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UniNews

TORCH BEARER

The Commonwealth's
first Poet Laureate
Selina Tusitala Marsh

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Student's sculpture takes centre
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Award-winning art educator
Steve Lovett's colourful space

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IN THE NEWS

A selection of University staff and students who provided expert commentary in the media recently. Let us know! Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz.



Justin Case

MARKET MOVES

Ausbiz spoke with Business School finance lecturer Dr Justin Case about his research showing that business news articles, specifically those published in the *Wall Street Journal* between 2000 and 2022, could more accurately forecast stock market volatility than other commonly used methods.

Link: tinyurl.com/case-ausbiz-forecasts



Darren Svirskis

HOPE FOR SPINAL CORD INJURIES

Spinal cord injuries sever the link between brain and body and can have devastating consequences. Currently, they are incurable. However, an ultra-thin implant that delivers gentle electric currents to the injured spinal cord is showing promise for healing, Professor Darren Svirskis (FMHS) told RNZ's *Afternoons*.

Link: tinyurl.com/svirskis-rnz-spinal-implant



Joshua Uvaraj

AI MUSIC COPYRIGHT QUESTIONS

RNZ's *Nine to Noon* interviewed Dr Joshua Uvaraj (Law) about Velvet Sundown, a Spotify hit band that doesn't exist – its music is AI-generated. Uvaraj said the case raises legal questions: "If AI produces a copyright-infringing work, who's liable?" He says New Zealand awaits clear government direction.

Link: tinyurl.com/uvaraj-rnz-velvet-sundown



Joanna Hikaka

AGEISM AWARENESS

RNZ *Nights* interviewed Dr Joanna Hikaka, co-director of the University's Centre for Co-Created Ageing Research, about ageism, to mark Age Without Limits Day. "Ageism involves having negative thoughts or feelings about someone just because of their age," she explained, noting that ageist stereotypes remain widespread.

Link: tinyurl.com/hikaka-rnz-ageism



Alicia Didsbury

CANCER HOPE

1News featured Dr Alicia Didsbury and Professor Peter Browett from the University's Centre for Cancer Research. Didsbury is leading a major project to launch a new cell and gene-based treatment platform for cancer, supported by the centre, New Zealand Blood Service and doctors at Auckland City Hospital. Read our story below.

Link: auckland.ac.nz/cancer-platform



Michael Witbrock

BIG GAINS FROM AI

Professor Michael Witbrock, newly appointed to a government advisory role on artificial intelligence, told Ryan Bridges on HeraldNOW that AI can drive big gains in effectiveness and job satisfaction in the public service. "The wonderful thing about AI is that it enables you to do things that were impossible before," he said.

Link: tinyurl.com/witbrock-heraldnow-advisory

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Events and Notices, The Loop.

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clickable links to any URLs.



Paraone Luiten-Apirana
working on Horotiu.
Photos: City Rail Link



Horotiu installed at
Te Waihorotiu Station.

STUDENT'S ARTWORK CENTRED IN NEW STATION

A huge whakairo created by Engineering PhD candidate Paraone Luiten-Apirana now watches over Auckland's newest train station.

In the humming heart of Tāmaki Makaurau, beneath the city's surface, a taniwha has returned – reborn in kauri and light.

A whakairo (carving) named *Horotiu*, representing a taniwha of the same name, now rests in the ceiling of the City Rail Link's new Te Waihorotiu Station. The whakairo is the work of civil engineering PhD candidate Paraone Luiten-Apirana (Ngāti Hikairo, Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Arawa), and the story of its creation began with a patu (hand-held weapon) carved by the kaiwhakairo and an act of reciprocity.

Paraone is a rising star in the world of whakairo, and one of those who saw his potential early on was artist and designer Graham Tipene (Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, Ngāti Hine).

"I first met Graham at an art exhibition back in 2021," recalls Paraone. "And I knew then that if I ever got my first tā moko, it would be from him."

When he later received that tā moko, Paraone carved Graham a patu as a thank you gift. Graham was later commissioned to create artwork for the new station, and the patu that Paraone had carved for him caught his eye. Without hesitation, Graham suggested that Paraone create one of his designs in the project: *Horotiu* – a whakairo that Paraone describes as "the size of a small car".

Horotiu is a kaitiaki, originally aiding ancestors

in their navigation to Tāmaki Makaurau.

Horotiu later took the form of a guardian of Tāmaki's waters, a taniwha watching over the city's streams.

The whakairo *Horotiu* is embedded in this story. The taniwha figure is surrounded by a depiction of raupō (reeds), and glimmers of light behind these mirror the reflection of stars on the water's surface.

Paraone says the story perfectly suits *Horotiu*'s location.

"It's a navigation story. And what better place to tell that than in a train station, where people are constantly arriving, leaving and finding their way," he says.

