

Preserving Indigenous voices: Web archiving in Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Abstract: Digital technology is an important modern tool for Indigenous languages, cultures, and voices. The web has been embraced by many Indigenous communities as it provides an effective way to disseminate information and connect community members. This is especially relevant as the displacement and migration of Indigenous Peoples has meant that language and cultural communities are becoming less localised and more dispersed. It is faster, easier, and more cost effective to share knowledge digitally. That is also what makes digital content vulnerable to being changed, deleted, or 'lost' - one of the strongest arguments for web archiving. We must ensure that the knowledge and information that is shared digitally by Indigenous communities is collected, preserved, and made accessible to future generations. However, the collection and storage of Indigenous knowledge and data raises questions regarding control, self-determination, and the right to free, prior and informed consent.

Keywords: Indigenous voices, Indigenous knowledge, Māori, web archiving, digital preservation, Indigenous Peoples' rights, Indigenous data sovereignty

1 Challenges and opportunities presented by digital technology

Globalisation can be likened to colonisation in terms of the negative effects for Indigenous communities. Digital technology, a hallmark of globalisation, has contributed to, and in some cases exacerbated several issues, including contemporary language domination, cultural appropriation, homogenisation, and the misrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples through the proliferation of inaccurate information and a lack of authenticity. For example, in 2014, Google's predictive search function was accused of promoting racial stereotypes for providing offensive autocomplete suggestions when searching the words 'Māori are', including 'stupid', 'scum', 'lazy', and 'violent' [1].

However, digital technology has also been embraced by many Indigenous communities as it is an important modern tool for Indigenous languages and cultures, specifically in relation to learning and teaching. Historically, Māori have been quick to adopt new technology which is perceived to be of benefit to the advancement of Māori communities. For example, Māori were quick to adapt the oral arts for the press, following a rapid increase in literacy as a result of the early mission schools. More than 40 Māori language newspapers were produced from the 1840s into the twentieth century [2].

Extant manuscripts attest that Māori wrote prolifically in the nineteenth century, recording genealogies, songs, tribal histories and religious and customary practices.

From the early 1890s some submitted writing to the Journal of the Polynesian Society, with the result that it is a valuable source of Māori oral literature [3].

Māori have, in the past, embraced new opportunities to ensure cultural continuity and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Digital technology provides an effective modern method for disseminating information and connecting community members. This is especially relevant as the displacement and migration of Indigenous Peoples has meant that language and cultural communities are becoming less localised and more dispersed.

In 2013, it was estimated that at least one in six Māori live overseas [4]. Some researchers suggest that it is closer to one in five, with the vast majority of the Māori diaspora living in Australia [5]. Across the Pacific, it is estimated that at least one in three Hawaiians live outside of the Hawaiian Islands [6]. The Internet bridges the gap between those diasporic communities and their communities at home.

Digital technology has provided an opportunity to create virtual communities. In the case of language revitalisation initiatives, particularly through the web and social media, virtual language communities have been created. They transcend geographic boundaries, and they are an example of taking a tool of language domination and turning it on its head by using it for the purpose of endangered and minority language revitalisation. Furthermore, many minority language activists and researchers are seeing the Internet and associated digital technologies as crucial catalysts in language revitalisation initiatives as they allow communities to create their own forums and resources for learning, in culturally appropriate ways.

2 A Māori world-view

World-view is at the core of culture. It is both the influencing factor in the values, customs, and belief system of a people, and the sum of those values, customs, and belief system. The term can be applied to an individual or group when discussing the 'lense' or 'point of view' of that individual or group, that is, world-view acts as a type of filter system. The inherent nature of world-view means that it is difficult to separate oneself from one's world-view [7].

In te reo Māori (the Māori language), the word *muri* means 'behind' or 'back', and it also means 'future' or 'time to come'. Our word for 'before' or 'the past', is *mua* which also means 'in front'. According to a Māori world-view, the past lies before us, that is, it's firmly fixed in front of us, and we face the past even while moving into the future [8].

For Māori, the past, present and future are unified as parts of the same whole. Being Māori denotes that you inhabit the world of your *tīpuna* (ancestors). Therefore, events that occurred before you were born become part of the fabric of your life as the experiences of your *tīpuna* weigh heavily on the present. This allows us to draw on old knowledge as the foundation of future endeavours. Archiving 'the now' will therefore be laying the foundation for future innovation. This reinforces the importance of preserving born-digital content of 'the now' for the future.

Jackson argues that a culture cannot be understood without reference to its world-view as it is the basis for core values; Jackson posits that:

Because each culture is unique, the behaviour exhibited by its members has certain unique characteristics. No members of a culture can be understood in isolation from the cultural forces which shape them, and no culture can

be understood unless account is taken of the attitudes, expectations, beliefs and values on which it is based [9].

