

# Phanzine

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## Editorial

This is our first issue of the year so a belated New Year greeting to PHANZA members. We hope 2007 is a successful and stimulating one for you all.

The year promises to be another full one for PHANZA, with the obvious highlight being our third public history conference, this time co-hosted with Massey University and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. Other initiatives will be unveiled as the year progresses. We aimed to have the website revamp sorted by now but there have been unavoidable delays. We hope to have it up and running by the middle of the year.

Past *Phanzines* have highlighted the increasing role that technology is playing in improving accessibility to research institutions and their resources. It is clear that, far from reaching some sort of plateau, the use of technology will only increase. As long as our research institutions have the funding to expand their on-line and electronic resources, they will. The key to most useful on-line resources is scanning. It is now quicker and faster to scan large numbers of documents, and it will only get better.

These technological developments are most important for a variety of reasons. It will make researching from outside the main centres (and particularly outside Wellington) that much easier. It will speed up researching and reduce wear and tear on archives. However, it will also reduce face-to-face contact between institutions and the public. It might not quite get to the point where you don't need to leave your desk, but that is the kind of future that new technology is opening up. See inside this issue for more on recent developments.

For all that, it will be a sad day when researchers don't have to visit institutions, and there will always be those historians who will want to make sure they haven't missed anything, or those who simply want to get their hands on paper.

Michael Kelly

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# Profile: Sean Mallon

*Sean Mallon is a graduate of Auckland and Victoria Universities and first came to Te Papa in 1992 as a trainee collection manager. In 1994 he became a collection manager. Six years later he moved into curatorial work, becoming Senior Curator, Pacific Cultures in 2003. Kirstie Ross spoke to him last month about his work at the museum and his recent preoccupations.*

*Tell me what's happening with Pacific Cultures in the museum I know that Mana Pasifika closed this morning and is being de-installed after being on the floor for since the opening of Te Papa in 1998. You've been working the Next Big Thing for as long as I've been at Te Papa, which is over three years now - when is the new show going to open and what's it called?*

I have been working on a new long term exhibition titled *Tangata o le Moana: the history of Pacific peoples in New Zealand*. This has been with my colleague and co-curator Kolokesa Mahina-Tuai. It has been a drawn out process which began for us in 2003. The time has come to replace the current exhibition *Mana Pasifika* which has run for about nine years. *Tangata o le Moana* opens in October and will probably be up for the next decade.

*That's a long shelf life - what, if any, are its points of difference from its previous incarnation?*

The new exhibition differs from *Mana Pasifika* and features a strong historical narrative. *Mana Pasifika* was upbeat in tone and celebrated the persistence and survival of Pacific cultures in New Zealand. It was organised around several themes relating to social and cultural practices. To some extent *Mana Pasifika* was a modest showcase of the collections. This was necessary at the time because we were significantly constrained by space and we had several communities to represent. The new exhibition tells a history story. It investigates how the histories of New Zealand and the wider Pacific have been intertwined for centuries – from the arrival of the first human settlers to the present day. The new exhibition is less structured around cultural themes than *Mana Pasifika* and follows a chronology. It features a wide range of interpretive media including film, computer and mechanical interactives, and some objects from the collections that haven't been seen on long term display for 20 years or so. The new exhibition space will also be twice the size of *Mana Pasifika* and should complement the other New Zealand history exhibitions on level four of the museum.

*Highlights?*

In terms of the collections, the highlights will include two large vaka (canoe) that were exhibited in

New Zealand during the 1906 Christchurch exhibition. We also have a large audio visual installation that delivers some fascinating accounts from migrants, activists and public figures. In general, just getting an exhibition on the floor that addresses Pacific people's history will be a highlight. Contextualising objects from our collections and connecting their wonderful back stories is wonderful opportunity.

*Any hard battles lost / won / advanced because / in spite of museum processes or the constraints / possibilities imposed / offered by the exhibition format?*

I think the toughest battle is deciding what goes into exhibition text and what doesn't. I think all curators at Te Papa struggle with this, especially when historical narratives are being presented. Trying to describe the Imperialist ambitions of Grey, Vogel and Seddon, in less than 100 words, gives you barely enough space to introduce the characters let alone explain their ambitions. If visitors come to view this exhibition with a good knowledge of New Zealand history, they will be able to slot the Pacific stories into the relevant periods of time. For people who aren't familiar with New Zealand history, they might not get a sense of the broader national picture, but they will certainly come away with a better appreciation of Pacific people's long history of connections with and in this country. In the case of our exhibition we are presenting the tips of a couple of huge icebergs but we are told by our visitor researchers that museum visitors don't read long texts, so striking the right balance is always a challenge for us.

