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Waipapa
Taumata Rau
University
of Auckland

UniNews



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on finding his path

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Old Choral Hall

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Research fellow wins
major photography award

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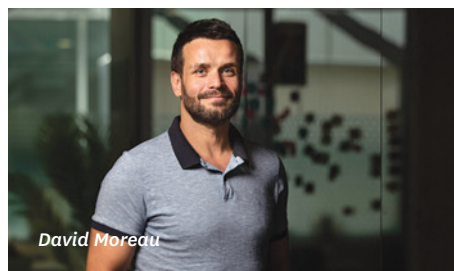
CAPTURED IN TIME

A look inside the
University's archives

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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.



David Moreau

FASTING AND YOUR BRAIN

Short-term fasting doesn't generally diminish cognitive function in adults, Dr David Moreau (School of Psychology) told *Men's Health*. The idea that fasting interferes with mental performance "probably stems from how we feel when hungry – tired, distracted, and irritable," he said.

Link: tinyurl.com/moreau-mens-health

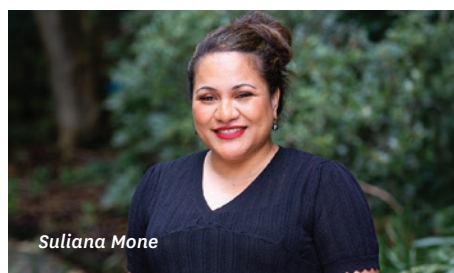


Raewyn Poulsen

GENDER TO BLAME

Gender differences in the way men and women's tissue cells respond to damage may lead to effective new treatments for osteoarthritis. Pharmacology researcher Dr Raewyn Poulsen (FMHS) told RNZ's *Nine To Noon* that men's cells renew cartilage tissue, while women's cells preserve it.

Link: tinyurl.com/poulsen-osteoarthritis



Suliana Mone

TONGA'S CONSTITUTION TURNS 150

Tonga's Constitution has protected the kingdom's independence and shaped its national identity despite ongoing debates about its modern relevance, Dr Suliana Mone (Auckland Law School) said in an interview with *Pacific Mornings*. Mone shared her comments in light of the Constitution's 150th anniversary.

Link: tinyurl.com/mone-pacific-mornings



Sam Marsh

PARACETAMOL WARNINGS NEEDED

Many New Zealanders are exceeding the recommended dose of paracetamol and risking liver damage, according to a new study. Dr Sam Marsh (FMHS) told RNZ that people often don't realise cold and flu products contain paracetamol and there need to be warning labels on such medicines.

Link: tinyurl.com/marsh-rnz-paracetamol



Chris McMillan

SPORT VS CLIMATE

The *Sunday Star-Times* interviewed Dr Chris McMillan (Social Sciences) about professional sports contributing to climate change in New Zealand. Meanwhile, climate change is having a significant impact on community sports, with games frequently postponed due to wild weather and flooding, said McMillan.

Link: tinyurl.com/mcmillan-sst-sport



Febelyn Reguyal

UPCYCLED FLOUR POWER

With 24,000 tonnes of bread wasted each year in New Zealand, Dr Febelyn Reguyal (Engineering and Design) is tackling the issue by analysing the environmental footprint of flour made from unsold supermarket bread. She told *Morning Report* the upcycled flour uses less water and has fewer emissions than imported wheat flour.

Link: tinyurl.com/reguyal-rnz-flour

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Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz

For the fortnightly Whāimōhio The Loop newsletter, email: staff-comms@auckland.ac.nz.
Deadlines are on the intranet under News, Events and Notices, The Loop.

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Old Choral Hall's portico helps strengthen the heritage building.
Photos: Simon Young

OLD CHORAL HALL SINGS AGAIN

The reopening of Old Choral Hall signals a new chapter in the history of a landmark for the University – and for Tāmaki Makaurau.

When the building wrap came off the front of Old Choral Hall in August it revealed a ‘face’ that hadn’t been seen for almost a century.

The landmark building’s portico – the covered structure at its Symonds Street entrance – had been reinstated, giving the building back its original public face, which had been missing since its first portico was removed following the 1931 Napier earthquake.

The gleaming new portico is more than a pretty face; it will play a crucial role in helping the building withstand any future earthquakes, with steel hidden within its columns now providing

bracing for the building’s façade.

The seismically strengthened and refurbished building was blessed on 1 December and will be officially opened by Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage and alumnus Hon Paul Goldsmith on 5 December.

Project design began in 2019, with work significantly disrupted in the early stages by Covid-19 lockdowns. In total, 1,304 contractors have spent 370,000 hours working on site and more than 50 consultants have been involved.

Margaret Waller, project manager with Campus Environment, says the building’s

interior, formerly a “rabbit warren” of internal offices constructed over several decades, has been reconfigured to open up many spaces. This has included removing a mezzanine floor to restore the full height in the building’s foyer, as it was when it was originally used as a choral hall.

New services, such as air conditioning, sprinklers and a lift, have also been installed in the building, which now contains 4,000sqm of floor space, including offices for students and staff and two 100-seat lecture theatres.