Horotiu took six months to bring to life and began with sourcing the right timber. "We went on a trip up North to find it. I'm not a wood expert, so I wasn't even sure what I was looking for," laughs Paraone.

But the moment they walked into their second timber yard, Paraone says a kauri slab called to him. That log became the body of *Horotiu* and introduced another strand to the artwork's genealogy.

"Kauri and whale are brothers in Māori pūrākau (myth)," explains Paraone. "So while the carving is based on a kaitiaki in the form of a taniwha, it's also a fusion – part tuna (eel), part whale. The kauri adds its own whakapapa to the work."

And for the thousands of commuters who will pass by *Horotiu* each day, perhaps without ever knowing its origin, Paraone hopes the work will still serve its purpose: to guide, protect and connect.

Beyond his work with chisels and timber, Paraone is carving out new spaces through his University research, which explores the evolving relationship between tradition and technology in whakairo.

His research question, "What are the implications of using machines (or different/ automation technologies) in carving?", has grown into a rich investigation of materials, tools and the whakapapa of innovation.

His answer to his research question is nuanced.

"Novel technology can create opportunities for whakairo in new spaces, creating accessibility and strengthening Māori identity," he says. "But my research also looks to celebrate current and ancestral practices."

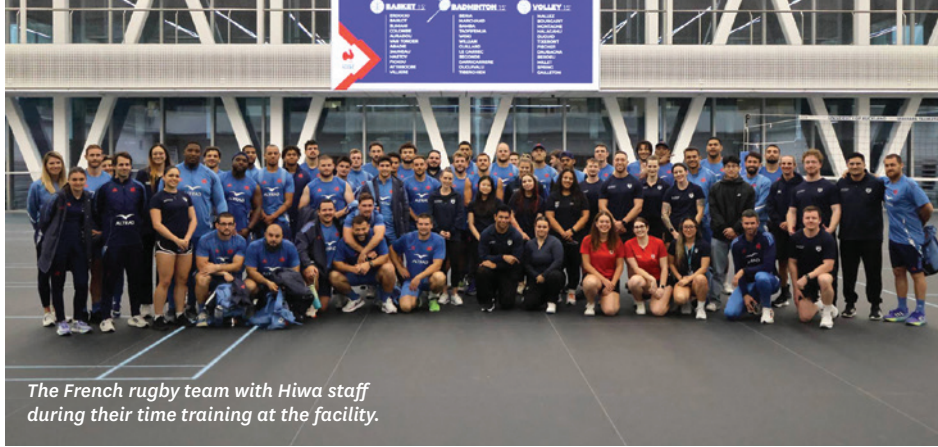
He experiments with a range of unexpected tools – from hand-forged blades to common garden implements. Holding up a grubber, he says with a grin, "if you just sharpen the edge of this, it's perfect for defining the contours of wood", reflecting the innovation exhibited by ancestral tohunga whakairo.

He's also studying the impact of power tools and digital carving technologies, including CNC routers (computer-controlled cutting machines) and laser cutters, analysing how they compare to the adzes and chisels of old.

Still, he holds firm to the traditional values that ground his practice: whakapapa, wairua and intention.

"The tool might change," he reflects, "but the story, the tikanga, the connection – that has to stay the same."

■ Te Rina Triponel



The French rugby team with Hiwa staff during their time training at the facility.

LES BLEUS TRAIN AT HIWA

Students and staff were intrigued to see the French international rugby side working out in Hiwa while on tour in New Zealand recently.

The French side spent a couple of weeks using Hiwa as their training base prior to playing their test matches and when in Auckland for the rest of their tour.

The team have indicated they're keen to return to Hiwa next year too.

Able to take advantage of the semester break, when there are fewer students on site, Les Bleus used the gym for intense training sessions, and worked out alongside students in the main gym.

Toby Batchelor, the University's performance sport team leader, says Hiwa staff ensured students came first, but there were spaces set

aside for the French XV at certain times, which included the weights area and Sports Hall 2.

He said there were benefits to showcasing the world-class facility to elite sporting organisations who see it as a top training location, which is how the opportunity came about.

"New Zealand Rugby was looking for somewhere for the French to train for their test match series ... we got on some Zoom calls with the French rugby team and made it possible."

Toby says it's not just the athletes who enjoyed the experience; the students loved it too.

"You see them hustling around wanting to take photos and get a few autographs, so I think it's been cool for the student experience."

The French players and management were also happy to have their photo taken with Hiwa staff.

"They've been great to deal with," says Toby. "I just wish my French included more than 'bonjour'!"

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/les-bleus-visit

VICE-CHANCELLOR TO HELP GUIDE AUCKLAND'S INNOVATION FUTURE

Vice-Chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater has been named among a group of prominent leaders tasked with driving Auckland's transformation into a world-class hub for innovation and technology.

