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ARTICLES (PEER REVIEWED)

The Public Good of Digital (Academic) History

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Introduction

*The promise of digital technologies for public history is vast: new audiences, dynamic content, increased engagement, large-scale collaboration. But to achieve this promise, we must focus on the goals of public history and adapt our working practice to the new conditions created by the digital environment.*¹

Take the word ‘public’ out of Sharon Leon’s statement and it becomes true for history carried out in university contexts. In an age where interested non-historians turn first to Google rather than a library for their history, and where Google searches on historical topics return Wikipedia articles and YouTube videos as the top results, it may be time that academic historians rethink the goals of their research. A common criticism of academic historians is that we write and publish with an audience comprised only of fellow scholars in mind, while public historians ‘share a commitment to making the study of the past accessible to members of the general public’.² While in the case of New Zealand history, at least, this criticism is overstated, with many of these historians writing with a wider audience in mind and their books on aspects of New Zealand history frequenting mainstream bookstores nationwide, it is still true that our primary outputs remain monographs and paywalled scholarly articles.

There will always be a place for scholarly articles and monographs that get into the devilish details, the greater intricacies of the subject, and push the boundaries of knowledge. But is that a sufficient goal today? As the subject specialists on topics of public interest, is it also our duty to ensure that our research is available to that interested public in an accessible way, both in terms of not being held behind paywalls, and in terms of tone and mode of communication? If we fail to do this, we run the risk, as Serge Noiret argues, ‘of seeing academic specialists, who know about critical historical methods and historical knowledge, as no longer relevant in the digital turn’.³ Creating a more accessible digital presence for our research alongside traditional scholarly publications (that might be available in a digital format but nevertheless inaccessible due to cost) enables us to reach a wider audience, both directly among those who find it in

Google searches, and indirectly if it is used as a source by those publishing Wikipedia articles and YouTube videos.

But how do we make that transition from an audience of readers of scholarly monographs and articles to a public audience of anyone with internet access? If making our research available in an easily discoverable and freely accessible digital way involves actively thinking about an audience beyond traditional readers, does that make ‘digital history’ ‘public history’? If so, do we need to consciously acknowledge that? Do we need to ‘adapt our working practice to the new conditions created by the digital environment’?⁴ If so, how far? Noiret notes several ‘academic digital history projects’ that, although online and public facing, are not ‘digital public history [projects], either because of the way in which they were designed, their intended audience, or the absence of the public as direct facilitators of the projects themselves’.⁵

The Soldiers of Empire project highlights several of the challenges of making traditional academic history a digital public history, including different audience expectations, time and resources, the disruptive nature of adapting our working practice to meet the demands of the digital environment, and finding appropriate ways to present sensitive material.

The Project

The Soldiers of Empire project is an investigation that focuses on the British Army soldiers who served in the New Zealand Wars, primarily in the 1860s.⁶ We are posing a range of broader questions than those traditionally considered within the ambit of military history, including linking the history of war with questions of imperial mobility, settler colonialism, and reform movements within the Victorian institution of the army. The project was funded by the Marsden Fund Te Pūtea Rangahau a Marsden, from the Royal Society of New Zealand Te Apārangi, between 2015 and 2018.⁷ The principal investigator is Professor Charlotte Macdonald and the research was carried out in the History Programme at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington.⁸

A major component of the Soldiers of Empire project has been the construction of a database identifying the soldiers, ‘putting a face’ to the men, as far as possible, by linking pieces of information about them from across multiple War Office files.⁹ It is still under construction, but at the time of writing includes 14,645 individuals and over 240,000 pieces of data. The database brings together service details alongside biographical information about the men. It is important for our own research into the soldiers, enabling some analysis of who comprised these forces, rather than treating the regiments as a largely faceless mass.