Another challenge has been interpreting objects from our collections so they relate to the New Zealand history story we are focused on. For example, what connection does a contemporary carving from the Solomon Islands have with street signs in Auckland? What relevance does a small collection of adzes and carvings from New Caledonia have for the story of Pacific people in New Zealand? Why do we have a Maori pataka in the middle of an exhibition about Pacific people? You'll have to visit the exhibition to find out.

*Does the exhibition elaborate your philosophy of Pacific histories in relation to New Zealand history? Were you*

*able to advance your philosophies about Pacific histories and cultures in relation to the monolith that is 'New Zealand History' within the context of the show?*

I think we could reflect more on New Zealand's location and relationship to the Pacific and its peoples. None of the recently published general histories of New Zealand deal with this in any significant way. However, the new *Oxford History of New Zealand* promises to look more closely at international relations and how the rest of the world impacted on New Zealand. I understand this will include a focus on the Pacific region.

As far as Te Papa is concerned, I think for the first time we are creating an exhibition that locates Pacific Island peoples within and across a broad New Zealand history narrative. We are portraying Pacific islanders not as recent arrivals, or curious exotics, but as peoples who have been active in the growth and development of New Zealand as a nation. They settled the country first, joined New Zealand armies in WWI and II, provided people and raw materials for the development of farming, trade, and industry. I am talking here of

the Niuean and Cook Island soldiers in the wars, the exploitation of phosphate industry from Nauru and Banaba, Cook Island house girls on New Zealand farms, tussock workers in the hills and the factory workers of the post war migrations. New Zealand is still importing Pacific Island labour to do the jobs other New Zealanders won't or can't do.

*What's next - any publications, international speaking engagements, etc, related to the exhibition or otherwise?*

We have a major publication in development with Te Papa Press that will trace the history of Pacific people in New Zealand. It will explore the exhibition narrative in more depth and will be well illustrated. We have invited Toeolesulusulu Dr. Damon Salesa to co-edit it with us but it is at least two years away. We are really looking forward to presenting these stories to a wider audience beyond Te Papa's walls.

*Along with the exhibition itself, there will be a book of the exhibition and a show and tell presentation of the exhibition at PHANZA's 'Making History in Public' in June this year.*



Sean Mallon and Kirstie Ross looking over a wall plan of the *Tangata o le Moana* exhibition. (Kolokesa Mahina-Tu'ai)

# Making History in Public

*Bronwyn Labrum, co-organiser of this year's public history conference, explains why it's an event not to be missed.*

Have you ever wondered why there are so many medieval re-enactment opportunities in New Zealand? How does Trademe trade history in public? These and other fascinating questions around history and museums, moving images, literature, heritage trails and other topics will be raised at this year's public history conference. There are also sessions on [nzhistory.net](http://nzhistory.net), Te Ara, and the Film Archive.

The conference aims to reflect on the varieties of ways that history is being made, received and debated in the public arena, with a particular emphasis on the visual and material contexts of public history.

A wonderful range of speakers from New Zealand, Australia and North America, including freelance historians, historians employed in public institutions, academics and postgraduate students have offered presentations. Their support shows how important public history is in the present and how critical the issues around content, interpretation, and mode of presentation are.

The conference will end with a Trans-Tasman roundtable on the similarities, contrasts and issues of common concern to public historians on both sides of the ditch. The draft programme is available on the website: [http://www.phanza.org.nz/documents/draft\\_prog.doc](http://www.phanza.org.nz/documents/draft_prog.doc). This is also a great networking opportunity.

Proceedings will begin on the Friday night, 29 June, with a pre-conference gathering/drinks and

short historic film screening at the New Zealand Film Archive on the corner of Taranaki and Ghuznee Streets. The rest of the conference will be held in the Old Museum Building (Massey University) on Buckle St, itself a heritage building. The conference is being co-hosted by the Professional Historians' Association of New Zealand / Aotearoa (PHANZA) and the School of Visual and Material Culture, Massey University - Wellington, with the support of the History Group of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.



