

Te Wero i te Ūpoko Tukutuku – The challenge of Māori Subject Headings

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a small and informal review of the challenges experienced in the application and implementation of Ngā Ūpoko Tukutuku / Māori Subject Headings (MSH) list by Library staff at the University of Auckland (UoA) Library.

The development and implementation of the MSH list has been a welcome step towards the use of Mātauranga Māori terms of reference. But we should be cognisant of the continuing compromise that Māoritanga undergoes in the effort of Māori to participate fully in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The MSH are a good start, our response to the continued use and ongoing development of the MSH is the current wero (challenge) that will determine our preparedness for our Aotearoa New Zealand of the future. This paper gives a brief overview of the history of the MSH the particular emphasis on the time it has taken to have the MSH developed and implemented throughout Aotearoa. The paper then moves on to the feedback that was taken from staff at the UoA Library most involved with the MSH and the challenges that they experience when using the MSH. Recommendations are made on a strategic level and also on an organisational (in-house) level. On a broader level this paper asks if the systems of approach that we in libraries employ when dealing with Te Ao Māori pliable enough to have moved beyond our current “tick box” practice?

INTRODUCTION

The MSH are a unique and welcome addition to libraries in Aotearoa/New Zealand as they improve the accessibility of Māori material to Māori users by enabling users to search with Māori terms. The development of the MSH imply a continuing commitment by libraries to promote and support te reo and kaupapa Māori. There has been limited discussion on the MSH since they were implemented and it seems opportune to initiate comment on the usability of the MSH by staff.

This paper will outline the experience that UoA Library has had implementing and utilising MSH. The two years since the launch of the MSH has given us time to reflect on the Library’s use and application. The holistic philosophy that underpins Māori tanga can have wider implications that may be overlooked when mainstream organisations attempt to implement Māori initiatives. Increased understanding of the challenges that the MSH have posed (as a bicultural initiative) may help to improve the access of Māori material to Māori students, Māori staff and other Māori users of the UoA Library. Furthermore, the Library could benefit from a deeper understanding of the wider implications of Māori frameworks when implementing future Māori initiatives.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper was to explore the challenges that the UoA Library has experienced with the MSH. It is believed that a better understanding of the MSH experience within the UoA Library would allow the Library a more informed perspective in terms of the implementation of similar bicultural initiatives. Understanding the needs of the staff and their challenges with the MSH would highlight areas of concern and/or areas of success.

KAUPAPA = METHODOLOGY

The intention of this paper is to discuss the experience of staff at the Library that use the MSH. The methodology used for data collection was not intended to be scientific or comprehensive. A small in-house survey was conducted to gain an understanding of the way MSH were used by staff within the UoA Library. The sample was chosen to be representative of staff that catalogued Māori material and who worked closely with the Māori collections held by the Library.

Requests for participation went to technical users (cataloguing staff) and staff considered to work closely with the Māori collection, Te Rōpū Kaimahi Māori.

Each questionnaire is designed to draw on the experiences of staff in their particular roles. Follow up interviews were given with those who were available for further comment.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (literature review)

The literature reviewed sits within a wider Māori discourse that challenges Western paradigms by asserting tino rangatiratanga through the implementation of kaupapa Māori and te reo within the mainstream environment.

The need for MSH was identified as early as 1989 by researchers gathering information for a bibliography on Ngāti Kahungunu [Irwin & Katene, 1989]. The authors explore and discuss the difficulties of accessing Māori information using the standard library catalogue and classification systems. The authors became increasingly frustrated with what they perceived to be the monocultural, monolingual and Americentric systems of access used by most libraries, systems that essentially marginalised Māori from taonga.

Perhaps in response to these findings, a proposal to investigate the possibility of creating a Māori thesaurus was published that year [Working Party on Māori Subject Headings, 1989]. The investigation included establishing the groundwork for a Māori thesaurus and proposing guidelines on how these might be applied. Again it was found that the LCSH provided inadequate access to Māori material and recommended that direct access through the use of a Māori subject thesaurus be considered. Furthermore it was requested that libraries actively promote Māori language in their roles as educators and information providers.

While groundbreaking at the time these documents now serve as a reminder to Māori of the long and drawn out process of getting any Māori initiative implemented within libraries (or any mainstream organisation for that matter). It is depressing (but not surprising) to think that it has taken almost 20 years to get the MSH established and implemented amongst libraries in Aotearoa. This raises the following question

“What are the unseen barriers in place within our industry that necessitates a 20 year timeframe to develop and implement an initiative as simple and basic as the MSH?”

