

## Take a step back – looking at alternatives

Have you looked at alternatives to starting a new museum? You should strongly consider collaborating with an existing organisation rather than starting an organisation that might end up competing for the same funds.

This is an important step as these alternatives can provide more flexibility in the resources you allocate to achieve your project. The start-up costs are likely to be lower and results come more quickly compared, say, to constructing a building, which may be years in the making, as well as requiring a long-term investment.

Here is a selection of alternatives to consider:

- partnership with other local organisations such as museums, halls, libraries, churches, or businesses
- trade shows, conferences, temporary exhibitions
- a project, e.g., restoration project; publication of a book
- a touring exhibition in libraries and schools
- working with your local council to lease space etc
- a mix of services, e.g., a combination of visits, workshops, resource packs, collection boxes for loan
- a virtual museum via a website.

The following case studies illustrate four of these alternative approaches.



*Kete Horowhenua. Image courtesy of Horowhenua Library Trust*

### Case study 5: The digital museum

#### **Kete Horowhenua – the stories of the district as told by its people**

Launched on 5 March 2007, Kete Horowhenua is a community-built digital library of arts, cultural, and heritage resources for and about the Horowhenua district. The Horowhenua Library Trust, partnered with the Horowhenua District Council and Levin SeniorNet, undertook the creation of the site and is responsible for its ongoing development. The organisers were worried that Horowhenua, as a district without a public general museum, was losing treasures and archival resources as older citizens downsized their homes or died.

Kete Horowhenua aims to give the community an opportunity to capture the memories and stories that are

its heritage, a place where artists and ordinary citizens can showcase their work and celebrate who they are through photographs, video and audio footage, and stories. It's also an opportunity to get privately owned papers and photographs out from under beds and have them sit alongside public archive and photographic collections.

The National Digital Strategy: Community Partnership Fund provided the bulk of the development funding, supplemented by Horowhenua Library Trust, Horowhenua District Growers Association, and Horowhenua District Council. Ross McColl Cars provided transport whenever needed, and Horowhenua College made their computer suite available for training volunteers. It is expected that to manage the website will take the equivalent of one part-time position, for a total of about \$25,000 per year.

There have been many positive outcomes from this project. Dozens of individuals in the community have given thousands of hours of voluntary labour in preparing digital content, proving that people are passionate about their own stories.

'TradeMe' was the inspiration for creating an easy and intuitive interface. 'If it's easy, anyone can contribute, and they will' was the organisers' mantra. The digital domain has captured the imagination of the younger generation worldwide, and this website can be used as a vehicle for encouraging this generation to be more interested in their culture and heritage.

However, the digital approach need not be an impediment to the older generation – the ones with many stories to tell. By working together with Levin SeniorNet, Kete Horowhenua was able to compose clear instructions for all to follow. As one excited user said, 'I did it ... entered SeniorNet as a topic. It was easy and the on-screen instructions were clear ... I did ... I found it ...What a buzz!'

For the organisers, probably the most positive outcome is that a digital museum has a very low financial commitment compared with a physical museum!

#### **An invitation**

The Kete software is available for download and other communities are invited to build their own Kete. For technical help, contact Walter (walter@katipo.co.nz) or go to <http://blog.kete.net.nz>. For more information about Kete Horowhenua, go to <http://horowhenua.kete.net.nz> or contact Rosalie Blake, Head of Libraries (kete@library.org.nz).