*Former National Museum now Massey University's Wellington Campus, venue for this year's conference. (M. Kelly)*

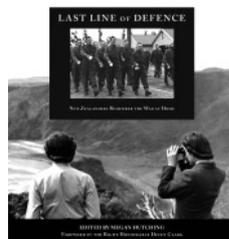
For further information please contact Bronwyn Labrum ([B.J.Labrum@massey.ac.nz](mailto:B.J.Labrum@massey.ac.nz)) or Neill Atkinson ([Neill.Atkinson@mch.govt.nz](mailto:Neill.Atkinson@mch.govt.nz)).

## History Group news

*Bronwyn Dalley updates readers on activities at the Ministry for Culture and Heritage's History Group.*

Public history in New Zealand is starting to go a little grey. This year the History Group of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage celebrates the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its original predecessor was formed. The National Centennial Committee met for the first time back in June 1937; the rest is (public) history. The Group is organising a programme of events to mark this auspicious year, so watch our website for details - [www.mch.govt.nz](http://www.mch.govt.nz).

This year the Group released the final instalment in its series of oral history books based on interviews with



Second World War veterans. Megan Hutching edited six of the seven books, and Neill Atkinson took charge of the other. We're still collecting stories from Second World War veterans as part of the From Memory programme. Alison Parr, who runs the programme, is focusing particularly on the civilian - and majority - experience of wartime New Zealand.

The memory of war is also central to a large project we've just started, which looks at the effects of the First World War on New Zealand. For the last year, a team of oral historians has been interviewing people who grew up in the shadow of the war in the 1920s and 1930s. We're interested in how people lived in this period, and what effects the war had on their lives, families and communities. That material will be useful as we begin to produce books and website topics on the war and its effects. A clutch of things is planned: Ian McGibbon will produce a study of New Zealand's involvement on the Western Front, and later this year we'll release a website topic in time for the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Passchendaele.

We've also received funding for a four-year project to collect oral histories of Vietnam War veterans and their families. That should kick off in the next month or so once appointments are made. We'll be looking for more oral historians around the country to interview veterans in their area, so anyone interested should contact us.

A core part of that project will be a major website, along the lines of the highly successful People's War site run by the BBC history team. Our website work is becoming more important ([www.nzhistory.net.nz](http://www.nzhistory.net.nz)). Two new staff now work full-time on the site: Kynan Gentry, who combines history with some technical wizardry, and Steve Watters who looks after, among other things, the Classroom section of the site for teachers of history. Jean Sergent-Shadbolt works part-time on the site.

Government history is still a core part of the team's work. Neill Atkinson's history of railways and society will appear later this year. Gavin McLean is working on a history of prime ministers and cabinet, following nicely from his book last year on the office of the governor-general. David Green is delving into the mysteries of auditing; once this book is out next year, there will be a solid body of works on some of the central government agencies including Treasury and the Reserve Bank.

## Births, Deaths, Marriages and Relationships Registration Amendment Bill 2007

*PHANZA recently made a submission on the above bill and it is published here in full for readers' interest.*

PHANZA is an organization of professional historians that was established in 1994. Membership is open to those with a research-based degree in history or a related discipline, or to those who have demonstrated substantial historical research experience, and/or publications. The current membership is around 120. A majority of the members work as historians outside the universities.

In preparing this submission we have consulted with our members, and a number have made specific comments on the bill. We have also consulted with the New Zealand Historical Association.

Our comments relate to sections 74 and 75 of the bill. Sections 74 allows open access to birth certificates only of individuals born more than 100 years ago, to death certificates only of individuals who died more than 50 years ago or were born more than 80 years ago; and to marriage certificates of individuals who married more than 80 years ago. This compares to the present policy of near unrestricted access.

Clause 75 details circumstances in which these restrictions can be overridden. Records can be consulted, but access to information relating to

particular individuals is only permitted if the individuals are dead or were born at least 120 years ago.

PHANZA members frequently consult births, deaths and marriages records in the course of their research, which is often conducted on behalf of clients who have commissioned histories or biographies. The records are particularly valuable in New Zealand as census enumeration records were long not retained.

The restrictions will impact on historians working particularly on biographies, war, immigration or local histories:

- For historians working on biographical topics, birth, marriage and death information provides key markers about origins, social circumstance, place of residence, numbers of children and the like. Death certificates in New Zealand are particularly informative in such respects.
- It can be very difficult for historians working on war history to gain access to service and personnel records; researchers will want to use birth, death and marriage records as an alternative or supplement to the military records.

