



The Friends of the Turnbull Library

Ngā Hoa o te Whare Pukapuka Turnbull

President's Report to the 86th Annual General Meeting Wednesday 18 July 2024

Tēnā koutou katoa

Presenting this report as President of the Friends of the Turnbull Library is an opportunity to record the achievements of the Friends over the 12 months to 31 March 2024 and to reflect on our objectives for the year ahead.

But, first, a personal explanation: I'm addressing this AGM as the immediate Past President of the Friends. At the start of this year I reviewed my commitments on a number of fronts and decided to stand down as President in a manner that would enable a smooth transition to fresh leadership. My resignation took effect on 31 March, with Committee member Professor Barbara Brookes stepping in as Acting President from that date – with a view to nomination as ongoing President at this AGM.

I'm delighted with this outcome. Barbara is an eminent historian, academic and writer and brings a lifetime of experience in research and accessing and working with collections. She is a strong advocate for the protection of and access to the Alexander Turnbull Library collections and has signaled a commitment to working with the Friends to reach out and strengthen our links to the diversity of current and future users and the wider community of ATL supporters, donors and partners.

Chris Szekely farewell

Earlier this year we experienced a significant leadership change at the ATL with Chief Librarian **Chris Szekely** retiring after 17 years at the helm – a period in which Chris led the Library and staff through many challenges and opportunities. In thanking Chris as he departed, the Friends Committee paid tribute to his years of service as our first Chief Librarian of Māori whakapapa, his courteous and professional relations with the Friends, his many innovations including bringing poetry to the fore, and importantly, his willing acknowledgement of the value of staff expertise – a legacy on which to maintain the proud reputation and capability that will carry the Alexander Turnbull Library into the future.

Friends of the Turnbull Library Programme

Over the past year the Friends maintained an active programme of activities – in each case with the aim of promoting interest in, and showcasing, the rich diversity of the Turnbull collections and the expertise and passion of the ATL staff.

Annual programme of speakers

Our **2023-24 monthly Speakers programme** from April 2023 through to March 2024 presenting eight public talks in person and on-line at the National Library in Wellington and

three in the Takapuna Library in Auckland. To acknowledge those speakers and demonstrate the diversity the topics – a summary list:

In Wellington:

- **Dr Michael Brown** ATL Music Curator: *The Disasteradio Project*
- **Paul Diamond** ATL Curator Māori: *Researching Downfall: The Destruction of Charles Mackey*
- **Helen Beaglehole**, independent researcher, editor and writer: *Sources, Silences, perspectives and prejudices: The Challenges of writing the first history of settlement in the Marlborough Sounds*
- **Marinus La Rooj** independent researcher: *Down the Conspiracy Rabbit Hole: Arthur Field Nelson and the Great Depression*
- **Prof Barbara Brookes**: Professor Emerita, historian and author: *Women's suffrage and citizenship*
- **Tess Tuxford** Researcher and performance advisor, Te Herenga Waka VUW: *The role and impact of women in Forest and Bird's early history*
- **Dr Hilary Stace** independent researcher and FoTL research grant recipient: *Researching a biography: Janet Fraser: Political partnerships*
- **Barbara Frances, independent researcher**: *The Battle for Rangiriri, 20 Nov 1863 and the aftermath.*

And in Takapuna Auckland:

- **Alison McIntyre and Jess Moran** ATL Associate Chief Librarians: *The Turnbull Library virtually everywhere*
- **Paul Diamond** ATL Curator Māori and author: *Curator Māori – the challenges*
- **Dr Ashwinee Pendharkar** ATL Curator Contemporary Voices and Archives: *Contemporary collecting: Towards a documentary heritage for tomorrow.*

Overall our public events in 2023/24 were attended by approximately **1,405** people.

The programme was promoted both on our website and on the National Library Events pages. And now that most members have provided email addresses we are able to communicate reminders of news and upcoming events more effectively. Further, all talks delivered in the Taiwhanga Kauhau Auditorium here in Wellington are consistently offered via Zoom webinar link, thanks to the support of our ATL and National Library colleagues. Our next step will be to work towards providing access to the recordings of those presentations after each event.

I thank those involved in organising these speaker events - particularly, **Rachel Underwood**, **Kate Fortune** and **Kirstie Baxter** – along with our ATL and National Library colleagues, **Joan McCracken** and the National Events team which hosts and provides technical support.

Auckland Writers Festival

Once again, through **Kate Fortune's** ongoing liaison and support, the Friends of the Turnbull Library sponsored a well received session in the 2023 Auckland Writers Festival: **Writing Past Wrongs**: involving **Paul Diamond** reflecting on his book *Downfall*; and novelist **Paddy**

Richardson speaking about her novel *By the Green of the Spring* concerning the experiences of those of German heritage interred on Matiu Island during WWI.