We knew there was wider scholarly interest in the topic. Rising public interest in the subject was also evident, in part due to the 150th anniversaries of some of the major events in the wars and because of the success of the Ōtorohanga College students’ 2015 petition for a national day of commemoration for the New Zealand Wars and for that history to be taught in New Zealand schools.¹⁰ Further, it has been clear from the beginning that descendants of the men were interested in a freely available dataset that included their ancestors. Perhaps as many as a quarter of the men who served with the British Army in the colony over this decade took their discharge (left the army) in New Zealand, many of them becoming settlers.¹¹

Academic articles and monographs, in the humanities at least, work on a long time scale. From a first draft to a final publication, through peer review, editing and fitting into publication schedules, the time frame for an article is likely 12 months at a minimum, rising to several years for a monograph. From the outset, the decision was made to have a public face for the project by way of a website, to accompany these traditional outputs, to show some fruits from the research and existence of the project, before these traditional publications began to appear. An early version of the Soldiers of Empire website went live within a few months of the project beginning in 2015, with information about our aims and objectives, the research team, and a blog. A first set of data was available to be searched on the website before the first Rā Maumahara, national day of commemoration of the New Zealand Wars, on 28 October 2017.

Between November 2015 and August 2022, the website had 57,532 unique users and 65,089 individual ‘sessions’; 182,915 page views, of which 80,532 were unique (the difference between these page view figures being the same user visiting a page they have viewed previously); 46 per cent of unique page views were of the home page and 14 per cent of the database. Peak use occurred around dates when Charlotte or myself presented on the project or used the website in our own teaching.¹²

Audiences and Access

In considering whether digital history is public history, the present article focuses on audience and access to historical information. In the New Zealand context, *Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand* and *NZHistory* are two excellent and widely used digital history outputs that are specifically public histories.¹³ The content is written by professional historians, the sites are produced by Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage and a general public audience is to the fore. *Te Ara*, first published in 2006, reports more than 500,000 users monthly, making it one of the most popular websites in New Zealand.¹⁴ Many of the users are school students and teachers, but also others in the professional historical field, including museum curators and university lecturers. Users are encouraged ‘to submit their own stories and to comment on image and media pages’ and ‘Flickr, Twitter and Facebook’ are used to ‘interact with users’.¹⁵ *NZHistory* was launched on 16 March 1999. As well as short historical essays and a calendar that outlines events ‘on this day in history’ for every day of the year, it includes ‘classroom’ and ‘hands on history’ sections specifically for teachers and students.¹⁶ These government produced digital histories are very explicitly also public histories.

But digital history does not have to be public. We can use digital tools and methods in the privacy of our own computers to interpret, analyse, interrogate and display our historical research without it being accessible to anyone else. If we do make any of it available online, we do not have to make it accessible for a wider audience, or to think about audience at all. As will be outlined in further detail below, creating and maintaining a public digital platform for academic research requires adaptation of ‘our working practice’ to meet the demands of ‘the new conditions created by the digital environment’ that can be, ultimately, too disruptive to ever implement fully.¹⁷

If we do choose to go some way down the path of making our research and digital outputs publicly available, and if we choose to actively think about and consciously acknowledge an online audience, we need to think more carefully about how we transition from an audience of traditional scholarly article and monograph readers to an audience of anyone with internet access. An important first step is identifying just who that ‘online audience’ is. We are unlikely to be able to satisfy every conceivable user of a website, but we probably can imagine the main groups or user types that are likely to engage with the history we are presenting. As Leon puts it, ‘We must be specific in identifying the audience and understanding the needs and assumptions that they bring with them to our work.’¹⁸

For the *Soldiers of Empire* project, we had four major user groups in mind – fellow scholars, interested general members of the public, family historians, and, with a new New Zealand history curriculum (*Te Takanga o Te Wā* and *Aotearoa New Zealand’s Histories*) being released this year for implementation in 2023, high school teachers and students looking to engage with this history.¹⁹ As the project progressed, it became apparent that our scholarly audience would be served by our usual scholarly outputs. The website was ultimately created with a more public audience in mind. The database component has been shaped in particular by use by family historians, to enable them to answer for themselves the questions most frequently coming through to us from the website contact form.