Many of the issues that arise regarding the collection, storage, and distribution of Indigenous knowledge are essentially about conflicting world-views. For Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the focus is on *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship) and the interests of the collective rather than those of the individual. *Kaitiakitanga*, which emphasises protecting and developing resources for future generations, also applies to knowledge. In the Māori world, knowledge is not 'owned' individually, but collectively. This is at odds with most dominant world-views which emphasise individualism. *Kaitiakitanga* dictates that we have the responsibility to pass on community-held knowledge to the next generation.

3 The importance of digital preservation

It is faster, easier, and more cost effective to share knowledge digitally. However, that is also what makes digital content vulnerable to being changed, deleted, or 'lost' - one of the strongest arguments for web archiving. Increasingly, the digital is replacing the physical. Much, if not most, of our knowledge creation takes place online now. Furthermore, the digital sphere is sometimes the only place that some information exists. Often Indigenous online projects are thwarted by a lack of funding. When those online projects are shut down, that knowledge is lost, or at the very least it becomes inaccessible to the masses. Furthermore, with the prevalence of social media, especially as a way of connecting the diaspora to 'home', most of our social history is being recorded on the web.

We must ensure that the knowledge and information that is shared digitally by Indigenous communities, especially for educational purposes, is collected, preserved, and made accessible to future generations. It is important for our sense of identity and fulfills our responsibility of *kaitiakitanga*. The moral of the Aesop fable The Ants and the Grasshopper is particularly relevant here, that is, 'It is thrifty to prepare today for the wants of tomorrow'. However, the collection and storage of Indigenous knowledge and data raises questions regarding control, self-determination, representation, and the right to free, prior and informed consent.

4 The politics of archiving Indigenous voices

Collecting and protecting information is resource-intensive and costly which means that it is yet another context where Indigenous Peoples will often have to rely on outsiders. Many Indigenous communities remain suspicious of outside 'help', especially outside researchers and data gatherers, as Indigenous Peoples have a long and painful history of having our knowledge systems and our ways of engaging with the world around us disparaged and oppressed.

In a time of fake news and conflicting narratives, the notion of web archives as repositories of 'truth' and the issue of exactly whose truth has become more important. However, from a Māori perspective this is not a new issue, it is simply a new context. Indigenous Peoples have always been acutely aware of which truth and whose truth is preserved, knowing first-hand Marx's maxim that history is written by the victors. In the case of Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the colonial settlers could be considered the 'victors'.

This is evident when one considers that the New Zealand land wars were known, until very recently, by our State education system as the 'Māori wars' and this notion was perpetuated in the classroom to generations of New Zealanders. By naming these wars the 'Māori wars', it was implied that the responsibility for the wars, and therefore the blame, rested with Māori. Jackson argues that the descriptions of Māori identity have often been determined by non-Māori and that there is truth in the old adage that 'the namer of names is the father of all things' [10].

Indigenous poet and writer Albert Wendt has stated that, 'We are what we remember; society is what it remembers, that's why we must control what we remember – history – and hand that on to our children' [11]. Each person, group or community has their own 'truth'. What is particularly appealing about the oral tradition in Māori society is its ability to hold the truth of multiple, and sometimes competing, groups equally, as opposed to the written tradition which tends to favour one at the expense of another.

This aspect of the oral tradition is celebrated in Māori culture. For example, there are multiple versions of the Māori creation narrative and each has been carefully transmitted to the next generation. A person who has an understanding and knowledge of the narratives and histories of other tribes as well as their own is revered.

The web is not edited for content the way that traditional media has been, which has provided a platform for minority groups, and consequently, has supported diversity. The oral tradition and the web are similar in their acceptance of different truths. However, there is a marked difference between the two. Specific cultural responsibilities are the foundation of the oral tradition and it can only function successfully in a high-trust environment. The same cannot be said of the web, where there is intentional deception that takes place. Speaking your own truth is very different to intentionally misleading your audience.

5 Indigenous Peoples' rights and Indigenous data sovereignty

When it comes to web archiving, self-determination as it applies to the collection, ownership, and application of Indigenous knowledge on the web must be a part of the conversation. Under Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), to which Aotearoa/New Zealand is a signatory, Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination and 'by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development' [12].