The new leadership group, unveiled by Auckland Mayor Wayne Brown, will steer the Auckland Innovation and Technology Alliance – an initiative set up to fast-track the city's goal of becoming a globally competitive centre for innovation and technology.

Professor Freshwater will represent Auckland's research and education sector in the initiative and says the appointment highlights the vital contribution that this community makes in shaping the future of cities and economies.

"I'm proud to represent the research and education ecosystem in this important endeavour to position Auckland as a dynamic centre of innovation and technology," she says.

"Strong collaboration among educators,

researchers, industry and local government is essential to ensure Auckland is equipped to meet the opportunities and challenges of the future."

The leadership group brings together a diverse cross-section from across Auckland's innovation landscape. Alongside Professor Freshwater are Sir Peter Gluckman (director of Kōi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures), Spark CEO Jolie Hodson, Frances Valentine (founder of AcademyEX), Simon Bridges (founder of the Auckland Tech Council), Graeme Muller (CEO of NZ Tech) and Mat Rowe (co-founder and executive director of Outset Ventures). The group will begin formal work in August.

Early priorities for the group include leading a new Auckland Innovation and Technology Direction, developing a city-wide framework for innovation precincts and championing an Auckland Techweek in 2026 to showcase local success stories.



Alumna and documentary maker Shirley Horrocks. Photo: Chris Loufte

DOCO ON DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI DON MCGLASHAN PREMIERES

The first film profile of musician and Distinguished Alumni Don McGlashan will receive its world premiere at the New Zealand International Film Festival (NZIFF) in Auckland this month.

Anchor Me: The Story of Don McGlashan is directed by alumna Shirley Horrocks and will screen at the Civic Theatre on 9 August.

From *Anchor Me* and *Bathe in the River* to *Dominion Road* and (in collaboration with another alumnus Richard von Sturmer) *There Is No Depression in New Zealand*, Don has written some of New Zealand's most-loved songs. He graduated from the University in 1982 with an Arts degree, was named a Distinguished Alumni in 2012 and was inducted into the New Zealand Music Hall of Fame in 2023.

Shirley Horrocks has had a 40-year career as a maker of documentaries about New Zealand writers and artists, such as Marti Friedlander, Len Lye and Allen Curnow, as well as scientists, such as Dame Juliet Gerrard.

Shirley, who gained an MA (Hons), an MBA and a drama diploma from the University, received an ONZM for services to filmmaking in 2019. Her documentary on the musician is her thirteenth film to screen at the NZIFF, distinguishing her as the New Zealand director who has shown the most films at the festival.

Don has said he loved singing in the University choir, and also recalls the American poetry course that involved keeping a journal instead of writing essays. "The habit stayed with me," he says, "and my journal is often the source of my songs."

Don has gained a literary reputation for his writing of song lyrics, and he was awarded a literary fellowship at the University in 2001.

For more on Shirley: auckland.ac.nz/shirley-horrocks-ingenio

NEW ZEALAND YOUTH CHOIR SUCCESS CELEBRATED

The University was strongly represented when the New Zealand Youth Choir (NZYC) was recently crowned Choir of the World.

The choir claimed the title (which it last held in 1999) at the prestigious Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales on 13 July.

The NZYC, which features 50 singers aged 18 to 25, includes 12 current University of Auckland students and ten young alumni, all guided to victory by University alumnus David Squire, the choir's conductor.

David also received the Most Inspiring Conductor award at the event, recognising his exceptional leadership and musical vision. He has been the choir's music director since 2011 and was previously a chorister himself, from 1985 to 1991.

School of Music senior lecturer Dr Morag



All the UoA student and alumni members of the choir, pictured with Morag Atchison (School of Music) and David Squire at St Albans Cathedral.

Atchison (who also featured in last month's *UniNews* following her performance at the consecration of the Bishop of North Africa) has been the NZYC's vocal coach since 2007. She says she's proud to help shape the choir's sound and guide the young singers.

"Every three years, we have a new group of singers who are all so very talented and committed to choral singing," says Morag.

"Each choir has their strengths and weaknesses, but this choir [2023-2025 NZYC] has had outstanding leadership, not only from their conductor David, but from the choir leaders Rosa Elliott and Takerei Komene."

Rosa and Takerei are both School of Music alumni; Rosa is now the music teacher at Christchurch's Villa Maria College and Takerei is arts and cultural co-ordinator and choir director at Epsom Girls' Grammar.

Says Morag: "They [the leaders] have created a new tikanga for the choir, making every singer feel valued and respected and, as a result, the music team has been able to demand the very best from the singers."