As well as considering audience, we considered access to, and longevity of, our data. Collections of historical data, such as that used in *Soldiers of Empire*, have often been kept in the private collections of the researchers who compiled them, with no way for other scholars to access them for re-use or to scrutinise

them to replicate the results. Many of the data collections eventually become unusable even by the scholars who created them, given that technology moves on and leaves the dataset behind on magnetic tape, cassettes, cartridges, floppy disks, or in file formats that are no longer supported.²⁰

More recently, it has become much easier to share such datasets alongside publication of the research, and an increasing number of historians, and humanities scholars in general, are doing so. The *Journal of Open Humanities Data*, launched in 2015, is one vehicle for such sharing, publishing both research papers based on humanities data and short data papers on datasets that have been made available for re-use. The data papers describe the dataset, how and why it was constructed, and how it might be re-used.²¹ As the 'About' page of the journal succinctly notes:

Making research outputs available for others to work with and build upon is part of the social contract of academia... It is difficult to argue that the results of publicly funded research should not be made publicly available... [It] leads to more efficient science, as well as new kinds of studies previously not possible that involve the combination of multiple data sources... [and] can be reused by the wider public for a range of purposes including teaching, journalism and citizen science projects.²²

For such reasons as these – scholarly transparency and the 'social contract of academia' – and because we knew the data we were gathering would be of interest to others, it was important to us from the beginning that the Soldiers of Empire database would eventually be made publicly available and accessible. Rather than leave sharing the dataset until the end of the project, we have chosen to have iterations on the website since 2017. The R Shiny App created to host the dataset online presents transcriptions of War Office files in filterable and searchable data tables, but also offers ways to interrogate the datasets, in graph and map form. This not only makes it easy to find and understand individual records, as someone searching for their ancestor would want to do, but also aids in seeing trends from the aggregate data, as a teacher, student, journalist or fellow scholar coming to the dataset would be more likely to want to do.²³ The benefits of the database being publicly available have not been one-way. Our data, and consequently our research as a whole, has benefitted greatly from feedback from the descendants who have found information on their ancestors recorded incorrectly or simply missing, or who have sent their copious family history research notes or unpublished family histories to us.²⁴

A further motive for making that application the primary focus of the project's digital space is that the data collected for it is increasingly being held behind paywalls, even though it is all public record. The data is primarily comprised of War Office files held by the National Archives of the United Kingdom but has been transcribed and made available by family history websites, available only through those websites (though without a personal subscription) even when you are standing in the National Archives building (unless you have special permission to view the originals). Having transcribed the data and knowing it was useful and interesting for family historians in particular, we wanted to make it publicly and freely available, because it felt wrong that it should only be available digitally from anywhere in the world to those who could afford a subscription to a family history website, or could travel to a public library that provided access as a service. Ideally, of course, the institutions that host the original documents would make access freely available. However, digitising these records is a mammoth task and, given their tight budgets, it is understandable that these institutions take help from family history websites whenever they can.

By making the Soldiers of Empire data, collected for our own scholarly purposes, publicly available, we provide a two-fold service: we make our research process more transparent and replicable for other scholars, and we make this data, that is public record, freely available to anyone with internet access. Because our dataset is geared towards research of the soldiers as a whole, it also enables use and searching of the data in a more open and flexible way: users can interrogate the full dataset for patterns that might be derived from it.

This contrasts with family history websites that require searching for a specific name – a product of focusing on their primary audience, which is looking for individuals.

If the major determinant of whether digital history is public history or not is accessibility, then we must also consider the mode of communication. The primary change to our usual practices in the Soldiers of Empire project is in simplifying the language used across the website and database app. As one example, if we were writing with only a scholarly audience in mind, we would refer to our sources with a full archival reference, confident that our readers would know how to find that source and how it fits within the context of the archive it belongs in. Instead, we have provided descriptions of the sources, detailing their creation and any issues with them as they have been made available today. In presenting the data table for the WO12 dataset, for example, if we had only fellow scholars in mind, we might simply have prefaced it by saying:

Source: ‘Effects and Credits’ pages, TNA Series: WO12, Commissary General of Musters Office and successors: General Muster Books and Pay Lists (AJCP ref: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-728688653>).

Instead, this data table includes the following preface:

This tab contains data drawn solely from the Effects and Credits pages of the WO12 archive series – the quarterly muster rolls of the regiments. These files were copied by the Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), and have since been made available digitally via Trove ([WO 12, AJCP, Trove](#)).