The building is listed as a Category 1 heritage place – the highest level of heritage recognition – and evidence of the building’s past has been retained as part of the refurbishment.

One of the most striking examples is a previously undiscovered well (pictured below), which has been archaeologically documented and covered over with a clear floor panel so this unique piece of history remains visible.

Given the position of the well, Margaret says its construction could even pre-date the construction of the choral hall itself.

“It may even relate to the construction period of the [adjacent] Albert Barracks Wall and internal buildings,” she says, “with the well providing essential water for building mortar and any encampment of labourers providing the workforce for the barracks’ construction.”

One of Margaret’s favourite features of the refurbishment is another previously hidden treasure: a skylight, which was found above the original entry steps to the side of the hall. It has now been repurposed as a ceiling feature with lighting above.

“No one knew it was there, and it has been brought back to life in an imaginative way.”

Reclaiming the front foyer as a double height space “is another wow moment”, she adds.

And in a fitting touch, singers from the building’s first owners, the Auckland Choral Society, will perform in the foyer on opening day – allowing the space to sing again.

■ Caitlin Sykes



THE HISTORY OF A HERITAGE LANDMARK

This Old Choral Hall was built by the Auckland Choral Society in 1872, on the same site as two previous choral halls, which had burnt down. Able to seat more than 1,000 people, it served not only as a place for the society to perform, but as the main public hall for Auckland before the current Auckland Town Hall opened in 1911.

Even before the University of Auckland bought the building from the society shortly before World War One, it had close

associations to the University. It saw the graduation of Kate Edger, the first woman to gain a BA in the British Empire, in 1877, and was used for teaching from 1888.

The University added two wings to the original hall to house its science department: one in 1919 and another in 1925. Glass tiles from the time the building housed chemistry labs are still visible in the 1919 wing. The 1925 addition was designed by architect Roy Lippincott, the American architect also behind the University’s Old Arts Building, and its iconic ClockTower.

GOOD TO KNOW

HIWA WINS INTERNATIONAL ACCOLADES

Hiwa Recreation Centre has recently been recognised with two major international architecture prizes.

The facility won the Sport Architecture category at World Architecture Festival in Miami, Florida on 13 November.



Photo: Scott Norsworthy

Hiwa, which was designed by Warren and Mahoney in collaboration with MJMA Architecture and Design, Toronto, and Haumi, was up against a diverse range of high-quality projects, ranging from major arenas to small community facilities.

Simon Neale, the University's chief property officer, says it's fantastic to receive the international recognition.

"This award acknowledges the quality of its design and the way the facility supports student well-being, clubs, sport, recreation and high-performance programmes," says Simon.

"While Hiwa is a world-class recreation facility, it is also much more than that. The building is central to our student experience and is designed to be fully inclusive, supporting the success of everyone who uses it."

The month prior, Hiwa won another international accolade: the International Olympic Committee – IOC Architecture Prize, presented in partnership with the International Association for Sports and Leisure Facilities (IAKS International).

DOCTORAL RESEARCH ON SHOW

More than 100 examples of doctoral research were on show at the Research Showcase held by the School of Graduate Studies 11–13 November.

The annual competition allows students to share their research via poster displays and images, with 20 prizes up for grabs.

Kirsten Tilleman (Engineering and Design, pictured below, top right) won the Academic Poster category, showcasing her research into

designing for inclusive safety on public transport.

Cristal Salatas (Liggins, pictured bottom left) won first prize in the Research Image Own Creation section; she is investigating how maternal nutrition is associated with preterm birth in New Zealand.

Winning for her AI-created research image was Rebecca Allcock (Arts and Education).

For the full winners' list go to:
auckland.ac.nz/research-showcase



**Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori,
Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins.**
Photo: Elise Manahan

GLOBAL INDIGENOUS EDUCATORS GATHER

Several of the University's researchers and educators contributed to the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE), which was held in Auckland from 16–20 November.

Indigenous communities and educators from around the world gathered for the conference, hosted by Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makaurau – AUT.

Since its inception in 1987, when knowledge keepers first convened in Vancouver, Turtle Island (Canada), WIPCE has united Indigenous educators, leaders and communities around a vision to honour, preserve and advance Indigenous education.

Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori, Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins (Ngāti Hau, Ngāpuhi), led a breakout session exploring Indigenous inclusion, and the distinction between decolonisation and Indigenisation.

"My hope is that we are moving beyond inclusion approaches and towards Indigenisation," says Te Kawehau.

"Indigenising approaches work toward institutions that Māori recognise as 'ours' – as places where we see genuine engagement with Indigenous Māori ways of existing and where mātauranga and Māori priorities and initiatives are thriving."

Auckland Law School professional teaching fellow Eru Kapa-Kingi (Te Aupōuri, Ngāpuhi, Waikato, Apanui) delivered a keynote address for youth delegates, focused on politics, self-determination and decolonisation.

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/wipce

NEW SENIOR LEADER WELCOMED

When Mark Gregory first set foot on the University of Auckland campus in 2004, he bought a University-branded t-shirt and thought to himself, 'I'd like to work here someday'.

