

Report back on a workshop meeting between users and **Archives New Zealand** regarding their **new collections search**, 30 June 2022.

I attended the meeting on behalf of PHANZA and the agenda, topics out of the scope of the meeting, the results of a pre-survey of participants follow.

After we talked through these, we had the opportunity to talk specifically about our top three “pain points” which can be summarised as lack of searching/filtering functionality, performance issues and usability issues. We then had to list five priorities and then rank them (see screenshots below).

It was a very managed meeting, but we all got the opportunity talk about problems and priorities and the Archives New Zealand staff attending were very engaged and asked lots of questions. Attendees commended Archives NZ staff for the support they are providing to individual researchers.

I gather than Archives NZ are having lots of discussions with the vendor about how to improve the system which is also used by New South Wales State Archives. Apparently, the system has lots of potential but it is evident that they are very disappointed with that they have currently.

The meeting confirmed that improving the advanced search facility should be a top priority for Archives New Zealand. At the end we were told that new releases are scheduled for the next quarter and these include improvements to the speed and stability of the system and to the search functionality. I think that the kind of searching we enjoyed on Archway will take some time to restore. It can't come soon enough!

In the meantime users are encouraged to seek support and assistance with searching through [Ask an archivist – Archives New Zealand](#).

Julia Bradshaw

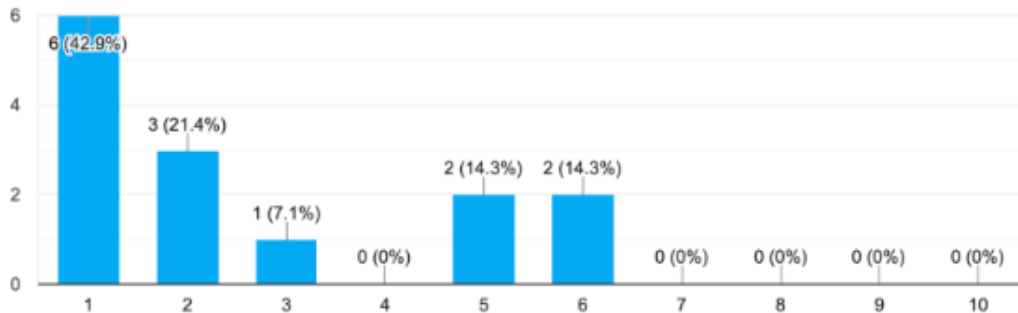
The image shows a screenshot of a meeting agenda and a list of items that were out of scope. The agenda is on the left and the out-of-scope items are on the right. The agenda items are: Introductions (Chief Archivist), Purpose of the workshop, Set the scene, Go through feedback, Brainstorming, Prioritisation, and Next steps. The out-of-scope items are: Reading rooms hours, Overseas published Collections and the National Library, A return to Archway, Other future digital services e.g. government loans and digital transfers, and Any perceived breaches of the Public Records Act.

Agenda	Out of Scope
> Introductions (Chief Archivist)	• Reading rooms hours
> Purpose of the workshop	• Overseas published Collections and the National Library
> Set the scene	• A return to Archway
> Go through feedback	• Other future digital services e.g. government loans and digital transfers
> Brainstorming	• Any perceived breaches of the Public Records Act
> Prioritisation	
> Next steps	

## 😊 How happy are you with Collections Search?

How happy are you with Collections Search?

14 responses



Extremely  
unhappy

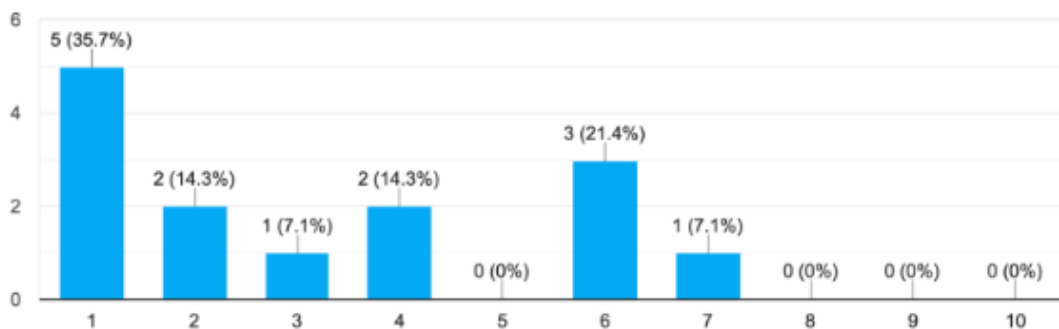
Extremely  
happy

**Average:**  
**2.6 / 10**

## 👍 How easy do you find Collections Search to use?

How easy do you find Collections Search to use?