- For immigration historians, birth, death and marriage records are essential to building up a picture of places of origin, mobility, and family status at time of death and marriage. Equally for local historians, they allow the charting of many of the networks and relationships that form the texture of a community.

PHANZA believes the imposition of limits on access to birth, death and marriage records must be revisited. The bill refers to the fact that registered information may currently be used 'for any purpose, including intrusive or unlawful purposes . . .' such as identity theft. But we think lawmakers should also take account of the Bill of Rights, which guarantees (section 14) 'freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and opinions of any kind in any form'.

Clearly a balance must be struck between the right of individuals to privacy and the rights of others to information, but the provisions of this bill have tipped the balance too far in the direction of the former.

We understand that there is currently no restriction on access to birth, death and marriage records in the United Kingdom, nor any announced intention to introduce such restriction.

There are also practical and operational issues to take into account:

- Identity theft usually requires a verified birth certificate. Researchers can work with transcripts but these will also be unavailable
- A large amount of identity information is already accessible on genealogical data bases on the web. The record keeping by the Church of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah, United States of America, is only the most extensive example. Further, many local authorities have online indexes to cemetery records, whilst many newspaper archives include birth and death information, which also therefore provide such information.
- At the operational level we believe that the introduction of a restrictive system, but with scope for exemptions, will tie up official time and energy that could be much better directed, in processing hundreds of requests.

In conclusion, we wish to see the status quo maintained. Should some restriction be considered unavoidable, it should only apply to records generated less than 25 years ago and should be managed by a process in which the granting rather than the withholding of transcripts of documents would be the default position.

## Archives New Zealand meets researchers

*PHANZA was represented at a meeting of historical researchers with the Chief Archivist on March 28 this year. Malcolm McKinnon reports on the second meeting of the group, which was triggered by concerns reported on in the August 2006 issue of Phanzine.*

The second meeting with researchers provided an opportunity for the Chief Archivist and other staff members to report on actions taken since the last meeting, in particular the return of manual finding aids and the installation of new microfilm readers to the reading room in Wellington and work on the MA13 series, a crucial one for Treaty researchers.

Concerns were raised over the proposed four month closure of Auckland office of Archives New Zealand while a move to new premises is being carried out. Concerns focused on the inadequacy of notice

given of the closure, the implications of the length of time the office will be closed for researchers, and uncertainty about photocopying arrangements during that period. The discussion produced some useful suggestions as to ways in which access to records through the closure period might be managed so as to minimize the disruption to researchers. Further meetings of this ad hoc group of researchers with the Chief Archivist and senior Archives staff will take place. Researchers who wish to bring their concerns to the attention of the group can contact me at [president@phanza.org.nz](mailto:president@phanza.org.nz).

# Mind the official / the official mind

*Malcolm McKinnon muses on PHANZA's interactions with government departments.*

Much of the PHANZA committee's work can be described as lobbying – and of no bodies more frequently than of departments of government and their ministers. The first months of this year have seen PHANZA lobbying three government departments, Archives New Zealand, Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) and Internal Affairs.

Many PHANZA members have experience of government departments – through writing about them, working for them or working in them (e.g. Archives) – so lobbying government is no journey of discovery.

Still, seeking to influence a government department from the outside recurrently provides vivid reminder that while we live in a democracy, we also live in a country where the government is known as 'the Crown', where ministers are 'ministers of the Crown' and where officials are 'servants of the Crown'. Which can mean that in the 'official mind', loyalty is owed to the department, to the minister, and to the Crown, before it's owed to the public.

In the case of Archives New Zealand the news is good. After we reported on researcher dissatisfaction with aspects of the Archives regime in our second issue last year, Chief Archivist Dianne Macaskill and her team responded vigorously and helpfully (see the report in this issue).

We reported on a meeting with LINZ officials in our last issue of 2006. We can report that they too were responsive to concerns we raised about the security and condition of historical land title and related records

used by researchers, and some improvements have been made.

