

Building our national identity

Digital technologies and personalised access to digital content has meant that audiences are slowly becoming more fragmented and individualised, with a loss of collective, national identity being a potential consequence. In the digital domain, public cultural institutions (whose holdings are not generally covered by the OIA) however have a new opportunity to help fill a common public space, unconstrained by physical limitations of location, floor space and operating hours.

One means for doing this is connecting public service broadcasting, a vital part of New Zealand cultural life, with museums, libraries, archives, art galleries and others in a public digital commons space.²⁶

Television and radio are two of the most widely accessed and familiar technologies available for communicating about New Zealand life, and have a role to play in enabling New Zealanders to access and use digital content. In the UK this has been in part achieved through the piloting of a Creative Archives Licence, allowing users the ability to download, exchange and re-use public content for non-commercial purposes. The BBC has recently announced plans to eventually make all its archive of broadcast content available free to the people of the UK via the Internet.

In New Zealand there is an opportunity to translate public broadcasting values into a non-broadcasting space, connect with other online expressions of New Zealand's cultures and heritage, and in so doing draw an audience into an online digital world. Seamless access to, and the ability to interact with, digital content such as that found on TVNZ ondemand, the Film Archive, NZ History.net, Te Ara and Matapihi websites, among others, would create a rich cultural space that showcases our nation's history and identity.

Strengthening the public domain

As in many countries, New Zealand's copyright legislation sets out to ensure there is a balance between protection of creators' and publishers' rights and fair access to created works by protecting the ability for the creator or publisher to earn a return or livelihood from their creative works for a limited time. There is also a public interest in allowing certain uses of otherwise copyrighted works (such as for educational purposes), and in ensuring society at large gains an unrestricted benefit in the public domain.

In the digital age, public domain works have gained a new lease of life as classic texts and other works have become freely available on the web. In New Zealand however, little is done to collect, organise and promote public domain content for its potential re-use and re-purposing in a digital form. Many sound recordings, films, literary works, images and government records are out of copyright, and yet are often not promoted by the institutions that hold them as public domain, even where they have been digitised.

Given considerations of ownership and appropriateness, an opportunity exists for New Zealanders to be provided with a further rich resource of national cultural heritage in digital form.

Overcoming the digital content divide

Social exclusion from a digital New Zealand will continue to be a concern for the government. There remains significant stratification in access to Internet, broadband and other digital technologies, which is expected to be addressed by the Digital Strategy, particularly in the area of digital literacy and access. Around 30% of households still do not have access to a computer at home, and 35% do not have access to the Internet. This compares to just 14% that do not have personal access to a mobile phone.²⁷

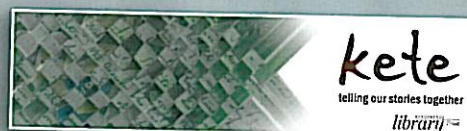
However, access to digital technologies and technology skill building needs to be sustained over time, and they are not the only factor in overcoming social exclusion.

Integration into social networks where digital technologies are used and valued, access to people who can provide practical help and support, and feeling comfortable in a digital landscape, are all necessary parts of digital participation. Providing appropriate opportunities for people to create, share and use digital content is an essential avenue towards creating a digital society.

Community opportunities to share and use content

Kete Horowhenua is one of a growing number of community-built digital libraries of arts, cultural and heritage resources. Kete aims to get privately owned papers and photographs out from under beds to sit alongside public archive and photograph collections. It captures memories and stories, show cases local artists, and generally celebrates the people and places of the Horowhenua, through photographs, video and audio footage and stories.

The project aims for a vibrant and lively community of Kete Horowhenua users that add value to the site by joining together related photographs and clips and documents. Writing and submitting articles or stories that others can add their own memories and knowledge to as well is encouraged. The Horowhenua Library Trust project is carried out in partnership with the Horowhenua District Council and Levin SeniorNet, and was funded from the Community Partnership Fund.



²⁶ For a discussion see *Building the Digital Commons: Public Broadcasting in the Age of the Internet*, 2004, Murdock, G., <http://www.kulturteknikker.hivolda.no/filer/505.pdf>

²⁷ *Household Use of ICT*, December 2006, Statistics NZ.