More than two decades later, he returns to take up the position of chief operating officer (COO) and registrar this month, following the retirement of long-serving Deputy Vice-Chancellor Operations and Registrar Adrienne Cleland. While retiring from her role, Adrienne will continue with the University in another part-time role until April 2026.

Mark brings more than 25 years of experience in university operations and strategy across Australia and the US. He most recently held the role of vice-president corporate and COO at Flinders University in Adelaide, where he worked from 2017 until this year.

His career has also included senior leadership roles at the University of Adelaide and Portland State University in Oregon, following an early career in technology and software start-ups in his hometown of Chicago.

He holds an MBA and undergraduate degrees in computer science and mathematics, as well as in psychology.



*Mark Gregory takes up the role of chief operating officer and registrar this month.
Photo: Simon Young*

"The University of Auckland is a great university, with scale, quality, international reach, sustainability impact, a diverse culture and history. And it sits in a beautiful place in the world," he says.

And as for that University of Auckland t-shirt? "I still have it," he says.

"On my last visit, I picked up a new Waipapa Taumata Rau t-shirt, too."

Full story: auckland.ac.nz/mark-gregory



Proud father Jack Stanley, 89, travelled from Dunedin to Auckland to see his daughter, Professor Margaret Stanley, receive the Callaghan Medal. Photo: Royal Society Te Apārangi and Rebecca McMillan

ROYAL SOCIETY MEDAL WINNERS

Five leading University scientists were recognised with medals by the Royal Society Te Apārangi on 4 November for outstanding contributions to science, communication and society.

Professor Christian Hartinger (School of Chemical Sciences) was honoured with the Hector Medal for advancing understanding of how compounds called metal complexes interact with proteins – work that is helping design next-generation anti-cancer drugs. Professor Chris Sibley (School of Psychology) received the Durie Medal for his landmark New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS). The 16-year project has tracked the views of more than 70,000 New Zealanders.

School of Biological Sciences colleagues Professor Margaret Stanley and Professor Rochelle Constantine were also winners. Margaret, an ecologist, received the Callaghan

Medal for her outstanding contribution to communicating science and raising public awareness, while Rochelle received the Fleming Medal for pioneering research that has shaped marine conservation policy in Aotearoa and internationally.

Professor Leo Cheng (Auckland Bioengineering Institute), who has developed world-leading techniques to record and analyse electrical activity in the body, received the MacDiarmid Medal for outstanding scientific research that demonstrates the potential for application to human benefit.

Also in early November, the University's Dr Patrick Savage won the society's Early Career Research Excellence Award for the Humanities for his interdisciplinary research into the relationships between music and language across cultures. In collaboration with 74 researchers, he led a research project showing songs and instrumental melodies are slower and higher pitched and use more stable pitches than speech.

Full stories:
auckland.ac.nz/rsnz-medals-2025
auckland.ac.nz/rsnz-early-career-2025

A portrait of Michael Steedman, a man with short dark hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue blazer over a light blue patterned shirt and a red lanyard with a white tiki pendant. He is holding a large, white, spiral conch shell in front of him with both hands. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a large red geometric structure on the right.

MICHAEL STEEDMAN

A DIFFERENT PATH

As Kaiarataki, Michael Steedman is tasked with overseeing the success of the University's Māori students and staff.

Photos: Chris Loufte

Kapa haka and the Māori martial art school of whare tū taua helped Michael Steedman connect to his Māoritanga. Now he's determined to support the next generation to find their own paths.

Michael Steedman's associations with Waipapa Taumata Rau extend back decades, to a time when the pathways for Māori students looked very different from how they do now.

"There are paths today," says the University's Kaiarataki, Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori, "that allow students to come back to themselves and discover meaningful relationships with te ao Māori."

As someone charged with overseeing success for Māori students and staff, and creating initiatives that allow Māori culture to thrive, Michael (Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, Ngāti Whātua ki Kaipara, Te Uri o Hau) is committed to forging ahead on those paths.

"Data projections show the youngest populations in Tāmaki Makaurau over the next 20 years are Māori and Pacific. So, unless we lift the skill base and experiences of that demographic, we won't realise that potential. We have a responsibility to be part of that transformation," he says.

"This University has made a large contribution to society, and we can make an even bigger one for our future generations."

Connecting through kapa haka

Michael grew up in Helensville, with a strong understanding of his whakapapa, which also includes Celtic and Scottish roots. It was "a very country upbringing", he says, imbued with subtle yet meaningful Māori practices, such as eating pūpū (mud snails) and scattering the shells across the driveway.

"We have a responsibility to be part of that transformation."

– Kaiarataki, Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori, Michael Steedman

"We did Māori things at home, but we didn't have the reo. I knew who I was – we went to marae hui and kaupapa occasionally – but as kids we didn't have the deeper understanding of tikanga," he recalls.

"My grandparents were from that generation where they were discouraged from using the reo and didn't teach their kids. On reflection, though, our customary practices were present."