The Effects and Credits pages recorded, essentially, what a man owed the regiment, or what he was owed by the regiment, upon his departure from the regiment, usually by death, desertion, or discharge, but also occasionally by transfer to another regiment and other such less permanent departures. While one might expect that this would mean every man is entered into these records just once, in the case of soldiers who deserted and were later returned to the regiment, they will appear for each desertion, and later for their discharge or death also. Men also appeared in these records at each successive quarterly muster until the clerk had completed all the relevant details about the man. That is, at the first muster they may not have had the full details of what the man owed or was owed at hand, and so their name is carried forward to the next muster, and so on until full details are available.

At some future point, this data will be tidied up further so that each ‘event’ a man is entered for appears only once, but at this stage every time they were recorded in the Effects and Credits pages appears in the data table below.²⁵

As is always the case, making information more accessible for one purpose or audience makes it more accessible for everyone, and filling in these details saves extra work on the part of any fellow scholars who subsequently come to the data.

A probable next step for our web presence (alongside continuing to update the database) will be with the release of the new history curriculum. How can we make the web presence for this research more useful for teachers and their students? This is a question all New Zealand historians whose subject matter touches on aspects of the new curriculum might be asking themselves. Making the web presence more accessible will support this audience, which generally has less access to the paywalled scholarly articles we write. As teachers are finding their way with the new curriculum and the first generation of New Zealand children are being introduced to Aotearoa New Zealand’s history in a comprehensive way, ensuring we change our ways of working to address this audience by producing our research in a digital, and public, format is a worthy use of our time and resources.

Time and Resource Constraints; or Limitations on Making Digital History Public History

As might be gathered from the above, there is a considerable amount of extra work in considering diverse audiences and ‘adapting our working practice’ accordingly. Just because something is online and freely available, does not mean it is ‘free’ in terms of the production of content or the time required to craft that content for the digital environment. Looking back over the *Soldiers of Empire* project, we can see that we underestimated how much we would need to ‘adapt our working practice’ in order to create our desired public face. Initially, we envisioned a regular blog with updates on the research; regular Tweets about the research and engaging with related content; an up-to-date news feed of our seminars, lectures, conference papers and other such activity about the project; a space for people to learn about our goals in the project and who we were; and a way to access the database. However, ‘we’ are a core team of two: myself and Professor Charlotte Macdonald. Both of us also had other academic work to attend to on top of undertaking the actual research that would feed this digital presence. Without making the digital presence the primary focus of the project, or without a dedicated assistant to work at keeping everything up-to-date while other work was being undertaken, it simply was not feasible to bring this vision to full fruition.

Blog posts seemed to strike a suitable balance. They seemed a natural output for a public face to the project. We always had new snippets of research we could potentially share in this format, and we had maintained a regular series of blog posts in a previous, smaller, related project.²⁶ Scholarly blogs are becoming increasingly common and are a simple, efficient and accessible way to reach new audiences, and to get early feedback on research.²⁷ However, they were not straight forward, requiring us to significantly alter our usual writing styles, and to be prepared to share ideas in written form before we felt entirely ready to do so.

Leon notes, ‘writing for a blog requires a willingness to write quickly and frequently. Driven by users’ desire for fresh content... blog content is perceived as being much more spontaneous, relaxed, and casual’.²⁸ Neither of us would claim our scholarly writing to be ‘spontaneous, relaxed, and casual’, so this was always going to be a hurdle. In addition, given the sensitive nature of the research, relaxed or casual may have been inappropriate. We did not consider it viable to write a ‘scholarly’ blog that was less frequent, fully referenced and written with fellow scholars in mind, because we were very conscious that the website’s primary audience was public.