The way the 2025 NZYC carried themselves in all parts of the competition, on and off stage, shows "they truly are a taonga", she adds.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/nzyc-win-2025

STAFF EXCELLENCE RECOGNISED

Staff from across the University were celebrated for their efforts and achievements at the annual VC's Recognition Dinner held on Thursday 17 July.

Hosted by Vice-Chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater at the Fale Pasifika, the dinner recognises academic and professional staff who have demonstrated exceptional performance in their roles across teaching, research, service and leadership.

"In recognising the achievements of academic and professional staff, we are reminded of our impact on New Zealand and the communities that support us. This is what we do," said the Vice-Chancellor.

The event brought together staff from across faculties and service divisions, with formal citations presented by the Vice-Chancellor and the University's senior leadership team.

For the full list of recipients:
auckland.ac.nz/recognition-dinner-2025



Photos: Richard Ng



SELINA TUSITALA MARSH

BEARING THE TORCH

Commonwealth Poet Laureate
Professor Selina Tusitala
Marsh. Photo: Mark Chilvers,
commonwealthfoundation.com



The University of Auckland professor has been named the first-ever Commonwealth Poet Laureate.

When discussing the possibilities that poetry offered her, Selina Tusitala Marsh once said the artform “gave me a voice when I felt I didn’t have one”.

Now her voice will be heard across more than 50 nations and among more than 2.7 billion people.

The notable New Zealand poet and University of Auckland professor of English and drama has been named the inaugural Commonwealth Poet Laureate.

The appointment, the first in the 75-year history of the Commonwealth of Nations, will run until the end of May 2027. It will involve Selina crafting original poems for flagship Commonwealth events, including Commonwealth Day, the Commonwealth People’s Forum, and ministerial and heads of government meetings.

She will also advise on the creative planning

for the Commonwealth Foundation – the principal agency for Commonwealth culture – and will appear in person at the Commonwealth People’s Forum and Heads of Government Meeting in Antigua and Barbuda in 2026.

Selina, who is of Sāmoan, Tuvaluan, English, Scottish and French heritage, says she is deeply honoured to accept the role.

“In Sāmoan, we say, ‘O le tele o sulu e maua ai figota’; ‘The more torches we have, the more fish we can catch.’ Poetry is our torch,

illuminating paths between our diverse cultures and histories.

“The Māori proverb goes ‘He toi whakairo, he mana tangata’; ‘Where there is artistic excellence, there is human dignity.’ This profound truth guides my vision for this role. Through the elevation of our creative voices, we affirm our shared humanity across the Commonwealth.

“When we honour the artistry within our communities, whether it flows from Sāmoa, my

“When we honour the artistry within our communities ... we recognise the inherent dignity and worth of every person whose story deserves to be told.”

– Professor Selina Tusitala Marsh, Faculty of Arts and Education

mother's island, or New Zealand, where I was born and grew up, we recognise the inherent dignity and worth of every person whose story deserves to be told."

Selina is a former New Zealand Poet Laureate (2017 to 2019) and is an award-winning writer, known for her three collections of poetry and, most recently, her best-selling children's graphic memoir series Mophead.

In 2019, she was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit and a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand. In 2024 she was the first female Pacific writer to be awarded the prestigious Katherine Mansfield Menton Fellowship.

Selina has already played memorable roles in Commonwealth events. Last year, she co-hosted the People's Forum at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sāmoa, and in 2016 she recited a poem, *Unity*, which she wrote for the Commonwealth Day service at Westminster Abbey in front of the late Queen Elizabeth II and other dignitaries.

Lighting a new path

Selina was the first Pacific person to earn a PhD in English from the University, where she lectures in Pacific poetry and creative writing. She has also written poems to mark significant events on campus, such as *B201* – the poem she wrote for and delivered at the opening of the renewed Faculty of Arts and Education building on Symonds Street in 2023.

She is also the co-director, of the University's Centre for Arts and Social Transformation (CAST), which promotes arts-led approaches to justice, health and well-being. Alongside other staff members from CAST, including co-director Professor Peter O'Connor, Selina travelled to Hawai'i last year offering creative support to children affected by devastating fires on Maui.

Selina says the honour of being the inaugural Commonwealth Poet Laureate, means she can live up to the responsibility of her name, Tusitala (teller of tales), with the intention to create even greater visibility for Pacific peoples.

No stranger to leveraging her platform to advocate for her people and the arts, Selina led prime ministers and heads of state in a singalong at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting last year in Sāmoa. Her poem chorused a wish list of urgent issues facing Commonwealth nations, including climate and health justice, using a well-known Christmas tune.

She says the Commonwealth Poet Laureate role will be a huge undertaking.

"I have written extensively about the many hats we wear as Pacific people and that applies to myself. I am the sum of many parts, which includes being an academic and a poet. I intend



Selina performing a specially written poem at the Commonwealth Day service at Westminster Abbey in 2016.
Photo: Picture Partnership

"I intend to navigate this exciting new role with the same passion and energy that I bring to the other areas of my life."

