

NEW YEAR, NEW MEDIUM

Welcome to the first issue of *Te Ara – Journal of Museums Aotearoa* to appear on-line. The fiscal realities of publishing in print led the Board of Museums Aotearoa to reconsider its communications strategy, so we have followed the lead of many museums into cyberspace. Knowing that there will be members and readers who remain loyal to the printed word, we now have two options available for *Te Ara* in addition to the electronic version. Single articles can be readily downloaded, but libraries and fans of the traditional journal format can still obtain each new issue in hard copy through the Print on Demand option.

CHANGING TIMES

Once we have fully mastered the new electronic format, the intention is to continue to produce two issues annually. In the period since our last issue, much has happened on the museum and cultural heritage scene, but it does not always get discussed in any depth among the museum community. Legislative changes have

updated the Protected Objects Act 1975; the Office of the Auditor-General has produced an important report on the management of collections within local authority funding spheres; Auckland Museum has completed its 12 year refurbishment programme; Te Papa is celebrating its tenth birthday; TheNewDowse and Tauranga Art Gallery are breaking new ground and many other institutions are advancing their own developments. Local government elections have changed the political flavour of several territorial authorities, while a General Election in 2008 could foreshadow higher level policy changes. Our sector will increasingly find itself facing the effects of macroeconomic factors – oil prices, credit squeezes, the high New Zealand dollar, fluctuating tourism flows. And then there is climate change... All of these have impacts on the museum sector and merit reflection and debate in *Te Ara*, so contributions in any of these areas are welcomed.

COLLECTIONS IN THE REAL AND VIRTUAL WORLDS

As Museums Aotearoa proceeds with implementing *A Strategy for the Museum Sector in New Zealand* (2005), collections will get greater public attention through the Distributed National Collection project. Parallel initiatives, such as forthcoming features for New Zealand Museums On-line, should encourage the availability of collection information via museums' websites. How will these developments affect the numbers of visitors and researchers engaging with "the real thing"? The jury is still deliberating, but there's no doubt that museums need to experiment with emerging communications technologies if they are to capture the attention of the digitally literate. iPods, Blackberries and multi-functional mobile telephones are just the beginning. Can museums keep up?

Jane Legget

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Making the leap into cyberspace has been something of an adventure for everyone involved. Te Papa's National Services Te Paerangi has supported the transition financially, while Phillipa Tocker, Executive Director of Museums Aotearoa, has been greatly assisted by Fiona King and Jeremiah Boniface with managing and implementing the technological and design aspects, with professional input from Lisa McCormick of McCormick Design and Liane Hathaway of eXpert. Jeremiah has also been working on retrospectively adding previous issues which will be available later this year. Authors for this issue have been patient. The best way to thank this team is by contributing articles, opinions, letters and reviews of museums, exhibitions and books to YOUR journal. We look forward to airing what matters for museums in Aotearoa New Zealand in the ether and on the page.