Further, spontaneity risks something being put on the page we might later have wished we had framed in another way. Being in the middle of a long term project, our thoughts on many matters are still yet to be fully formed, and so we have been reluctant to put those still evolving ideas into the world in such a public and semi-permanent way. We have presented our emerging work in unrecorded academic conference and seminar papers, which are fairly ephemeral in comparison to public facing blog posts. In addition, when the audience is fellow scholars, such preliminary thoughts are also less likely to be taken, or used, out of context; we can assume that audience is familiar with all the spoken and unspoken caveats one places on such findings when the research is not yet complete. In contrast, a member of the public may naturally assume that something published by an academic on their project blog is gospel truth rather than a work-in-progress, which raises the question of peer review of scholarly website content. Is a peer review process consciously or unconsciously expected by readers of a scholarly website? A question for another day is how such a process might work, if it would too considerably add to turnaround times, and whether it would negate the ‘spontaneous, relaxed, and casual’ nature of blog posts, rendering them less relevant.

In the end, most of the *Soldiers of Empire* blog posts have been written by students as part of their work for the project, or by us about the work students have done on the project and pointing to their digital outputs.²⁹ This has, for us, been an acceptable compromise. In each of those cases the student’s research had come to an end – this was their final work on the project, the culmination of a discrete piece of research.

It meant we were still offering something on the blog, but without having to put our own, still evolving, thoughts into the world. Nevertheless, these posts are still much more toward the scholarly end of the blog-writing spectrum, not 'spontaneous', 'relaxed', or 'casual'. Indeed, a few are essentially short essays, fully referenced and written in usual academic vernacular, but online. The leap from careful, long form, scholarly writing to something less formal (that is, more suitable for regular blog posts, or written specifically with a 'public' audience in mind) was a larger leap than we were ready to make or to ask our students to take. In short, without a fundamental shift in the way we work and the way we write, or a refocusing of our time to make such a digital output a priority, a regular blog series was impractical.

Maintaining a social media presence to engage an online audience for historical research is another task that can conflict with researchers' available time or skillset. Leon writes 'The key to successful writing for [social media] platforms is frequency and engagement. Unlike other venues for public history, a successful social media strategy is driven by a commitment to timely updates.'³⁰ There is a good reason businesses, government ministries, museums, and even universities, have dedicated social media teams. If posting to social media is not already a part of a daily ritual, adding this to one's plate of things to do in a given work day or work week is a huge and time consuming step. Leon adds that social media posts should be crafted as headlines: 'punchy, bright, and provocative is much more the order of the realm than staid. For historians concerned about sensationalism and nuance, this can be a difficult adjustment.'³¹ This is a concern for us with the Soldiers of Empire project. We are researching, and to some extent aiming to humanise, the men who comprised the British forces who fought battles that paved the way for generations of Māori to be stripped of their land, language and culture. We are presenting these findings at a time when there are still people who see any reparations or attempt at rectifying these historical wrongs as evidence of racial preference.³² British soldiers and their activities during the New Zealand Wars are far too easy to make into sensationalised click-bait, and that is not something we want to do, even if we could 'take comfort' that the tweets would mostly 'point to existing Web content that... reflects a more considered approach'.³³

Attempting to encourage engagement in the project and its website via Twitter while finding, then walking, the fine line between staid and click-bait, we had two Twitter 'campaigns' early in the project.³⁴ In both, we aimed to bring to light the men beneath the red coats, so to speak. In the first campaign, we tweeted cropped images of the moustaches of the men throughout 'Movember' 2015, linking to the digitised records of the images.³⁵ In the second campaign, we tweeted excerpts from a soldier's diary between 29 January and 4 May 2016, which John McLellan, one of our summer scholar students, had transcribed.³⁶ Some of the excerpts are just as one would expect from a diary of a man at war, for example, describing being injured on his first day of active combat in New Zealand, at the battle of Gate Pa on 29 April 1864: 'I suddenly felt as if something hot had taken off the top of my head and I fell against the side of the pit.'³⁷ However, we also tweeted excerpts that, in the broader context of the conflict he was in New Zealand to fight, border on ridiculous, but that in the context of one man's life and personal diary make perfect sense. Writing on 21 June 1864, the date of one of the bloodiest battles of the New Zealand Wars, he pines for his beloved Evy: 'My darlings birth day. How I have looked forward to this day for the last month'; 'I wonder if she ever thinks of me now'; 'How well I remember this day last year. I wonder if she ever guesses the reason why I went to Hythe.'³⁸