He moved to the city to attend the University of Auckland, living with one of his aunties while studying for a Bachelor of Science, majoring in sport and exercise science. Despite having strong connections to his iwi and hapū today, it was only at that point, through his aunt, that he first connected with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei.

After completing his degree, Michael enrolled in a personal development course for Māori men in Māngere. It sparked a journey of deepening his connection to his Māori language and culture that began with learning his pepeha.

"Saying it out loud was the first time I actually felt a connection," he says.

At a later meeting, when Michael was looking for work, he used his pepeha to introduce himself. Coincidentally, the person he was introducing himself to had the same pepeha and, recognising they were related, encouraged him to join his kapa haka group.

Michael joined a senior kapa haka group in the late 1990s called Te Puru o Tāmaki. Initially he struggled, singing songs without fully understanding the words. But through kapa haka he came to learn sentence structures, meaning and context.

"This is how I learned to speak te reo; it wasn't in a classroom," he says.

"Kapa haka was not only a vehicle for revitalisation but the gateway to myself; my Māori ancestry, my identity, was released through kapa haka."

Today, Michael is a kaihaka, or professional kapa haka performer, with Hātea Kapa Haka. The Northland-based roopū competes in Te Matatini and is well known for its creativity, particularly its renowned waiata tira (performed at the start of a kapa haka performance) rendition of the Queen classic *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

Whare tū taua: a Māori martial art school

Kapa haka also introduced Michael to the movements of the taiaha.

Traditionally used for fighting and wero (challenges on the marae), the taiaha is often associated today with the Māori martial art school of whare tū taua. It's a practice, says Michael, that brings him a sense of mauri tau (contentment).

"Whare tū taua is about coordinated movement of the body, hands and weapons," he explains. "It's similar to parts of karate in terms of set movements, and it also embeds philosophy, history, healing, rehabilitation and training. A warrior considers how they interact with everything around them – people, environment and context."

Michael recalls his introduction to the practice: "I was told that my uncle who lived down the road was an expert at this, so I knocked on his door and introduced myself."

"He asked me to come over every Sunday, which I did. I spent time with his whānau and it became a routine to a point when I forgot what I was there for in the first place. Then months down the track [he] goes: 'shall we go to the marae now', and that's when it started."

Michael became deeply committed to the practice, and now, nearly 30 years on, he serves as the 2IC at Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei for whare tū taua.

"It's been fundamental to my identity, learning these things as a sportsperson too; it's a great physical activity and has kept me fit over the years."

Michael has performed elements of whare tū taua at significant ceremonies, including the

kawe mate (mourning ceremony) for Jonah Lomu's funeral at Eden Park, and has delivered a wero to figures such as former US president Barack Obama and the former Māori Kuini Te Arikini Te Ātairangi Kaahu.

You may also spot Michael at Eden Park with his wife, UniServices Kaiārahi Tui Kaumoana-Steedman, opening games for the Blues.

Mentorship and growth

Waipapa Taumata Rau has also been central to his personal development, as well as his professional growth.

As a student, he met lifelong friends and mentors, including Emeritus Professor Michael Walker ONZM. The Biological Sciences academic first introduced the younger Michael to the Tuākana programme and supported him to become the University's first Kaiārahi, or Māori adviser, in the Faculty of Science in 2010.

"My Māori ancestry, my identity, was released through kapa haka."

– Michael Steedman

That experience emphasised to him the importance of integrating science and tikanga: "Facts matter; evidence matters," he says.

"In our culture, Māori practices are similar across the country and have stayed largely constant for a long period. Tikanga is evidence of practice. For me, it is its own form of scientific method. To critique it, you must have experience and understanding."

It's a concept that resonates with a whakataukī that a mentor taught him: "Ehara i te mea he tika, he hē; engari he rerekē," says Michael. "It's not right or wrong, it's just different."

The Kaiārahi role allowed him to contribute to initiatives designed to uplift Māori students, helping realise their potential in ways previous generations did not experience.

Another of his mentors at the University was a former vice-chancellor, the late Stuart McCutcheon, who Michael describes as a clear thinker, personable and genuinely interested in supporting Māori leadership.

At one point, when the role of pro vice-chancellor Māori at the University was being advertised, Michael says he applied, despite feeling "woefully inexperienced".

"I threw my hat in the ring, fully aware I wasn't the obvious candidate. I wasn't successful, of course, but that led to conversations with Stuart McCutcheon, who was vice-chancellor at the time. That chat changed everything."

"We had a good relationship. He created a space for me to grow professionally, and into the role that eventually became the Kaiarataki, the Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori."

Michael became the first Kaiarataki, initially under the leadership of Dame Cindy Kiro (pro vice-chancellor Māori 2018–2021) and now as deputy for Professor Te Kawehau Hoskins.

But the relationships that have truly allowed Michael to thrive, he says, have been with his kaumātua, who have been prominent and wise guides throughout his life.

"I've heard them say often: 'I runga i te rangimārie, which I understand as, 'with peace, solemnity'."

Although previous generations lived through traumatic experiences, such as being alienated from their language, he says this whakaaro illustrates his forebears' resilience, quiet strength and focus on the future generations.