14 responses



It is extremely  
hard to use

It is extremely  
easy to use

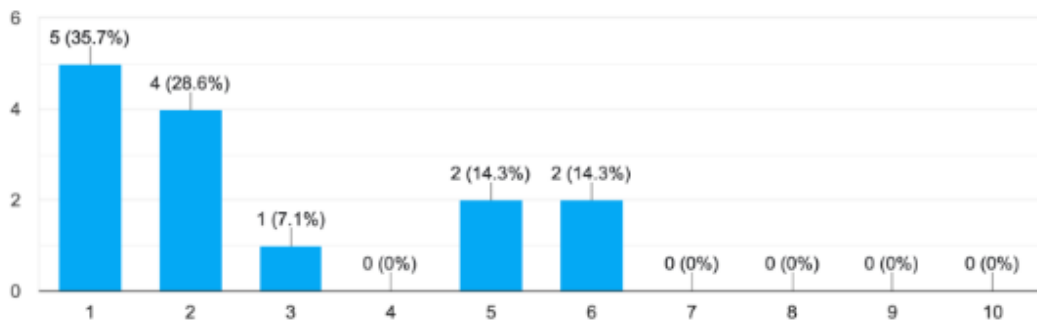
**Average:**  
**3.2 / 10**



## How fit for purpose is Collections Search?

How fit for purpose is Collections Search?

14 responses



Doesn't meet  
my needs

Fully meets  
my needs

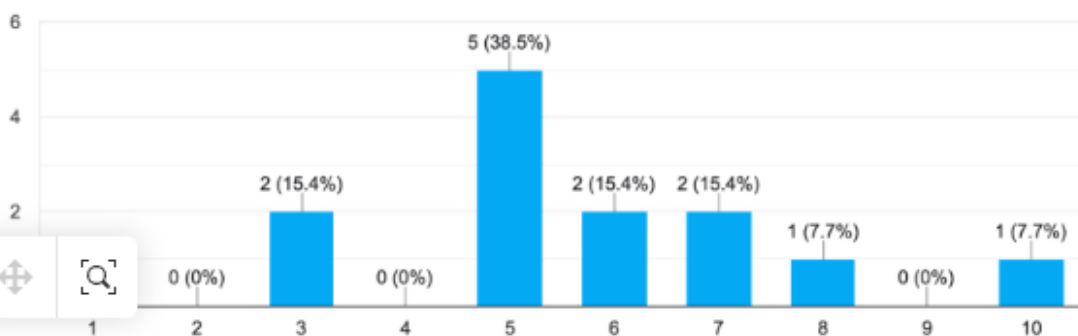
**Average:**  
**2.7 / 10**



## How do you rate the support that has been provided around Collections Search?

How do you rate the support that has been provided around Collections Search?