The role of libraries as gatekeepers of Māori knowledge is further questioned in the Te Ara Tika series, a series that follows arguments raised within wider discourse regarding the experience of Māori in a dominantly monocultural New Zealand society. Again, concerns were raised over the real need for appropriate intellectual access and greater information literacy for Māori and the significant need for bilingual and bicultural initiatives within the library environment. This need is consistently reiterated in succeeding articles.

The arguments and research put forward in the Te Ara Tika series [1993, 1997, 2004] have contributed significantly to the Library profession in Aotearoa and to Māori in general in researching and identifying the Māori experience of libraries. One of the key findings within Te Ara Tika : guiding voices [Szekely, 1997] was that the cataloguing system was confusing and non-intuitive for Māori. One of the participants are recorded as saying

“Whatever system we’re using, that’s not the system we [Māori] think in.” [Szekely, 1997. p. 24].

Those that participated in this piece of research felt that the subject headings were inappropriate to Māori and the systems of arrangements were presented in a way that made it difficult to access material. Szekely reported that while a Māori subject thesaurus existed (He Puna Kupu) it was having little effect as there was little encouragement to adopt its use. Szekely obviously frustrated with the lack of progress within libraries to adopt a bicultural focus recorded

“Policy development and implementation in the Library and information service environment appeared to move at ‘glacial speed’” [Szekely, 1997. p 61].

A quote that is particularly relevant to the progression of the MSH since the issue was first raised in 1989.

Following from the recommendations of Te Ara Tika [1993 & 1997] are the arguments for a greater bilingual focus in libraries as expressed by Anna Stevens [Stevens, 2004] and the responsibility of libraries in the revitalisation of te reo and tikanga is outlined further by Lorraine Johnston [Johnston, 2007].

The research that is most directly related to the study was undertaken by Simpson [2004] on behalf of Te Ropu Whakahau and the National library and clearly outlines the need for MSH. The research was to provide initiatives for the MSH Steering Committee and echoed the problems emphasised in Irwin [1989] and others that the formalised systems of access used by most libraries created barriers between iwi and the taonga that libraries hold. This research explored the need for greater accessibility for Māori within libraries with particular focus on the need for a classification system suitable to Māori searching terms.

Simpson's research identified the need for a MSH thesaurus to be situated within a Māori framework of reference to ensure the greater success of the MSH. It was suggested that the terms should not take a textual or linguistic approach but be based on an approach that maintained the cultural values that are inseparable from the language. The format of the thesaurus was to be structured similar to that of whakapapa using terms that are intuitive to Māori and that reflected the interconnectedness of concepts, a fundamental philosophy within Māoritanga. Furthermore the construction of the MSH were to reflect a Māori perspective and would therefore be readily recognisable and intuitive to a Māori way of thinking.

The research and recommendations within the Te Ara Tika series have been instrumental in documenting the experience of Māori with information repositories and have made strong progress in dismantling some of the barriers that exist in the library profession. The recommendations made by Te Ara Tika have greatly improved the experience that Māori have with libraries and have proved instrumental in providing a way for Māori information to be protected, accessed and cared for within these institutions. What history reveals however is that the "bicultural" process is often one-sided affair providing difficulties for the minority group to overcome. This means that any progress or success for Māori is often accomplished in spite of mainstream not because of it.

OUR EXPERIENCE

The challenges identified within our group may share some commonalities with other libraries but they are not intended to be a representation of those faced by other libraries, rather it is hoped that the findings will provide necessary feedback to the MSH governing body. The challenges therefore represent the problems that Library staff at the UoA Library experience when working with the MSH thesaurus, an access tool that is in te reo and based on Māori tikanga.

Staff provided general feedback and identified issues or problems concerning the use of the MSH. Further interviews were conducted with those available for comment. While this is a very small sample it reflects the organisation of cataloguing within our Library as not all cataloguers catalogue Māori material. Of the cataloguing team, there are two people responsible for cataloguing NZ material. These cataloguers add MSH on a regular basis to records with one of these people adding MSH daily to material. The Māori team provides the Māori kanohi of the Library and are responsible for the care, maintenance and promotion of the Māori collection, general feedback on the MSH was provided from this team. This discussion has a strong cataloguing focus.

Both the cataloguers that use the MSH are of non Māori heritage and have taken te reo courses to help in their cataloguing roles and also for personal development. The research completed by Simpson [2004, p.94] found that there were few cataloguers who were fluent te reo speakers or that had some knowledge of Māori language or customs, the UoA Library follows this trend. The UoA Library policy is to add MSH to material that is considered to have at least 20% Māori content.

Since the survey was taken the MSH has been updated and some of the issues that were raised in this review have been addressed.

How we find the right MSH term.