– Professor Selina Tusitala Marsh

to navigate this exciting new role with the same passion and energy that I bring to the other areas of my life."

The University's Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific, Professor Jemaima Tiatia-Siau, says she is thrilled with Selina's Commonwealth appointment.

"Selina's appointment is an acknowledgement of the natural and rich resources abundant in the Pacific, and our ability to tell and share stories in a unique and compelling way, while keeping our connections strong," says Jemaima.

"Our Tusitala has led from the front strongly over the past decades and we are so proud that she has been given a well-deserved platform representing all of us in the best possible way."

The role of poetry in the Commonwealth

Director-general of the Commonwealth Foundation Dr Anne T. Gallagher made the inaugural Commonwealth Poet Laureate appointment, and says it places creative expression at the heart of the Commonwealth's work.

She says we can learn best about ourselves and each other through the art form of poetry and that there could be no finer candidate for the position.

"Poetry helps us make sense of our fragile world. It is the language of love and dreams, the language of despair and desire, of protest and rebellion," says the director-general.

She says that at the Commonwealth Foundation, they have come to understand that poetry – and creativity in all its forms – is not an embellishment of the Commonwealth story but a catalyst for justice, understanding and hope.

"Selina Tusitala Marsh embodies that truth. Her poetry travels effortlessly from the smallest community to the global stage, illuminating the concerns and aspirations of our 2.7 billion citizens and challenging all of us to listen more closely."

As Selina accepts the torch of the Commonwealth position, she says she's committed to amplifying the voices that heal, challenge, and unite the Commonwealth family.

"Together, we will kindle more torches, casting light on the stories that connect us all, celebrating the artistic excellence that affirms our collective human dignity."

■ Julianne Evans and Kim Meredith

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/commonwealth-poet-laureate



*Dr David Krofcheck was among a global cohort of scientists to win this year's Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics.
Photos: Chris Loufte*

DAVID KROFCHECK: AT THE HEART OF THE MATTER

A lifelong wonder about the mysteries of the Universe has underpinned Dr David Krofcheck's career, which has seen him contribute to major scientific discoveries at the largest particle physics laboratory in the world.

Rocks were the catalyst for Dr David Krofcheck's fascination with the Universe and its origins.

As a young boy growing up in the industrial US city of Pittsburgh, he would hunt for fossils in disused quarries near his home. Discovering shells, crinoids and other ancient forms of life sparked an early interest in science that quickly flourished.

His parents caught on, buying him a telescope, which he used to keenly observe the world around him – including watching his father, who worked at the steelworks three blocks from the family's house, head home each day.

"When you're in a hard neighbourhood, you look at buildings, windows, your neighbour's houses. That was my first real experience doing something scientific," explains the University of Auckland academic.

His fascination with science has since helped him see much, much further.

Since 2003, the only scientist in his field (high-energy nuclear physics) in New Zealand has also been working for CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research. There he's been involved with experiments involving the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) – the world's biggest and most powerful particle accelerator.

In 2025, that work led David and the 13,507 other global scientists involved in LHC experiments to be awarded an 'Oscar of the science world' – the Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics.

From Pittsburgh to Aotearoa

Aspiring to a university education was unusual for residents of a blue-collar city like Pittsburgh when David was growing up, he says, but his

parents were determined it was a path he and his sister would follow. So, after high school, he enrolled in a Bachelor of Science at nearby Carnegie Mellon University.

It was there that he took a part-time job in a high-energy physics laboratory and found his niche.

"There were lots of people thinking the same way or who had similar experiences growing up," he remembers. "I really felt like I found my crowd there."

This sense of community continued at Ohio State University, where he completed a Master of Science and a PhD in physics. After graduating, he held postdoctoral positions at Michigan State University and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. While at the former, he met his now wife – a New Zealander – on a blind date.

Looking to move down under, he saw that the University of Auckland was advertising for an oceanographer who could also teach electronics. To his surprise, he managed to convince the recruiters that a nuclear physicist would be a better fit and, in 1995, joined the Faculty of Science as a senior lecturer in physics.

Links to the Large Hadron Collider

This month marks David's thirtieth year at the University, where he currently teaches three undergraduate courses and is the postgraduate adviser in physics. And for more than 20 years he has also been working alongside thousands of other scientists for CERN.

The intergovernmental organisation's Geneva base is home to the largest particle physics laboratory in the world, and nearby, in a tunnel beneath the France-Switzerland border, lies the famed LHC. Widely regarded as the 'world's greatest science experiment', the LHC has a circumference of 27km and a depth of 175m. Unsurprisingly, it took a decade to build and was the result of a collaboration between more than 100 countries.