And they're qualities, he says, that his generation, and those to come, must hold onto as they forge a new path.

■ Te Rina Ruka-Tripone





Seabird researcher Dr Edin Whitehead (above), pictured on the Antipodes Islands where she captured her award-winning image (right) last summer.

Photos: Edin Whitehead



PHOTOGRAPHY WIN FOR SCIENTIST

Dr Edin Whitehead has been named New Zealand Geographic Photographer of the Year in the awards' wildlife category.

Dr Edin Whitehead says her image of an Antipodean albatross chick that likely succumbed to starvation is a stark reminder that not every chick develops into a fledgling strong enough to take flight.

The photo, captured on the Antipodes Islands by the biological sciences research fellow, was named winner of the wildlife category at the New Zealand Geographic Photographer of the Year awards ceremony on 23 October.

Although she had been a finalist in previous years, and Young Photographer of the Year in 2014, she says she was surprised by the win.

"It was a bit embarrassing – I actually cried. I never go in expecting anything; that's just my approach to life ... and you appreciate everything that you get."

Edin says it meant a lot to win the award for a photojournalistic image that carried a strong message, advocating for the plight of seabirds.

It was captured while she was working as a field assistant for the Department of Conservation's Conservation Services Programme on the Antipodes Islands, located 860km southeast of Rakiura/Stewart Island.

Scientists have monitored the Antipodean albatross population on the islands for the past 30 years. Between 2005 and 2007, bird numbers crashed due to high female mortality rates and low chick production, and a 2024 survey found numbers still remained far below pre-crash levels.

Edin spent last summer monitoring the colony's population with research ecologist and zoologist Kalinka Rexer-Huber and recalls how she captured the winning shot.

"The light was really nice one evening and I was planning on walking back to our hut to make dinner, but Kalinka was like, 'No, no, you stay here with your camera. I'll go back.'"

That's when she found one of the chicks, dead on the ground.

"We had kind of been anticipating it. As soon as we get to the island, we go around the study area and find all of the chicks from last season, we map all the nests, see who's been successful, who hasn't been successful."

They had seen obvious signs of chicks in distress, which occurs when the parents can't provide sufficient food, or have ended up as fishing bycatch by longline fisheries, leaving their young vulnerable.

Edin's love for the natural world stems from her parents, both medical doctors (her mother is now retired), who shaped her curiosity and creativity. Father Tony Whitehead introduced his daughter to birdwatching and passed on his photographic talents; he was also a finalist in the same category of this year's awards, and has been a finalist in previous years.

"In another life, Dad would have had my career. He's an obsessive and amazing photographer, so he's responsible for me being the way I am! Mum's responsible for the side of me that loves to document and write everything down, which is useful for both research and outreach."

Growing up in Rotorua, she spent summers by the sea at Mt Maunganui and Ōhope.

"My brother and I are both first-generation New Zealanders, but we often visited family in South Africa. That grew my love for being out in nature; I did a lot of birdwatching with my dad and granddad.

"I've managed to get Dad out into the field with me working on seabirds occasionally, and it's super special sharing that side of my life with him."

Father and daughter also run a wildlife photography masterclass on Otago Peninsula.

At the awards ceremony, the words of photographer, storyteller and awards' judge Qiane Matata-Sipu struck a chord with Edin; Qiane talked about the 'why' that drives people to capture images and tell stories. Edin originally embarked on a conjoint Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Arts degree but pivoted as her curiosity to ask questions about the world in a "science-y kind of way" persisted.

It's a path that's led to finding her own 'why', now researching the impacts of climate change on seabirds, and capturing such award-winning images along the way.

"The story of Antipodean albatrosses and their trajectory towards extinction has been a big part of my life for the past two years," she says.

"These birds are disappearing, and if my work can help people see and care about that, then it's worth every moment."

■ Kim Meredith



Growing up with a mother with MS sparked Professor Hanneke Hulst's decision to study neuroscience.

LEADERSHIP AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

Brain scientist Hanneke Hulst is the new director of the Centre for Brain Research.

For Professor Hanneke Hulst, moving halfway across the world has offered a chance to fulfil her dreams.

The brain scientist has shifted from the Netherlands to become director of the University's Centre for Brain Research (CBR). She takes the reins from its founding director, Distinguished Professor Sir Richard Faull, who has moved into a part-time role.

Hanneke stumbled across the advertisement for the CBR job while in her previous role as scientific director at Leiden University's Institute of Psychology and says it reawakened her youthful dream of working overseas.

"It's an adventure moving across the world," says Hanneke, who first visited New Zealand 13 years ago, travelling around the South Island in a campervan. "And when I read the vacancy description, it felt like it was written for me."

Part of that sense of destiny arose because CBR aims to launch a new centre focused on the inflammatory and neurodegenerative disease multiple sclerosis (MS) – an initiative that aligns closely with her research expertise. She also felt inspired by the sheer range of neuroscience the centre embraces.

Hanneke grew up with a mother with MS, sparking her decision to study neuroscience

and brain disorders. She started looking into MS during her PhD and has since specialised in MS research, while also learning about a range of other brain disorders and treatment approaches.