Number of methods. Look at the given LCSH then compare MSH. Look at subject/topic and see what MSH are authorized on Te Puna for this subject/topic. Use the Iwi-Hapū names list.

Limited te reo and knowledge of kaupapa Māori provides obvious challenges while using the MSH when cataloguing. A common method for finding a MSH term would be to start with the LCSH and to try to find the relevant MSH. Often a Māori dictionary is on hand to provide added definition. If there

is a tough problem or to see if there is a term that has been overlooked, someone from the Māori team would be consulted.

What we find difficult.

No difficulty, unless I come across something that doesn't particularly sit with me in relation to the subject heading I am looking for.

There are big gaps in the subject areas covered by the list, especially for the type of material we are cataloguing, and some of the headings still don't have scope notes. When I am cataloguing material I often end up putting very general headings such as kōrero nehe and tōrangapū, which I tend to think is worse than useless.

Indications from the sample were that the terms used in the MSH thesaurus were too broad and this was considered to be a huge concern. Also the terms were perceived as too limited, often there didn't seem to be a suitable alternative to the LCSH provided. For example there seems to be no term for homosexuality. Similarly, the terms for business, sexuality, politics (modern and historical) were considered too general for academic material that requires explicit terms. Without having the option of subdivisions it was felt the terms weren't entirely descriptive of the material being catalogued or didn't provide a good reflection of the content of the book.

What about subdivisions?

No subdividing. Can't subdivide, you can't type in say politics [Māori equivalent]19th C or whatever century, or History [Māori equivalent]19th Century. The same for literature.

This response highlights the misunderstandings that may arise when one worldview clashes with another. As subdivisions are used to draw distinctions between periods, eras or geographies it was indicated that this had serious consequences for the end user. It was speculated that there would be large groupings of material under broad subject terms for example, mātauranga without any further distinction.

In Simpson [2004, p. 61] participants are recorded as saying there was no need to draw historical distinctions within the MSH as Māori view time as a continuum. For example an event that occurred in the past is very much interlinked with the present and as relevant today as the event was when it first happened. While this comment highlights a misunderstanding of the MSH and kaupapa Māori it also highlights a gap in the training or communication about the MSH.

Te reo & kaupapa Māori

I believe that it would be easier if cataloguers had a basic understanding of te reo Māori, as this might help them make a better informed decision about what to use. Sometimes I don't believe that the subject headings used in the front flap is useful for cataloguers and it puts ideas into their minds and changes the type of format that they use when searching for the appropriate dewey number or understanding of what the customer end result would be.

Second to the concerns expressed over the broadness of the terms is the difficulty that cataloguers experience with the reo and kaupapa Māori. Within the cataloguing team there is a very limited knowledge of te reo. This creates a certain apprehension over the MSH, one, because the layout is one that reflects a Māori worldview which means that the starting point for finding a term can be difficult to get used to and two, that there sometimes isn't any context with which one has to use as a starting point. This reflects the differences between the LCSH and the MSH as the classification systems are arranged differently and reflect different worldviews. The confusion experienced therefore is understandable. Both the cataloguers that work with the MSH have taken up te reo to help with cataloguing roles. However it was felt that as non Māori with limited reo it would be beneficial to have a onsite dictionary or to know what dictionaries were the best to assist with a search.

Lack of te reo me ona tikanga has also left some in the group wondering if it's their own lack of te reo or kaupapa Māori that means they can't find a term or whether the terms have not yet been added. It was asked "How are they [MSH terms] meant to be used and searched? Is there something we don't know that others do?"

For help I go to:

Consult my lists eg. Iwi-Hapū and discuss with Teri Taala. Sometimes consult the Māori & Pacific Information Services.

Those that worked with the MSH would consult together to find a relevant term or speak with someone who was Māori or consult with the Māori team for advice. Sometimes this would mean that the limits of the MSH would be confirmed only after these visits.

What about the [end] users?

We urgently need to find out how students are using these headings. Otherwise we could be wasting a lot of time just so we can say we have “ticked the box”.

Some within the group felt that it was necessary to find out how Māori end users were searching for material. It was asked as the MSH were so general were they actually relevant to the end user?

Design

For a non- Māori scope notes are sometimes very vague.

The problem of design was identified with various requests being made to upgrade the current index. It was expressed that some of the scope notes were too vague and wondered if they could be more specific. The arrangement of the thesaurus was also brought into question as it appears to be alphabetical, however terms with macrons are found further down the list. This can be misleading and caused some confusion for those that had little experience with the MSH. In one example it was believed that the term tāniko was not in the index as it was not realised that tāniko had a macron. The unfamiliarity with the layout of the MSH and with te reo lead to an unsuccessful search.