We were also informed about LINZ's developing strategy for its core paper records. In March LINZ released an 'information paper' on the strategy. Why the quote marks? The paper put some important statements on record, for instance that 'core survey and title paper records will be preserved for future generations' and that LINZ has no intention of 'destroying any records of archival value'. But the paper was primarily descriptive, laying out the issues rather than addressing them. What LINZ officials themselves think should be done could only be inferred – the LINZ official mind was not on display. We are preparing a response to the document that will spell out our views about what should be done to preserve the integrity of LINZ's core paper records and their accessibility to researchers.

The Department of Internal Affairs is responsible for the Births, Deaths, Marriages and Relationships Registration Amendment Bill, for which submissions have been called (also see this issue for our submission). You may have read about this bill in the press. If passed, it will dramatically limit the access that non-family members will have to birth, death and marriage information, so obviously has major implications for many biographical, family history and other researchers. We're told it's to help combat identity fraud, but it seems to be taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Smashed to pieces by the sledgehammer is public access to records. That official mind again.

# Heritage

*Michael Kelly looks at the coming revamp of the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter, laments the fate of the Jean Batten Building and checks in on the saga of Spinks Cottage.*

## ICOMOS New Zealand Charter

New Zealand conservation practice may still be in its infancy, but 14 years have passed since the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter was adopted. In fact, an earlier draft version of the Charter - the 'Aotearoa Charter' did the rounds for a while before the present Charter was adopted. In the period since, much has changed in heritage conservation and the Charter is undoubtedly due for a revamp.

All national charters can trace their formation back to the Venice Charter or the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites to give it its full title. Written in 1964, it was adopted by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), an international association of conservation professionals that promotes the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to the conservation of architectural and archaeological heritage.

ICOMOS was founded under the auspices of UNESCO, so it has a link to the United Nations but it is essentially an independent, but hugely influential, body. New Zealand's national committee was formed in the 1987, and its first and thus far most important task was the writing of the Charter.

It is fair to say that the Charter has served the purpose it was intended for. Almost all heritage practitioners cite the Charter in their work, most heritage organisations have adopted or at least refer to the Charter in their work, it is taught in heritage conservation courses, and the document has attained a status in wider planning and environmental practice.

Its shortcomings, some of which were known from early on, have grown more evident with time and ICOMOS's present committee has taken on the role of attending to its revision. There was a serious attempt made at rewriting the Charter in time to relaunch it at the 31<sup>st</sup> World Heritage Convention, to be held for the first time in New Zealand, in Christchurch, in June this year. Thankfully this idea has been binned and the process of consultation and drafting will take place over a lengthier period.

A copy of the existing Charter can be found at [www.icomos.org/docs/nz\\_92charter.html](http://www.icomos.org/docs/nz_92charter.html)

One of the main issues raised about the Charter is that its ostensibly sound principles and policies have been exploited by crafty advocates, developers and practitioners. One difficulty lies with the interpretation of *adaptation*, which appears to have been cited as a justification for a phalanx of unfortunate changes to heritage buildings. Others have complained about the general lack of direction from the Charter, to the extent that every heritage practitioner (and others) seems to have a different opinion on what it means.

Another controversy has been the 'requirement' to demonstrate that an addition is new. This has led to all manner of approaches, from date stamping to the use of dramatically new materials. Many have cited its policy on moving buildings as being too liberal. It was intended to be flexible so as to cater for the country's tradition of moving timber buildings. Instead, it has been used to give cover to less worthy exercises. And there are many others.

A working draft of a revision has been circulating ICOMOS members and other practitioners for some months now, but it has not been publicly released yet. If the process has some time to go before completion, many more drafts will be required. Anyone interested in checking progress should visit the ICOMOS New Zealand website [www.icomos.org.nz](http://www.icomos.org.nz) for updates.

## Jean Batten Building

A part of Phanzine 11 / 1 was devoted to lauding the Historic Places Trust on an encouraging display of resolve and leadership over the future of Auckland's Jean Batten Building, then under considerable threat of demolition by the BNZ. The Trust was threatening the use of a heritage order as a means to get the BNZ to shelve development plans.

We spoke too soon.

The Trust showed it has still not put its worst days behind it by caving into the BNZ and agreeing to the demolition of all but three of the building's façades and a few other features. By March this year, the Jean Batten Building had been reduced to little more than a frame. The Trust has tried to spin this as a decent compromise but media headlines such as 'Jean Batten Building just a memory' suggest otherwise.