"From living with mum, I knew MS impacts not only the person with the disease, but the life of their family," she says.

"MS often surfaces when people are between 20 and 40 years old, so they're in the prime of their life when they're hit by this brain disorder.

"There are a lot of years left, so there's the potential to make a big difference for this group, who are making career decisions and deciding whether to start a family."

Gaining a Master of Health Sciences in 2005 from Vrije University in Amsterdam gave her a strong foundation in population health, disease prevention and policy making. She then completed a second masters degree, in neuroscience, in 2008.

During her PhD in neuroscience, she examined why some people with MS suffer cognitive decline, yet others don't. Hanneke realised MRI scans of the brain only revealed half the story and she felt frustrated by the missing half – a "black box" she seemingly couldn't open.

Then, in 2020, she completed her third masters degree, in philosophy, bioethics and health. She uses perspectives from neurobiology, psychology and philosophy, she says, to approach her research holistically.

"I realised we tend to make everything in research as simple as possible to aim for clear-cut outcomes, but often a simplistic approach doesn't fit the complex phenomena we're studying – especially when studying brain disorders.

"When examining cognitive processes, it's essential to look at brain structure and function, but other factors also have a profound influence on cognition, such as a person's social life, friendships, support networks, employment, sense of purpose, financial independence, mood and fatigue."

Hanneke worked for 14 years as a researcher and assistant professor in the department of anatomy and neuroscience and the MS Centre Amsterdam at Amsterdam University Medical Centres, before moving to Leiden University four years ago. There, she was chair of neuropsychology of health and disease. She also led the MindS-lab, a research team focused on cognitive rehabilitation in people with MS and Parkinson's disease.

At the University of Auckland she will lecture in psychological medicine, in the Schools of Medicine and Psychology; at CBR, a focus will be on forging connections. She plans to build on the centre's existing international collaborations with universities in the Netherlands, Europe and the US, and hear how CBR can continue to create impact locally.

"I hope to integrate New Zealand even more strongly into international research projects, building bridges that enhance the centre's global impact," she says.

"I'm open to what the community wants. I will start by listening to the people first and seeing what the Centre for Brain Research needs most.

"In this climate of limited funding, I believe that by working together and using our resources wisely, we can make a real difference for people living with brain disorders."

■ Rose Davis

DOUBLE VISION

Identical twins Sanuthi and Sanumi Ranasinghe have known they would be surgeons for as long as they can remember.

The bubbly pair typically finish each other's sentences and then erupt into giggles.

"We had a phone book at home in Colombo, and I had written on it 'Surgeon Sanumi', and then..."

"I had written underneath, 'Surgeon Sanuthi'. That was one of the first things I had written when I picked up my pen."

When they moved to Aotearoa, New Zealand at the age of ten, their mother brought the phone book too; shortly before the twins' graduation from the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences on 9 December, they looked at it again.

They have valued each other's support through the tough six years of medical training, including finding they were on the same placements in the past three years.

They went to Melbourne for their surgery selective and followed their shared interest in plastic surgery to the same hospital.

There were mix-ups. "When we were in Melbourne, we were switching back and forth between these two hospital campuses every week. So they thought we were the same person," says Sanumi.

Sanuthi picks up the story: "So they're like,



Identical twins Sanuthi and Sanumi Ranasinghe graduate from medical school this month. Photo: Simon Young

"Remember what I told you last week?" I was like, "No, I wasn't there. I don't remember."

Sanuthi recalls a funny moment this year, when a consultant on Sanumi's team took everyone's coffee orders then surprised Sanuthi by giving her Sanumi's coffee. "I was really confused as to why he was giving me free coffee. I had to explain that I was a twin."

This year, they both went to London for their elective at Hammersmith Hospital.

Says Sanuthi: "It was nice working alongside Sanumi, because she was suturing on one side of the theatre table and I was doing the other side. It was a unique experience that we will probably never have again."

Less funny was dealing with missing grades and assessments, when administrators assumed there was a typo and sent only one email.

All was sorted though, and the good experiences far outweighed the bad.

There were rare experiences of racism at school on Auckland's North Shore and in the hospital system, too, but the twins were robust.

"I remember a day at school very clearly when one of the teachers said that we couldn't get into medical school and I couldn't get into an extension class," says Sanumi. "That was very discouraging, but I just thought to myself, 'I'm going to prove them wrong.'"

Health issues experienced by family members also cemented their commitment to study medicine.

Now that they are graduating, the pair are looking forward to taking different paths and developing individual personalities.

"We've been through a lot but, despite all of this, we are very grateful to have been able to complete six years of medical school together," says Sanumi.

■ Jodi Yeats

MEET THE 2026 AUSA PRESIDENT

Leadership and learning go hand in hand for Nimish Milan Singh, the incoming Auckland University Students' Association (AUSA) president for 2026.

This year, the fourth-year student (pictured right) has been outreach lead at Velocity, the University's flagship entrepreneurship development programme, run through the Business School's Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE). The experience helped build his communication and community-building skills, he says, which he used in his AUSA campaign.