On paper, the LHC's purpose sounds straightforward: to facilitate scientists in testing the theories of particle physics. Putting this into practice, however, is an extremely precise process.

Using electromagnetic fields, the LHC accelerates beams of charged particles to travel close to the speed of light before colliding. These particles are so minute it is comparable to lining up two needles 10km apart and engineering them to meet in the middle. The collision produces new particles, which scientists then analyse through detectors to gather data about the building blocks of matter.

It was one such detector that was the initial focus of David's involvement at CERN. He joined forces with Professor Phil Butler, a physicist at the University of Canterbury, and his son Professor Anthony Butler, a radiologist at the University of Otago, to spearhead a novel project: building part of the Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) detector. This giant 3D camera would document particle collisions through millions of images every second.

In 2012, the team's CMS detector collected information that contributed to the breakthrough discovery of the Higgs boson.

"In the periodic table of particles, there is one particle that is missing – an energy field known as the Higgs field with which all other particles interact to generate mass," David explains. "Particles and fields are supposed to be interchangeable, so the theory in the 1960s was, if you propose the Higgs field, there should be a Higgs particle."

To create one of these particles, an

accelerator powerful enough to disturb the Higgs field was needed. Enter the LHC, which possessed just the right energy range to produce collisions that would create a Higgs particle. As the particle fell apart, the Kiwi-built contribution to the CMS detector identified its characteristic fingerprint and confirmed the existence of the Higgs field.

The significance of this discovery was momentous: it substantiated scientists' understanding of how particles gain mass, thereby verifying the Standard Model of particle physics.

Peering further into the future

While honoured to be among the team of scientists who received the Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics this year, David is excited about other discoveries high-precision measurements with the LHC can reveal.

"We want to understand the processes that happened in the early Universe," he explains. "Nobody really knows what happened during the Big Bang, but in this magic laboratory that New Zealand found its way into we can study the microseconds after and know something real about how the Universe works."

David will be sharing more about his research this month at his Raising the Bar talk, 'Out of this world: the smallest and most surprising liquid in the Universe' – including a major finding made by CERN scientists.

"It turns out that the secret of the early Universe is a fluid, with the lowest viscosity of

any fluid ever discovered. It's the littlest liquid in the Universe."

When he's not studying physics or thinking about physics – which is most of the time, he admits – David is an avid reader and keeps close to 4,000 books in his garage-turned-library. He also enjoys getting outside and cycling or, when he's back in the US, cross-country skiing.

But everything always comes back to physics, he says. Why?

"It's purely curiosity-driven research," he explains. "Nuclear and particle physics goes back to the beginning, to the earliest fractions of a second of the Universe. To me that is a mind-blowing concept."

■ Nikki Addison

Raising the Bar is an annual event hosted by the University since 2017, featuring 20 talks by academics across ten bars. See David's talk on 26 August at The Conservatory. Tickets are free and available now. Scan the QR code for details.



COVER STORIES UNCOVERED

They say you can't judge a book by its cover – but a book's cover can certainly tell you a lot.

The cover of a large, weighty 16th century tome from the University's Special Collections is one example. The spine of the book (a French translation of Plutarch) has been rebaked with a fragment of manuscript waste – in this case, a piece of vellum covered in Latin text that has been dated to around the late 12th century.

Cultural Collections adviser Jo Birks explains that using discarded material – which in this case is centuries older than the 16th century book it supports – was a common Western bookbinding practice.

"That's fantastic now for researchers because sometimes these recycled fragments, including from early printed books, might be the only parts of texts that survive," she says.

The circa late 12th century material recycled for this handy bit of bookbinding, adds Jo, is actually the earliest known piece of manuscript held in Special Collections.

The book is one of several now on show as part of 'Got you covered: deciphering bookbinding' – an exhibition in the General Library's He Māra Mahara exhibition space. It shines a light on bindings as more than the materials holding a book together; like the texts they contain, bindings tell the stories of people, places and time.

Also on show is a highly decorated 1901 edition of *Maori Art* – a book originally issued in five parts – by Augustus Hamilton,

documenting toi Māori. Cultural Collections team leader William Hamill, who has curated the exhibition with Jo, says the work is credited with popularising the kowhaiwhai motif, leading to its adoption in a range of everyday design contexts.

He points out that the design is integrated into all aspects of the binding, and that the exhibited copy is one of a limited number that have striking decorated text edges.

Personalised bindings also feature in the exhibition, such as a midwifery textbook covered with a fabric carrying case, as do bindings from China, India and Japan, and a 19th century business ledger from the Tāmaki Makaurau-based bookbinder J.F. Leighton.

"There are some really gorgeous and diverse binding examples," says Jo, "and through this exhibition we're trying to convey the idea of looking at bindings, asking questions of them and exploring what they can tell us."