While satisfied with how we managed to walk that fine line in both Twitter campaigns, they required careful planning and time, once again time that could have been spent elsewhere on the project. In addition, we did not reach a 'public' audience with these tweets: instead we predominantly reached an extension of our usual scholarly audience. After these two pushes, the project's Twitter feed became mostly short tweets pointing to student work or blog posts, links to articles by others working in the field, or retweets of relevance to the project. Had we made this social media outreach a greater focus of the project, we might have reached a wider public audience, who might have contributed further information about the men from family histories, as the family historians who have been in touch through the website have done. It would

not have been without benefit to the project, but the time required did not, for us, merit the time lost for other parts of the research, or the risk of sensationalising something unnecessarily.

Despite the website and social media presence not taking the form we had initially envisioned, I do not see this as a failure, but rather as a coming to terms with what we ultimately wanted from the project's digital presence and the time we had available. It took some months to accept that much of that vision of the website was not going to come to fruition due to time pressures and the primary focus of the project being to get the actual research done. When I look at the website now, seven years after it was first launched, it is obvious why it ended up taking the shape it did. Our scholarly audience were being served by journal articles and conference and seminar papers that were being presented regularly throughout the project. This website presence was not primarily for them. Taking those making contact with us via the website as a proxy for website usage, the majority of our audience were family historians looking for their ancestors, who had found the website via Google. They primarily wanted to know if their specific ancestor was in our datasets and what else we knew about them. So, it was natural that we spent time on a resource for that audience, updating the app that presents the database of these men, so they could search for them in our datasets for themselves.

Conclusion

The promise of digital technologies for... history is vast: new audiences, dynamic content, increased engagement, large-scale collaboration. But to achieve this promise, we must focus on the goals of... history and adapt our working practice to the new conditions created by the digital environment.³⁹

Is digital history public history? It does not have to be, but it probably should be. If we are utilising digital technologies as tools and methods for our own research purposes, we can fairly easily share these online. If we can let those digital tools do double duty, serving our scholarly purposes and allowing our research to reach a wider audience, we should do so. We are living in an age where archives are increasingly digitised and available to anyone with access to the internet. It is also a time when professional skills and training are not as valued as they once were by the general public.⁴⁰ This combination has created perfect conditions for a world in which anyone can think of themselves as a historian, not understanding that 'history' is not just 'facts about things that happened in the past'. Meg Foster spoke to these concerns in an article published in this journal in 2014, citing James Gardner:

Left to their own devices, Gardner predicts that the public will use the past to reinforce their own expectations and prejudices. 'History' will apparently signify the rearrangement of facts for present purposes, and become devoid of true, historical meaning.⁴¹

Foster continues:

This apocalyptic vision of the future has been compounded by public misconceptions about historians and their work. A recent study in Australia suggests that most ordinary people have little idea what academically trained historians actually do, apart from work with 'old things'.⁴²

In this context, it is important that trained historians put their research and findings in the places the public can find it using a simple Google search, and not hide it away in articles and books that are inaccessible outside of a university library. Digital technologies offer significant promise and opportunities to historical researchers. Above and beyond these opportunities, we may have to 'adapt our working practice to the new conditions created by the digital environment' to avoid perceived obsolescence as a discipline. We should more fully engage with digital history and work to make that digital history public history.⁴³