Te Puna

Too much work on to be able to use the link and send enquiries. Most of the records that come from Te Puna are fine. It's the older material that doesn't have them. Other libraries create records before NZ&P (New Zealand and Pacific) they might add MSH but they might require another one.

Within the group there was an indication that there should be more support and communication between the library and the National Library as the governing body of the MSH. Those in the group felt that it would be helpful to have some kind of guidance on assigning headings particularly for material that is commonly subdivided in LCSH. People in the group wondered whether more MSH were being developed and whether other libraries were experiencing the same difficulties. While one person had used the feedback and suggestions link and was pleased with the response back from Te Puna, it was felt that greater communication nationwide was necessary. Time constraints were given as a reason for not sending in more queries or feedback. It was felt that a FAQs page or a newsletter that updated people on the progress of the MSH would be helpful and would bring greater confidence in the MSH thesaurus and the MSH governing body.

What we like

The structure for access, mainly if you are a cataloguer of some sort. Again dependant on whether that subject heading is available on the list.

The cataloguers appreciate having the MSH and recognised their unique place in the catalogue and the contribution they make on a wider scale in the promotion of te reo, however there was some concern that there be integrity in the process. Frustration was expressed over the concern for some kind of authority and governance over the MSH that would be communicated to technical users.

What can we do to help ourselves?

More feedback from Māori subject librarians/faculty.

In house training or discussion with Te Rōpū Kaimahi Māori about the MSH was suggested to gain a better understanding for how the MSH were arranged and why. This would provide some much needed context for those non- Māori who use the MSH. It might also give the cataloguers a better idea of how the end users were searching for material.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The scope of this research is deliberately limited to the experiences of the staff working with the MSH. Further and more serious research that explores the experience of the end user is recommended and considered vital to the success of the MSH.

1. A strategic focus needs to be added to the overall purpose and service provision aspect of the MSH. This needs to be driven from the National Library and Te Rōpū Whakahau as the governing body of the MSH. Its is observed that the MSH in its current form is an operational, tactical provision for the library sector, but needs stronger alignment to an overall strategic Māori Development plan.
2. The MSH needs to be located as a first stage initiative only, and not a reflection of the library sectors overall commitment to things Māori. A greater emphasis needs to be directed towards further development of the MSH, including an underlying commitment to increasing access to things Māori in the library and information sector.
3. To enable clarity surrounding the MSH and to increase uptake, it is proposed that a Professional Development framework or programme be developed to support the implementation and uptake of the MSH into practice. An overall framework would address relevant and appropriate mediums, online training perhaps, or examples of how someone with limited reo would find the relevant terms from the MSH for particular material.
4. The MSH requires further expansion to cover a wider scope of terms associated with disciplines of research and study. This would require increased terms, thorough scope notes and a review of the design. A search box would also be helpful.
5. An internal (UoA Library) working group involving key people from the Māori team and cataloguers should be organised to establish the parameters of the MSH and provide greater explanation of their arrangement. Points of reference for non Māori cataloguers who need to use the MSH could provide greater context for searching and finding relevant terms.

CONCLUSION

The MSH were created to rectify a long-standing deficiency within libraries, one which effectively marginalised Māori from not only the wider world but their own. That it has taken almost twenty years to create the MSH and have it implemented throughout Aotearoa suggests some serious gaps in service provision in the Library sector.

Overall the challenge of the MSH is one that needs to be answered by all libraries that use them, it is the challenge of continued maintenance, support and development. This would require a twofold approach. Firstly, a concentrated effort by the National Library and Te Rōpū Whakahau as the governing body to ensure continued funding and future proofing of the MSH. Secondly the challenge is for individual libraries to co-ordinate in-house training between the Māori team and wider staff to explain the MSH arrangement and framework and how they are best applied.

This paper began with an abstract that questioned the true intention of the Library sector by asking whether we were just ticking the box with the implementation of the MSH. In other words what is the Library sectors true intention for Māori? Do we act out of a sense of obligation basing decisions on Māori things around concerns of relevancy and convenience, or do we believe in the potential that catering to things Māori can deliver to the wider Library sector?

The Māori population is predicted to increase over the next 20 years. The rise in popularity of kōhangā reo, kura kaupapa and wānanga amongst Māori will mean a larger percent of the Māori population will be bilingual and expect a greater commitment to biculturalism. Libraries will need to respond to the information needs of this generation who will expect that Māori information will be cared for and managed according to tikanga and who will assume greater responsibility for their own information needs. Understanding the information needs of Māori now would be the basis of a forward projection strategy that would enable the library sector to better understand and meet the needs of Māori in the future.

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