■ Caitlin Sykes



This 16th century book's binding has been repaired with manuscript material from around the late 12th century. (Below) A midwifery textbook covered with a bespoke fabric carrying case.



View 'Got you covered' until 8 October in He Māra Mahara, Level M, Te Herenga Mātauranga Whānui General Library, Monday to Friday, 11am to 4pm. Join the curators for an exhibition tour on 3 September and a book-arts workshop on 19 August. Dr Nicholas Thompson, theological and religious studies, will also give a lecture on the manuscript fragment. Book through Eventbrite.

LEADING KENYAN AUTHOR'S IMPACT RECOGNISED

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, once described as East Africa's leading novelist, had close connections to the University of Auckland.

Members of the University community have mourned the recent death of distinguished Kenyan author and scholar Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who maintained a profound and lasting connection with the University spanning over four decades.

In 1984, Ngugi delivered the University's prestigious Robb Lectures on 'The Politics of Language in African Literature', which were later published as the seminal work *Decolonising the Mind*. These lectures, delivered during Māori Language Week, resonated deeply with the University's Māori and Pacific communities and established enduring bonds between Indigenous struggles for linguistic and cultural sovereignty.

Ngugi's advocacy for writing in native languages inspired local scholars, including Merimeri Penfold's groundbreaking translation of Shakespeare's

sonnets into te reo Māori. His work bridged African and New Zealand experiences of decolonisation, fostering meaningful dialogue about cultural imperialism and Indigenous resistance.

In recognition of his contributions to literature and his ongoing relationship with the University, it awarded Ngugi an honorary Doctorate of Letters in 2005. He continued to grace the community, most recently appearing at the 2018 Auckland Writers Festival, having come to regard Auckland as "a kind of third home".

Ngugi's legacy lives on through his revolutionary contributions to postcolonial literature and his unwavering commitment to linguistic and cultural decolonisation. His influence on the University's academic community and his solidarity with Indigenous peoples worldwide will not be forgotten. The University of Auckland has extended its deepest condolences to his family and the global literary community.

■ Professor Selina Tusitala Marsh and Emeritus Professor Michael Neill collaborated to write this in memoriam tribute.

FROM RED LIGHTS TO LEGAL RIGHTS

The rocky road to getting sex work decriminalised in New Zealand – a world first – is the subject of a new book by historian Cheryl Ware.



When the Prostitution Reform Act was passed in 2003, making New Zealand the first country in the world to fully decriminalise sex work, it was a landmark moment, says Cheryl Ware.

“New Zealand’s decriminalisation of sex work wasn’t just a legal shift; it was a social and cultural transformation. It gave sex workers the right to say no, to seek justice, and to be seen as workers,” says the University senior research fellow, who is an historian of sex, gender and health (pictured above).

The Act, which passed after hot debate and by the narrowest of margins – a single vote – safeguards the human rights of sex workers, protects them from exploitation, promotes their welfare and occupational health and safety, and prohibits the use of people under 18 in sex work.

For her new book, *Untold Intimacies: A History of Sex Work in Aotearoa 1978–2008*, Cheryl charts the road to the passing of the Act and its immediate aftermath. The historian, who specialises in late 20th century Aotearoa and Australia, spoke to 25 individuals who worked on the ships and the streets, in massage parlours and as private escorts across the turbulent period.

“Sex workers have always been part of our communities, but their stories have rarely been told in their own words. Oral history allows us to hear their voices directly, without filters,” she says.

The book starts in 1978, when sex workers were operating outside the law. It then looks at the price of going public with their bid for decriminalisation, the slow professionalisation

of the industry and the fight for workers’ health and safety, especially in an era of HIV and AIDS.

Cheryl notes the marked difference in safety and conditions before and after decriminalisation, but also, the ongoing stigma.

“Before 2003, sex workers were criminalised, marginalised, and often targeted by police. The Massage Parlours Act of 1978 regulated brothels but didn’t protect workers.”

After 2003, life and conditions were much better legally, meaning sex workers didn’t have to be looking over their shoulders every night for the police, but society’s judgement remained, she says.

And the workers themselves were actively involved in pushing for reform, she says, with industry advocate Dame Catherine Healy, of the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective, chief among them.

“These workers were not passive recipients of change; they were organisers, activists, and storytellers,” says Cheryl.

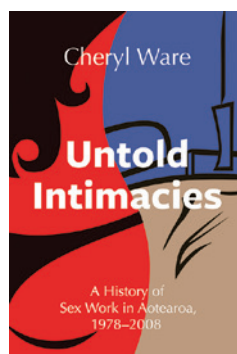
“They fought for their rights and reshaped the law, and I’m very thankful to Dame Catherine in particular for her close engagement with the entire manuscript, and all the others whose stories feature in this book, and who engaged with this project so openly.”