When the Trust first mooted putting a heritage order on the building a year ago, its northern regional manager, Sherry Reynolds, told the *New Zealand Herald* that as far as the Trust was concerned ‘any commercial use of the building would be fine, provided the external and internal features of heritage significance are retained.’



*New Zealand Herald*

When the deal with the BNZ, its developers and the Auckland City Council was announced last year, things had changed. Ms Reynolds described the use of the Jean Batten Building façade as ‘a significant and iconic feature of the new development’, before going on to congratulate the BNZ and its developers for their commitment to ‘preserving and protecting the building in perpetuity by way of a Heritage Covenant.’ Quite why a heritage covenant was needed when most of the building has gone is anyone’s guess. Now the building’s fate can be seen in stark reality, some comment is necessary.

It seems worth revisiting two significant issues raised time and again in this column and elsewhere. Firstly, and once and for all, façadism has to end, and the Historic Places Trust needs to lead the way in ensuring that happens. It’s better to let the building go altogether than leave a piece of it hanging off a modern structure. Secondly, there is no shame in striving to save heritage and losing. The public simply wants to

see the Trust, and other heritage agencies like local authorities, fight to save heritage. And if they lose, then at least they tried. Capitulations like the one over the Jean Batten Building merely end up making both the Trust and the building look silly.

The ultimate irony of this episode is that, having presided over this debacle, the Trust will now have to take the Category I registration off the building because it no longer merits it. And perhaps there is an even bigger issue with the registration. Did the Trust register the building knowing that it was going to allow most of it to be demolished?

The Trust may have deserved a caning, but the Auckland City Council is just as culpable. Since the arrival of Major Dick Hubbard, the city has talked a firm line on heritage but it has rarely walked it. At the same time the Jean Batten Building was being demolished, it was secretly deciding not to act to save Coolangatta, an unlisted, magnificent house in Remuera Road, from being replaced by apartments. Its destruction was another huge loss.

## Spinks Cottage

On a more positive note, the Historic Places Trust can take a pat on the back for turning its guns on the – frankly – preposterous idea of lifting Spinks Cottage, a Category I house in Wellington. Built in the late 1850s or early 1860s, the cottage has been the subject of a resource consent hearing over a proposal to lift it and build a new storey beneath to accommodate a youth café. The Trust deserves praise for its aggressive and committed approach to the hearing, held before commissioners earlier this month. The outcome is not known yet but all fingers are crossed.

### Breaking news:

The commissioners have declined resource consent and Spinks Cottage will stay where it is. It is not known if the matter will be appealed.

# Historians and Bush

*Michael Kelly looks at American historians railing against the Bush presidency.*

American historians are a bolshi lot. A survey of 400+ academic historians last year saw George Bush voted worst president of all time. And he had some serious competition – there have been a surprising number of hopeless presidents. It's not flattering to be written off after a decent period of post-office reflection, but it must be particularly galling to be so poorly regarded while you are still in power.

Now the American Historical Association has ratified a resolution condemning what it calls U.S. government violations of civil liberties 'during the war in Iraq and the so-called war on terror.'

The resolution links some of the better known violations of civil liberties with what it sees as constraints on the work of historians. The Bush administration, the resolution states, has violated 'principles of free speech, open debate of foreign policy, and open access to government records in furthering the work of the historical profession.'

The kind of constraints that the resolution states include the exclusion of foreign scholars and the reclassification of previously unclassified documents, along with the suspension of habeas corpus and the

use of unacceptable interrogation techniques at places such as Guantanamo Bay.

The resolution states:

Whereas a free society and the unfettered intellectual inquiry essential to the practice of historical research, writing, and teaching are imperiled by the practices described above and whereas the foregoing practices are inextricably linked to the war in which the United States is presently engaged in Iraq, [the membership should] take a public stand on behalf of the values necessary to the practice of our profession...and do whatever they can to bring the Iraq war to a speedy conclusion.

Just under 15% of the association's members voted and the final count was 1,550 in favor and 498 opposed. The AHA was founded in 1884 and promotes 'historical studies, the collection and preservation of historical documents and artifacts, and the dissemination of historical research.'

You can read more about the AHA at [www.historians.org](http://www.historians.org). For the full text of the resolution see: [www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2007/0702/0702aha3.cfm](http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2007/0702/0702aha3.cfm)

## Britain's history goes online

*Two more interesting sources in Britain have been digitised for researchers.*

### Slave trade records

Firstly, the website [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) has put the records of Britain's slave trading past on-line.

