be gained by obtaining

research privilege[3] and negotiating access to items[4] within an institution.

Some institutions, such as museums, have a caretaking role for preserving material items in their care, which can make access difficult for people and researchers interested in researching these publicly available items (Tamarapa, 2015, 5). Many institutions have been extremely supportive of my research but others have imposed barriers to access, the most common being the cost for the scanning or digitisation of an item, if this option is available. If this choice is not available then a physical site visit may be the only option, at considerable expense. Institutions talk about accessibility to their collections, but for the people who these works were created for and about, access still remains difficult, because many older recordings have been deleted, or can only be viewed on site.

In terms of the information or items being created or redistributed within *Tutuku*, this can be looked at through the lens of Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Te Mana Raraunga, the Māori Data Sovereignty Network, describes Māori Data as "data that are produced by Māori, and data that are about Māori and the environments we have relationships with"

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[3] Research privilege means certain people having access to an archive or institution where the general public do not.
[4] Items the author defines as within the realms of publically accessible items without restrictions.

(Raraunga, 2018). This indigenous view is important because it enables Māori to gain control and governance over the use and redistribution of digital data under a kaupapa Māori framework.

The COVID-19 Response

The global pandemic has created a momentum of government funding of projects and initiatives which respond in innovative ways to enhance the strength and resilience of communities because of COVID-19. *Tutuku* is one of these projects which has support from the Lottery COVID-19 Community Wellbeing Fund as it is a flexible digital archive which is able to reach more of the community in an innovative way. The digital connectiveness of *Tutuku* is more inclusive as it can be used by anyone who has an internet connection, rather than having to physically go into libraries, museums and archives. *Tutuku* responds to the increasing need for accessible resources which can be made available anywhere and at any time.

Digital Engagement and Education

We all learn from visually stimulating content, especially young learners who are constantly absorbing digital messages (McCandless, 2009, 1; Prensky, 2001). Young learners absorb digital messages and communication in both their leisure and educational time (Gurung and Rutledge, 2014,

92). *Tutuku* delivers a stimulating and visually engaging experience for the user.

Education is an important driver for Māori engagement with and use of the internet. Māori are highly digitally connected, ranking highest amongst other New Zealanders in using the internet for education purposes (The Māori Economic Development Advisory Board, 2015). Māori internet usage is also higher than the national average, and Māori have a higher adoption of listening to music and playing video games online than the rest of the New Zealand population (Hill, 2004: p.19-22). However, Māori have less Māori-specific digital resources available to them than non-Māori, particularly in the area of Māori music history (Kewene-Doig, 2016: p.2).

Digital engagement with Māori is important because this is the way in which most Māori wish to learn information, now and going forward. The Careers New Zealand Kāmehameha report highlighted two key areas for Māori digital future learning. Firstly, that future digital engagement initiatives need to develop high quality resources and content. Secondly, the quality of the information used for engagement is critical (Careers New Zealand, 2016). *Tutuku* will fulfil these two important criteria and will also expand the knowledge pool surrounding the Māori Showband legacy. The lack of access to quality digital content is experienced by many communities. Moreover, the digital divide or barriers

to digital access for young people, particularly in certain areas of New Zealand, is a significant issue (Parker, Griffin-Dzikiewicz, and McLaughlin, 2019, 39). There are situations where communities wish to engage heavily in meaningful and robust digital content but do not have access. How we, as Māori researchers and academics, address the issues of connectedness with our research will be an ongoing conversation.

Conclusion

As stated at the beginning of this article it is important for indigenous experiences of culture and history to be told by the indigenous voices. One way of doing this is through the concept of mana taonga in action. We then have agency over how our own culture is told rather than other people telling our stories of our experiences. The *He Kohinga Pao* exhibition is one example of mana taonga, taking ownership of how our stories are shared.

Tutuku was previously called He Kohinga Pao, the collection of musical knowledge. The name changed as *Tutuku's* ability widened from being a collection of musical stories to the broader archival and collection theme. The name of the app needed to reflect the wider scope while still incorporating the history of Māori popular music. The name, *Tutuku*, best fitted this need by the gathering together and the passing on of knowledge.

Tutuku is creating new ways for communities to access stories and histories about themselves. Digital devices and connectivity enable the knowledge to be accessed, to be shared and to enable a continuation of relationship building between and across communities. *Tutuku* reduces barriers for communities to engage with local histories and stories, in that it enables communities to engage with the content wherever they find it most convenient to do so, which may be at home, work, school or a community space. In being able to do so it creates opportunities to empower communities.

The content created provides a close examination of the Māori Showband movement themes, identity, experiences and narratives already available. The knowledge of this topic is expanded with the creation of informed commentary which is available to a wider audience through *Tutuku.* The informed commentary is a way of refocusing and enhancing the Māori Showband legacy. *Tutuku* is also creating pathways for expanding knowledge on many other subjects. *Tutuku* will continue on into the future to be a safe digital space for the sharing of indigenous experiences, culture and histories.

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