“Even with legal protections, stigma persists. Migrant sex workers in particular are excluded from the law’s benefits and remain vulnerable.”

As a coda, a 2008 government review of the Act found decriminalisation had not led to an increase in sex work, a concern of its opponents, and had improved safety and rights for workers.

Cheryl believes this story goes far beyond sex work: “It’s about labour rights, gender justice, and how we value people’s lived experiences.”

■ Julianne Evans



Untold Intimacies: A History of Sex Work in Aotearoa 1978–2008 is published by Auckland University Press, \$40



Mahoney on Evidence: Act and Analysis (2nd edition)

This is the second edition of what’s described as the leading and authoritative text on the Evidence Act

2006. Associate Professor Scott Optican (Law) is co-general editor of the publication, which is also authored by leading evidence law academics and practitioners, including University of Auckland senior law lecturer Dr Alexandra Allen-Franks.

Scott Optican and Elisabeth McDonald (general editors), Thomson Reuters, \$140

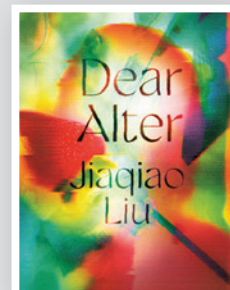


No Good

In this debut poetry collection, Arts alumna Sophie van Waardenberg considers girlhood and grief, love and its loss, distance

and the return home. Exploring the concept of ‘goodness’, the collection has been described as a ‘psychologically astute, honed, vividly rendered collection from a strong, engaging new writer’.

Sophie van Waardenberg, Auckland University Press, \$25, released on 14 August



Dear Alter

Another debut poetry collection published by Auckland University Press, *Dear Alter* is by Jiaqiao Liu, a poet from Shandong, China, who grew

up in Tāmaki Makaurau. Their writing has been published by *The Spinoff*, *badapple* and *OF ZOOS*, as well as in anthologies such as *Ōrongohau/Best New Zealand Poems 2017* and *A Clear Dawn: New Asian Voices from Aotearoa New Zealand*.

Jiaqiao Liu, Auckland University Press, \$30

MY SPACE



Steve Lovett oversees
Elam's Mātātuhi/Print Lab.
Photos: Chris Loufte



BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS

The day before the interview for his job at Elam School of Fine Arts, Steve Lovett snuck into the space where he'd be working to get a feel for the place.

"At the interview the next day, I said, 'these are the things that have to change, and within this time frame, otherwise I can't start the job.'"

The interviewers clearly approved of his vision. He got the job as technician at Elam's Mātātuhi/Print Lab and proceeded to change the architecture of the teaching area from a series of discrete rooms into a single connected space, with a large central hub.

And when you hear Steve talk about what goes on in the space, where he manages the technical delivery of all sorts of print-related processes, it makes sense. Printing is a physical activity, and often collaborative.

"So much of the work we do here is literally transferring physical information from person to person, hand to hand. When I get people to learn to screen print, for example, it's my hands on the squeegee, and they're beside me. I could

explain the process, but it's much better that they feel what's happening," he says.

"Understanding how to do things, where we have to be present – that's a really important lesson."

Art, and the tools to make it, are everywhere. A massive table dominates the space's large, central room, emphasising it as a place of community and collaboration.

"This is a really social space," adds Steve. "Students love to come up here and we begin to develop a relationship with one another, as they start to understand the possibilities of the things they can do here. I constantly change what's on the wall because I want people to ask questions and start conversations."

An artist and researcher as well as an educator, Steve was among three with Elam connections to receive one of the country's highest visual arts education awards in April – the Premier Award from the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators. Artist Dagmar Dyck, who is a doctoral candidate at Elam and assistant Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific at AUT, and Elam alumna and Pukekohe High School deputy principal Donna Tupaea-Petero, also received the award.

It was a humbling and overwhelming

experience, says Steve, who "absolutely hated school" as a child.

He was in his thirties when he completed a Master of Fine Arts at Elam, and was then convinced by Elam alumna, artist and Manukau Institute of Technology School of Visual Arts programme leader Marté Szirmay, to take on a job at MIT.

It was a pivotal decision, says Steve. He taught at MIT for 22 years, before taking on his current role at Elam in 2017. He clearly loves teaching students the visual language they need to master the artistic processes that will bring their ideas to life – ultimately starting the important conversations that art sparks.

At 66, still absorbed in research, transdisciplinary projects and considering a doctorate, he has no plans to retire.

"This is never a job; this is an opportunity, and it has been for 35 years, for me to think and grow and explore and have conversations.

"There are teachers who have transformed my life many years ago who I'm still in touch with and I tell students that today: there's this extraordinary opportunity in education to begin a conversation that can change our lives utterly."

■ Caitlin Sykes