"Running for AUSA president was my way of helping create the kind of university environment I would want to have if I were starting my degree now," he says. "I wanted a more community-focused experience, where students felt supported and connected beyond lectures."

As incoming president, Nimish is focused on initiatives that will enhance everyday student



life, including expanding overflow study spaces and introducing a clear AI policy for students.

"We all need somewhere to study, and as AI becomes more integrated into learning, we need to make sure students understand how to use it responsibly," he says.

In his Velocity role, Nimish has helped inspire and connect aspiring entrepreneurs across

campus – experience that has shaped his leadership approach.

"I've learned that asking is one of our greatest superpowers. When Silicon Valley entrepreneur Jeff Wallace visited the University, he reminded us that people are often willing to help if you just reach out. Sometimes, one conversation can open doors you never expected."

Nimish is studying towards a Bachelor of Arts in Chinese and history and a Bachelor of Science in physics and statistics.

Reflecting on his own University experience, Nimish has some advice for first-year students.

"Talk to your teachers; it can feel intimidating, but they genuinely want to help. Introduce yourself early and make it a habit to go to office hours. And join clubs and attend events. I cannot overstate how much I've learned and grown through the clubs I've joined, especially Velocity and the CIE community."

And if there's a motto that captures his approach to learning and leadership, it comes from one of his favourite fictional worlds.

"Help will always be given at Hogwarts to those who ask for it."

■ Yifan Li

TOI TE MANA WINS TOP INTERNATIONAL AWARD

***Toi Te Mana: An Indigenous History of Māori Art*, written by University of Auckland academics, has won Book of the Year at the Apollo Awards in London.**

The book, written by Professors Deidre Brown (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kahu) and Ngarino Ellis (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou), together with the late Jonathan Mane Wheoki (Ngāpuhi, Te Aupōuri, Ngāti Kuri), won one of seven categories in the awards. Held annually by *Apollo*, one of the world's oldest and most respected visual arts magazines, the Apollo Awards celebrate internationally exceptional achievements in the art and museum worlds.

Published by Auckland University Press, *Toi Te Mana* is the first New Zealand book to be recognised in the awards, and the first winner focused entirely on Indigenous art.

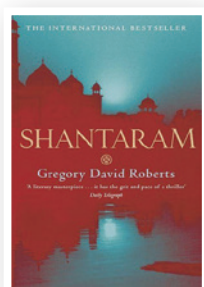
The Apollo Awards judges remarked: "This groundbreaking survey, a decade in the making, is informed by the authors' belief that 'a greater understanding of Māori art – by Māori and non-Māori – is essential for the survival of Māori culture'. They also attempt to set it among the great art traditions of the world, a task in which they brilliantly succeed."

The win follows *Toi Te Mana* taking out top national honours at the 2025 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards in the illustrated non-fiction category in May.

More: auckland.ac.nz/toi-te-mana

RECOMMENDED READS

Members of the Asian Staff Network's book club recommend some of their favourite books they've read this year.



Shantaram (2003)
by Gregory David Roberts

In the early 1980s, Gregory David Roberts, an armed robber and heroin addict, escaped from an Australian prison to India, where he lived in a Bombay

slum. There, he established a free health clinic and joined the mafia, working as a money launderer, forger and street soldier. He found time to learn Hindi and Marathi, fall in love, and spend time being worked over in an Indian jail. Then, in case anyone thought he was slacking, he acted in Bollywood and fought with the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan. – Pooja Yadav



Invisible (2021)
by Jacqueline Leckie

Invisible documents the experiences of Indian migrants and their descendants in New Zealand. I discovered this book through an obscure reference in the

editorial note of Nathan Joe's published script of his play *Scenes from a Yellow Peril*. *Invisible* poked at my realisation that I had not thought much about the long history of Indians in New Zealand (longer than that of Chinese goldminers!), and the complexity of their place in New Zealand as British subjects (before 1949),

and as Indians in their own right. I thoroughly recommend this book as a good introduction to the lives of Indian New Zealanders. – *Sindy Luu*



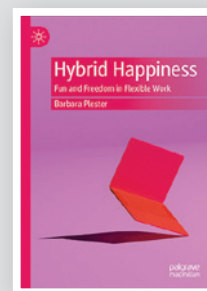
TJ Powar Has Something to Prove (2022)
by Jesmeen Kaur Deo

After a pretty and popular high school student, TJ Powar, gets called out and humiliated in a trending meme, she takes a

'hairy' stand against beauty standards – and halts all hair removal.

What struck me most about this book was how it used something so ordinary to unpack a much bigger conversation about beauty, culture and identity. The author masterfully explores how body hair becomes a cultural battleground, especially when viewed through the lens of Western ideals versus traditional and ethnic perspectives. As someone with a background in gender psychology, I deeply appreciated the way the author illuminated the often unspoken pressures placed on different bodies, particularly those that don't fit neatly into Eurocentric beauty standards. It's a relevant, necessary read for anyone who has ever felt their body was being judged not just for how it looks, but for what it represents. – *Eleanor Almeida*

Are you a staff member interested in becoming a member of the Asian Staff Network book club? Contact Sindy Luu: sindy.luu@auckland.ac.nz

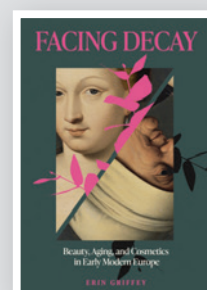


Hybrid Happiness: Fun and Freedom in Flexible Work

With a specific focus on fun and play, this book explores how hybrid work has changed workplace behaviours and interactions.