For Māori, self-determination is also articulated in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi, which is often referred to as Aotearoa/New Zealand's founding document as it marks the beginning of the 'official' Māori-Crown relationship [13]. Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed on the 6th of February 1840 between representatives of the British Crown and Māori leaders, as the Indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Under Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Māori are guaranteed tino rangatiratanga (which means the unqualified exercise of their chieftainship, self-determination, and sovereignty) over their land, homes, and *taonga* [14]. The definition of *taonga* is broad. In simple terms it means treasured possessions - both tangible and intangible. Data can be described as a *taonga*, a living treasure, because of its strategic importance to Māori.

Te Mana Raraunga, the Māori Data Sovereignty Network, has defined Māori data as knowledge or information that is digital or digitisable, and is produced by Māori or that is about Māori - our people, language, culture, resources or environments [15]. Te

Mana Raraunga advocates for Māori data sovereignty at a national level, specifically in asserting Māori rights and interests in data, and for the ethical use of data to enhance the wellbeing of Māori people, culture, and language.

For obvious reasons, the discussion regarding Indigenous data sovereignty ties in to the ethics of web archiving. According to Kukutai and Taylor:

Data permeate our lives daily, issues relating to data consent, use, ownership and storage have become increasingly complex. While indigenous peoples have long claimed sovereign status over their lands and territories, debates about 'data sovereignty' have been dominated by national governments and multinational corporations focused on issues of legal jurisdiction. Missing from those conversations have been the inherent and inalienable rights and interests of indigenous peoples relating to the collection, ownership and application of data about their people, lifeways and territories [16].

Indigenous data sovereignty refers to the correct allocation of power over information, knowledge, and data about Indigenous Peoples, and is directly tied to the rights of Indigenous Peoples to protect, control, develop and maintain their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge; as well as their right to protect their intellectual property over these [17]. Therefore, Māori Data Sovereignty covers the rights that Māori have in relation to the collection, ownership, and application of Māori data.

According to Tauli Corpuz, the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination 'necessarily includes their right to have data and information collected, by them or jointly with them, that reflect their past and present realities and provide the basis for their pursuit of self-determined economic, social and cultural development' [18].

The Mātaatua Declaration on the Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples was formulated in 1993. Among the recommendations, the declaration urges states, and national and international agencies to recognise that Indigenous Peoples are the guardians of their customary knowledge and have the right to protect and control dissemination of that knowledge, and that Indigenous Peoples also have the right to create new knowledge based on cultural traditions [19].

Therefore, when it comes to web archiving, it is critical that Indigenous Peoples are involved, in a way that reflects true partnership, in gathering culturally relevant material. Māori should be involved in decisions about the collection and storage of and access to Māori knowledge, information, and data.

This highlights the importance of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), which is included in the UNDRIP, and should be obtained before data are gathered and disseminated. The right to FPIC was included in the UNDRIP specifically to empower Indigenous Peoples and prevent further marginalisation, inequality, and discrimination.

The right to self-determination and the right to FPIC can be recognised through regulating the behaviour of individuals and institutions involved in gathering and disseminating data and knowledge pertaining to Indigenous Peoples, so that they may better respond to the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples. Where free, prior, and informed consent is impossible, this should be rectified by representation at the governance level, where Indigenous Peoples can exercise greater control over Indigenous data.

Sir Tipene O'Regan has said that he is 'concerned that iwi [or Māori tribes] must find ways to bring the intellectual and cultural property of Maori under some greater cultural control' [20]. Te Mana Raraunga, the Māori Data Sovereignty Network,

assert that 'Māori have an inherent right to exercise control over Māori data and Māori data ecosystems', and that this right 'includes, but is not limited to, the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, security, dissemination, use and reuse of Māori data' [21].

Under the subheading 'Data Governance', the Māori Data Sovereignty Network Charter states that:

There is a wealth of data pertaining to Māori...that is collected by the state as part of the Official Statistics System (OSS), crown agencies and government organisations, through commercial transactions, social media, telecommunications (including satellites) and other means. Only a small proportion of these data sources are currently accessible to Māori for our own purposes and benefit [22].

Māori representation at the governance level of data management is essential to ensuring that Māori data is made available in a usable form to Māori, and that it is used for projects that that are beneficial to Māori. Moorfield argues that, 'The first beneficiaries of indigenous knowledge must be the direct indigenous descendants of such knowledge. Indigenous peoples are the guardians of their customary knowledge and have the right to protect and control dissemination of that knowledge' [23].

If Indigenous Peoples have control over what and how data and knowledge will be collected and documented, and over the dissemination and use of these, it can lead to positive outcomes similar to those of the oral tradition. For example, the successful intergenerational transmission of knowledge to younger generations can be facilitated (learning and teaching) and, as previously mentioned, Indigenous communities can be the primary beneficiaries of their knowledge, cultural heritage, and any data relating to them.

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