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Endnotes

- 1 Sharon Leon, ‘Complexity and Collaboration: Doing Public History in Digital Environments’, in Paula Hamilton and James B. Gardner (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*, 2017, p45. Leon’s chapter works in many ways as a ‘how to’ guide for public historians working in a digital environment and has been very useful to my thinking about whether, and how, those same principles should apply to academic historians bringing their work to a digital space.
- 2 *ibid*, p45.
- 3 Serge Noiret, ‘Digital Public History’, in David Dean (ed), *A Companion to Public History*, John Wiley & Sons, 2018, p116.
- 4 Leon, *op cit*, p45.
- 5 Noiret, *op cit*, p115
- 6 For a concise overview of the New Zealand Wars, see Keenan, D. 2017, New Zealand Wars (Online). Available: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/new-zealand-wars>
- 7 The title of the project for this funding is ‘Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Settler’.
- 8 See Soldiers of Empire Home (Online), 2021. Available: www.soldiersofempire.nz/
- 9 For more on these files, and on some of the difficulties of bringing the details on these men together, see Charlotte Macdonald and Rebecca Lenihan, ‘Paper Soldiers: The Life, Death and Reincarnation of Nineteenth-Century Military Files across the British Empire’, in *Rethinking History*, vol 22, no 3, 2018, pp375-402.
- 10 McLachlan, L-M. 2016, Students Call for Day to Remember Land Wars (Online). Available: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihi/298505/students-call-for-day-to-remember-land-wars>. This petition resulted in a decision to make the teaching of New Zealand History a part of the core curriculum: Ardern, J. and Hipkins, C. 2019, NZ History to be Taught in All Schools (Online). Available: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/nz-history-be-taught-all-schools>
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- 18 *ibid*, p57.
- 19 For further detail on the new curriculum, see Aotearoa New Zealand’s Histories and Te Takanga o te Wā (Online), 2022. Available: <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/changes-in-education/aotearoa-new-zealands-histories-and-te-takanga-o-te-wa/>
- 20 Personal observations of the author, who will not name and shame the scholars in question!
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- 22 About (Online), nd. Available: <https://openhumanitiesdata.metajnl.com/about/> [Accessed 20 March 2022].
- 23 Soldiers of Empire Data Explorer (Online), 2021. Available: https://empiresoldiers.shinyapps.io/Soldiers_of_Empire_Data_Explorer/ [Accessed 20 March 2022].
- 24 Though a quite different output, a comparison might be made here with arguments made by Tanya Evans with regard to the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ABD). She notes that ‘for centuries public history was practised as local, family and community history’ and that ‘the ABD has long relied on the contributions of non-academics’ drawing on that ‘local, family and community’ history. Tanya Evans, ‘Biography and Life-Writing Can Re-Make the Nation: A Review of Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 19, 1991-1995 [A-Z]’, in *Australian Historical Studies*, vol 53, no 3, p484.
- 25 See Soldiers of Empire Data Explorer (Online), 2021. Available: https://empiresoldiers.shinyapps.io/Soldiers_of_Empire_Data_Explorer/ [Accessed 20 March 2022].