Ancestry.co.uk have already brought census records, birth, marriage and death records and immigration records on-line (accessible for a fee of course) and now they have started putting the personal histories of the victims of the slave trade online for the first time.

The scale of slave trading can be seen by the sheer number of names involved. Thus far the site has posted 100,000 names of Barbados slaves registered in 1834 in the colony. By later this year the site will have some three million names on 186,000 pages from 700 registers.

The register, known as the Former Colonial Dependencies' Slave Register Collection 1812 –1834, stemmed from the Abolition of Slave Trade Act, which

required that British colonies and territories (there were 23 colonies involved) keep tri-yearly registers of slaves and owners. According to the site this allowed the British Government '...to monitor slave ownership and stamp out illegal slave trading. No slave could be bought, sold, conveyed, imported, exported or inherited without first being registered.'

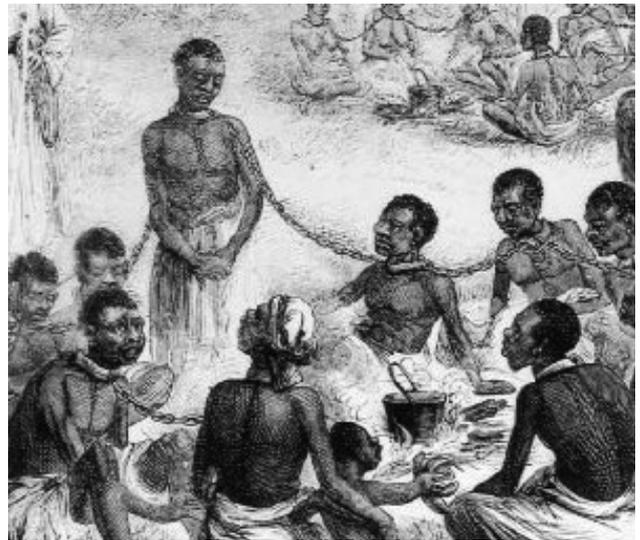
If you are a member of the site you can search for free by entering a first and last names and the place of enslavement. The site will be of particular interest for the two per cent of Britain's population that are black. According to the site, the majority of that two percent have slave ancestors. The launch of the search facility coincides with the celebration of the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery in Britain.

As a footnote, it's interesting to look at some of the details from the 1834 Barbados slave register.

The 1834 Barbados Slave Register contains the names of 99,349 slaves and 5,206 slave owners – an average of 19 slaves to every owner, although the full collection does include several owning up to 400 slaves.

Of the 99,349 slaves listed, 46,347 were male and 52,982 female. A total of 26,787 were aged 10 or under. Slaves are listed firstly by parish, owner and then name of the slave, approximate age and in some instances birthplace. The lists illustrate how most slaves were given Christian names and took their owners' surnames.

It's sobering stuff. But of course, as ugly as some of the empire's past activities were, none of this would be available today if it wasn't for exemplary British imperial record keeping.



## Old numbers

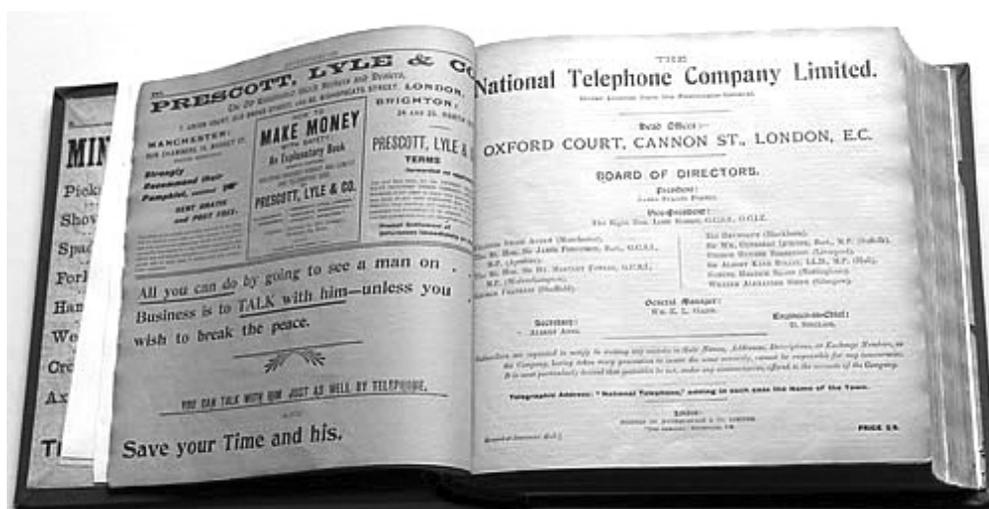
The second digitised source is old telephone books. British Telecom (BT) has put more than 100 years of their phone books on the web.