2023 Founder Lecture: Witi Ihimaera, DCNZM, DCM

On 28 June 2023 esteemed author **Witi Ihimaera** delivered the annual Founder Lecture: ***Indigenous Envoy: The Māori writer as New Zealand practitioner and indigenous artisan*** – a very personal journey recounting several decades as a Māori writer working within an evolving understanding of ‘indigeneity’ within our literary canon, culture and politics. The lecture was warmly received by over 170 in the auditorium and others on-line. It also marked the 50 year anniversary of the publication of Witi’s ground-breaking novel, ***Tangi***, closing with the launch of new refreshed edition. A very special occasion.

Publications

With the assistance of **Anne Taylor** of Boulderbay Words & Design, our annual magazine, *Off the Record* (Issue 31) was published in June 2023, again to a high standard of content and presentation. Two newsletters were also produced and distributed to members.

The *Turnbull Library Record* is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal published annually by the ATL in association with the Friends of the Turnbull Library, with costs and editorial guidance shared. Volume 55, published in 2023, featured diverse contributions from several ATL Curators. Many thanks to Editor **Michael Keith** - and to the Editorial Board comprising **Elizabeth Caffin, Kate Fortune, Jessica Moran, Tom Rennie** and **Matariki William**, for their oversight of this quality journal.

FoTL Research grants - 2024

Research proposals for funding of up to \$20,000 were again sought from scholars undertaking work that draws on the collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library. This year two awards were made:

- **Otago historian Dr Jacqueline Leckie** was awarded a grant to assist with a book project entitled ‘Indians over 100 years in Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington). As 2025 marks the centenary of Wellington’s Indian community, Dr Leckie is working alongside that community in producing their history to mark that date and the photographic and oral history collections of the Turnbull are proving vital to the project.
- **Associate Professor Kealani Cook** of the Humanities Division, University of Hawai’i was awarded a travel grant to assist in his project on ‘Non-Violent Civil Disobedience in Oceania’, a study placing non-violent resistance at Parihaka alongside the Samoan Mau Movement, the Ma’asina Ruru movement in the Solomon Islands, and Operation Homecoming at Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands. The Turnbull Library has significant manuscript holdings to shed light on elements of this work.

Committee member **Dr Robin Skinner** again coordinated the research selection process with efficiency, supported by Sub-Committee members, **Kate Fortune, Rachel Underwood, Barbara Brookes, Don Gilling** and **Sarah Ross**.

Finance, relationships and looking ahead

Over 2023/24 the Friends Committee continued to review the arrangement under which oversight of the Friends' investments is managed on our behalf by the Turnbull Endowment Trust – largely to check whether direct oversight might reduce administrative complexity. That work is still in train. A final decision will be made over the next quarter.

Turnbull Endowment Trust: The Friends of the Turnbull Library continues to maintain a close relationship with the Endowment Trust, and over the year ahead we are committed to finding opportunities to work together on shared initiatives.

Administration and support: The Friends is also well supported by our Alexander Turnbull Library colleagues - particularly Acting Chief Librarian **Jess Moran**, Associate Chief Librarian **Jackie Hay** and **Joan McCracken** who ensure our efforts are informed by, and contribute to, developments within the ATL itself.

And I must acknowledge here how fortunate we are to have the steady service of our Treasurer **Gillian Cross** who expertly keeps our finances in good order.

Over the past year we have improved communication with members, keeping our website up-to-date and making better use of social media. However, there is considerable room for improvement. Modernising systems in an increasingly on-line world is a challenge for a fully voluntary committee. For my part, I have committed to staying on the Committee to help ensure the Friends of the Turnbull Library is well placed to support the ATL and its users in meeting the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Friends of the Turnbull Library Committee: In closing, and handing over to our new President, I acknowledge the contributions of all Committee members. One of the key pleasures of joining the 'FoTL' Committee has been working alongside people with long and deep commitment to the value of the Alexander Turnbull Library and its collections – and a passion for sharing this with the wider research community and all New Zealanders.

To Past Presidents **Kate Fortune** and **Rachel Underwood**, our Treasurer **Gillian Cross**, departing Committee members **Sheila Williams**, **Derek Leask** and **Kirstie Baxter** – and to **Barbara Brookes**, **Don Gilling**, **Jim Mayo**, **Robin Anderson**, **Anne Philips**, **Steve Cosgrove**, **Robin Skinner** and **Dan Morrow** – I thank you for your contributions over the past year and look forward to an enjoyable and productive year ahead!

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou

Katherine Baxter

Immediate Past President
Friends of the Turnbull Library