13 responses

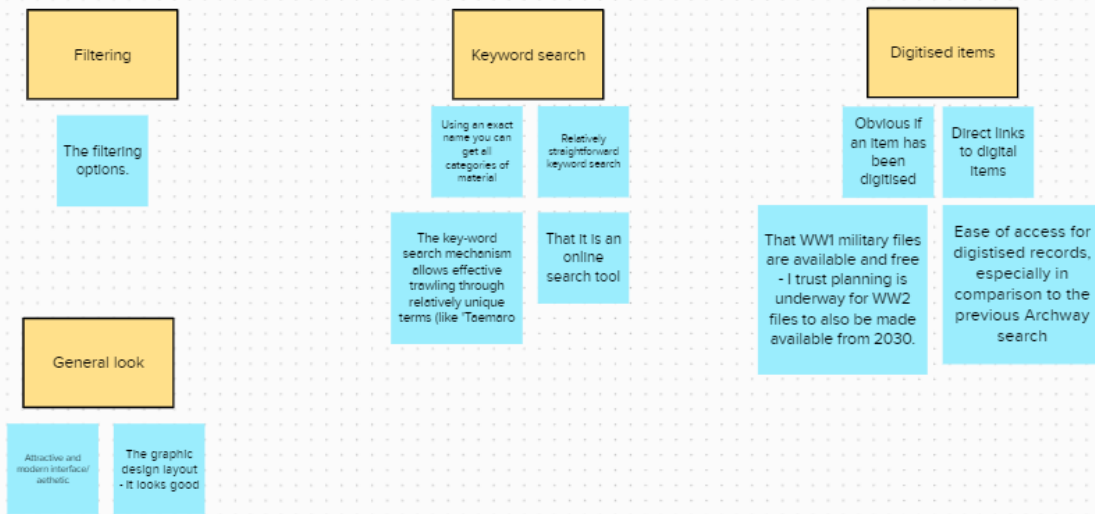


I am unhappy with the  
support I have received

I am happy with the  
support I have received

**Average:**  
**5.7 / 10**

## 😊 Favourite thing about Collections Search?



## 😞 Top 3 painpoints about Collections Search



## Performance issues

Extreme unreliability, although this has improved recently it still crashes from time to time (archive AIMS errors)

The server bugs, AIMS errors, general slowness of response

The server isn't very quick to respond to queries

The time delays of loading, searching and opening, let alone it continually going down

## Lack of advanced search functionality

The advanced search.

Limited fields within which I can search and/or organise searches

getting a large number of items and not knowing what they are. Also see above ability to search a surname and category

the terrible advanced search options;

## Error Messages

the frequent 'unexpected error' messages;

Frequent error messages that require reloading page.

the way you go away for five minutes to do something else and it has timed out;

## Realme & Ordering

Not being able to sign in to order items

The RealMe logging in requirement for requesting files

## Usability Issues

Is not particularly user friendly for those who are less tech savvy.

### The lay-out.

Having to load result results 12 at a time (try that when you have hundreds)

Being presented with a page of tabs rather than a list

How when it returns searches, you only get a few you can scan through before you have to load more

Way too many to list them all

you cannot go back to a clear record of your previous searches.

If you are searching page by page it is quicker to go out of Collections and start again rather than step back through the entries.

When returning to the search results, you lose your position in the list

## Access of records

Inability to access Collections Search using my device at an Archives office (Auckland)



TIP: Learn to zoom



## Top priority improvement

The advanced search - it would be hugely helpful if the current search fields were replaced with those that were previously available on Archway. (TG)

Make the system keep our place in the list queue after viewing an item - currently it sends you back to the beginning AGAIN SB

Details given in search results page include agency name and accession/series title (RB)



**Jeremy Moyle (Visiting Ram)**

Ability to search on exact phrase so that search is more limited. JB

Search on Record reference RS

Enable filtering/ searching by series - JM

Have a secondary search so you can search topic/name/ agency etc and then add at date range LW

Advanced search to allow searching of record numbers - LH

Search/browse by agency and find all records associated with it. VOM

Tribunal members being able to do their searches - some remote training via Zoom with a trained Archivist (TM)

More options for advanced search, such as agency, series, old archives ref. Collections terms are not ones users are familiar with. BS

## Second priority improvement

Filtering needs to include by date range.  
JB

Allow us to search ALL available options to view at once, rather than limiting to 12 SB

The way the search results are presented - rather than 12 results, there should be a minimum of 50 - every time a click is required is a reduction in efficiency. (TG)

Filter options that show agency codes or codes and other useful detail, not just an accession number BS

Search by former archival reference VOM

Refine filtering capacity so that we spend less time searching [TM]

The ability to search by archive type so if you want a map or a manuscript etc you can filter LW

Enable more search results to be seen at once - JM

Categorise results as per subject matter eg: Ak Probates RS

Ability to edit the fields in the search results to include record numbers and agency - LH



## Third priority improvement

Change the language involved in advanced search – Move away from the potentially confusing generic database language (e.g., Field, Rule, Value) and use terms that are more related to the archives (e.g., change value to 'search terms', or something like that)  
- JM

Search by agency. JB

Give us an option to do a series or agency search ASAP!  
SB

The way the information is laid out for each file (vertically) is much less efficient than having it appear horizontally (which is the natural movement for the eye when reading, and which also allows rapid comparison between files adjacent to each other). (TG)

Make advanced search options user friendly (for example by using terms that people can understand)  
VDM

Eliminating extra admin and hurdles that prevent users quickly getting the file that they want  
[TM]

Not limited to 12 search results. Stay at same line on results after drilling down RS

Have more search results per page LW

Hierarchy function is useful but only available in a few record groups. It also adds too few records when you click 'load more' making it very slow to search through a record group. BS

Sort search results by date - LH