Prompted partly by the British interest in genealogy, the facility will allow users to search through names, addresses and phone numbers for the period 1880 to 1984, the year that BT was privatised. BT has joined up with the website ancestry.co.uk to host the phone books. The site has an expensive sub - £69.95 – but apparently it does offer a 14-day free trial. They also host all seven England and Wales censuses from 1841 to 1901, and birth, marriage and death records from 1837. At the moment you can search 72 million names

in the greater London area but eventually it hopes to have 250 million names by the end of 2007.

The value of this resource is that it allows biographers, building historians and genealogists the chance to fill in annoying gaps in their research. This is particularly true of a period when most people listed their name, even the famous. For a period even job descriptions were allowed. As a matter of interest, there were 248 subscribers listed in the first phone directory in 1880.

It's time to start badgering Telecom.



UK Nat Tel Directory 1900-01.jpeg 'The National Telephone Company, established in 1881, was the largest of the private telephone companies that competed to offer a telephone service in the UK. The Post Office took over the NTC on 1 January 1912 and inaugurated a unified telephone system throughout most of Britain.'

# A benchmark slipping

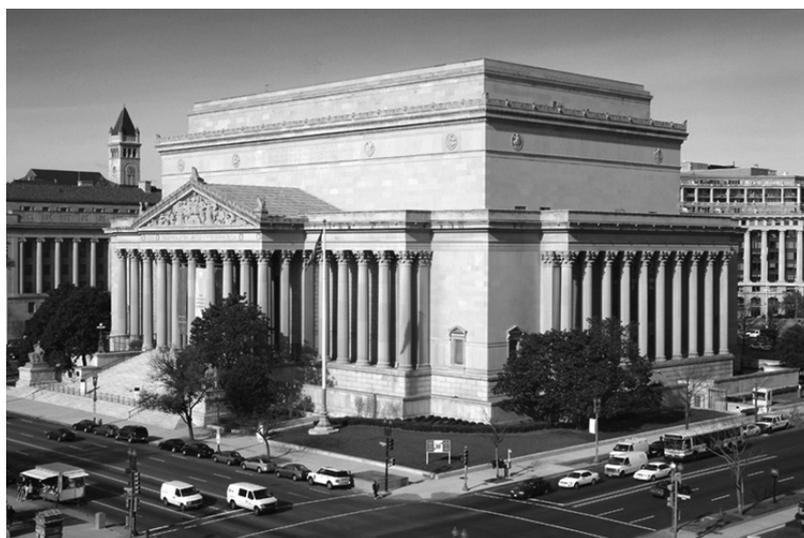
Before you next wander into Archives New Zealand, wonder at the customer service offered at the National Archives of the United States. Or rather, what used to be offered.

A recent op-ed in the *New York Times* by David Kahn, an author of books on code breaking, spying and the military, bemoaned a decline in the extraordinary service offered by the National Archives. According to this op-ed, alone among the world's great archives, archivists at the National Archives of the United States will sit down and guide a user through the maze of government records.

Apparently, a backlog in processing a huge pile of archival material has resulted in archivists being moved from dealing with the public to organising, describing and filing this new material. The organisation has

had no increase in budget for years and is hiring less-experienced personnel to do this new work, along with the reassigned staff, leaving only 22 archivists to deal with the public. The cosy chats at desks have gone and now archivists answer enquiries in glass booths on the main research room. The response time for written requests has drifted out and the after-hours service has been cut. The op-ed calls for more funding for National Archives so that it can again do its job properly.

They may seem like the complaints of a pampered elite, but there is a serious issue here. The United States government set a benchmark in providing access to government records. It's one that all governments can aspire to and it's one that the American government should return to.



*The imposing, ossuary-like form of the National Archives building in Washington, DC. (National Archives of the United States)]*



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