Associate Professor Barbara Plester (Department of Management and International Business) also looks at how these social aspects of work are increasingly important in hybrid work. However, they are occurring in new ways and forms as people navigate fast-changing workspaces.

Barbara Plester, Springer, \$57

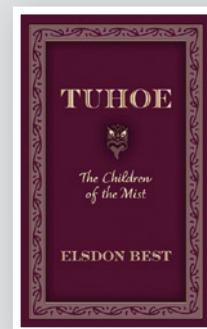


Facing Decay: Beauty, Aging, and Cosmetics in Early Modern Europe

Associate Professor Erin Griffey (Art History) examines early modern visual art, anti-aging recipes and other

writings to investigate the period's obsession with youth and beauty (and anxiety about age and decay). It explores why and how early modern women fought the appearance of old age, arguing youthful skin was pursued both as a sign of health and for cosmetic reasons.

Erin Griffey, Penn State University Press, \$175



Tuhoe: Children of the Mist

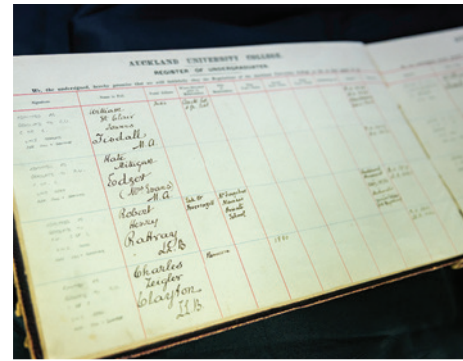
During the early twentieth century, ethnologist Elsdon Best lived for many years in the Urewera region, recording the culture, beliefs, customs and whakapapa of the

Ngāi Tuhoe people. One hundred years after its first publication, this two-volume work has come back into print with the guidance of alumnus Dr Rāpata Wiri (Ngāi Tuhoe, Ngāti Ruapani), whose doctoral thesis provided a re-evaluation of Best's work.

Elsdon Best, preface by Rāpata Wiri; Oratia Books; \$100



*University archivist and records manager Sean Connelly among volumes of the University Council's minutes.
Photos: Simon Young*



FOR THE RECORD

If you once scored a bad University of Auckland grade that you hope had somehow slipped into the ether, you're out of luck.

The University's archives team has them all – stretching back more than 140 years.

Student records have been diligently captured digitally as far back as the 1980s. In a work and research space on the City Campus, managed by Sean Connelly and his team, however, there's also a sturdy bank of filing cabinets filled with neatly typed student record cards dating back to 1927 (including, pictured bottom right, the records of former vice-chancellor Sir Colin Maiden).

In an adjacent, temperature-controlled room you'll also find the original, handwritten University registry book, capturing students' academic progression, from enrolment to graduation, from the University's beginnings in 1883. Among its pages is the record of Kate Edger, the first woman in the British Empire to graduate with a BA (pictured top, right). Other treasures in the space include Sir Colin Maiden's

academic robes (right, middle), the former Fine Arts Library sign and calendars that once listed every graduate of the institution.

Sean is the University's archivist and records manager and, along with three team members, records and preserves University life and history. Maintaining the University's historic record – its archives – still largely involves dealing with paper-based records retained for their historic importance, although many of these have and are being digitised. Managing records today, of everything from Council and Senate meetings to individual academic records, is all done digitally.

"One thing about our team that people find surprising is that we're real techies," says Sean. "That means the archive of the future will look very different to what it looks like today."

A couple of times a year, Sean conducts a two-hour workshop, held in the ClockTower, telling a hands-on history of the University through its archives. The star of the popular talks, he says, is the University's mace – an impressive sceptre-like object that plays a ceremonial role on occasions such as graduation ceremonies – which "always steals the show".

While Sean loves the mace, he thinks his favourite aspect of the University's archives is the Auckland College of Education Collection, which was brought into his team's care when the Epsom Campus closed.

"It's a really rich collection. While it's administrative, like the traditional University of Auckland archives, it also contains a lot of social history," he says.

Sean and archivist Jane Ferguson worked closely with communications lecturer Dr Margaret Henley as she accessed records in that collection while working on a Marsden-funded project exploring the history of netball in New Zealand. One of the outcomes of the project was an Auckland Museum exhibition, which Sean and Jane received a special invitation to attend.

"It was really nice to see that we played a small part in that exhibition," says Sean, "and in a project that you wouldn't normally associate as being part of a University role like this."

For information about taking a tour of the University's archives, contact:
records_management@auckland.ac.nz

■ Caitlin Sykes