- 26 Looking Down the Barrel of History: The Battle of Te Ranga [Online], 2014. Available: <http://lookingdownthebarrelofhistory.weebly.com/>
- 27 Andrew McGregor presents a strong case for the use of blogs by scholars, arguing, among other things, that as well as potentially fostering a more cohesive and collaborative community, as it has in his subfield of American sport history, this form of scholarly communication is also more democratic, being less formal and written for a public audience. Andrew McGregor, 'The Power of Blogging: Rethinking Scholarship and Reshaping Boundaries at Sport in American History', in *Journal of Sport History*, vol 44, no 2, 2017, pp239-56.
- 28 Leon, op cit, pp60-61.
- 29 Soldiers of Empire Blog [Online], 2022. Available: <http://www.soldiersofempire.nz/blog>
- 30 Leon, op cit, p62.
- 31 ibid, p63.
- 32 See, for example, remarks by former National Party leaders Don Brash and Judith Collins: Brash Speech Returns to Orewa Themes [Online], 2022. Available: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kahu/don-brash-returns-to-orewa-with-familiar-themes-of-race-based-privilege/XS4H5XH23Q6IDP2GUJLWTWS66E/> (Accessed 27 March 2022); Hobson's Pledge, nd, About Us [Online]. Available: https://www.hobsonspledge.nz/about_us (Accessed 27 March 2022); Collins Says Her Party Won't Stand for 'Racist Separatism' New Zealand [Online], 2021. Available: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/441350/collins-says-her-party-won-t-stand-for-racist-separatism-new-zealand>.
- 33 Leon, op cit, p63.
- 34 Facebook was not seriously considered as an option for social media engagement for the project as it is less 'scholarly'. Twitter was, and is, used more by digital humanities scholars for communication of their work and was the natural choice. As the 'Twitter for Scholarly Networking' guide published by the Digital Humanities centre at Berkeley University notes 'Twitter has evolved as a key space for digital humanists (and a variety of researchers from other fields) to discover peers at other institutions, share information, discuss, debate, and form communities of interest.' (<https://digitalhumanities.berkeley.edu/twitter-scholarly-networking> (Accessed 30 August 2022). Anabel Quan-Haase, Kim Martin, Lori Mccay-Peet, 'Networks of Digital Humanities Scholars: The Informational and Social Uses and Gratifications of Twitter', in *Big Data and Society*, vol 2, no 1, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951715589417> was published at the same time we were making this decision but not read at the time. Their findings 'show that Twitter is considered a critical tool for informal communication within DH invisible colleges, functioning at varying levels as both an information network (learning to 'Twitter' and maintaining awareness) and a social network (imagining audiences and engaging other digital humanists).'
- 35 Beginning on 1 November 2015 with the moustache of Captain W. T. Croft of the 65th regiment: <https://twitter.com/empiresoldiers/status/660535350087958528?s=20&t=I51eiuvAi2R-8K0yfpdCJg>
- 36 <https://twitter.com/empiresoldiers/status/692870389953761281?s=20&t=I51eiuvAi2R-8K0yfpdCJg>. The full transcription of this diary is available on the project website: <http://www.soldiersofempire.nz/ensign-nicholl-journal.html>
- 37 <https://twitter.com/empiresoldiers/status/712367275689512961?s=20&t=I51eiuvAi2R-8K0yfpdCJg>
- 38 <https://twitter.com/empiresoldiers/status/725818701883166720?s=20&t=I51eiuvAi2R-8K0yfpdCJg>; <https://twitter.com/empiresoldiers/status/726914948954120192?s=20&t=I51eiuvAi2R-8K0yfpdCJg>; <https://twitter.com/empiresoldiers/status/727662016303792128?s=20&t=I51eiuvAi2R-8K0yfpdCJg>
- 39 Leon, op cit, p45.
- 40 As evidenced during the Covid pandemic by the hundreds of thousands of people who would rather believe the theories of untrained members of the public read on social media than trained epidemiologists and the World Health Organisation, when it comes to appropriate public health measures, to the point where these experts are actively threatened – see, for example, MacLean, H. 2022, Otago Covid-19 Experts Copping Abuse [Online] Available: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/459107/otago-covid-19-experts-copping-abuse>; Neilson, M. 2021, Covid 19 Delta Outbreak Dr Siouxsie Wiles Hits Back at Claims She Broke Lockdown Rules [Online]. Available: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/covid-19-coronavirus-delta-outbreak-dr-siouxsie-wiles-hits-back-at-accusations-she-broke-lockdown-rules/2T70GKYA3X3IPTRZX45DVJTWQU/> (Accessed 27 March 2022); Livingstone, H. 2022, New Zealand Covid Experts Take Legal Action Against Employer Over Alleged Failure to Protect Them from Abuse [Online]. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/04/new-zealand-covid-experts-take-legal-action-against-employer-over-alleged-failure-to-protect-them-from-abuse>. Or, more specific to the subject matter at hand, by the comments made by members of the public about the new Aotearoa New Zealand history curriculum, who, having an interest in history and reading it in their leisure time, consider their opinion superior to the professional historians who contributed to the curriculum. Grant, D. 2022, If This History Curriculum is Shaping Our Future, the Outlook is Bleak [Online]. Available: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/128161959/if-this-history-curriculum-is-shaping-our-future-the-outlook-is-bleak>.
- 41 James B. Gardner, 'Trust, Risk and Public History: A View From the United States', in *Public History Review*, vol 17, 2010, p53, cited in Meg Foster, 'Online and Plugged In? Public History and Historians in the Digital Age', in *Public History Review*, vol 21, 2014, p5.
- 42 Foster, p5, citing Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton, 'At Home with the Past: Background and Initial Findings from the National Survey', in *Australian Cultural History*, vol 22, 2003, p17.
- 43 Leon, op cit, p45.