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MAHURU 2020

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

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History lecturer's gift for the future

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Acting president of the students' association, Emma Rogers, explains why being involved is so rewarding

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SNAPSHOTS

BIG JUMP IN RANKINGS

The University of Auckland is now back in the top 150 universities in the world. The 2021 Times Higher Education World University Rankings, released on 2 September, show Auckland at 147th equal, up on 179th equal for 2020 and between 200-250 in 2019. It's the University's best ranking since 2010 and again ranks Auckland the top university in New Zealand. Areas judged include teaching, research and citations, knowledge transfer (industry income) and international outlook (students, staff, collaboration).

MĀORI LANGUAGE WEEK

It's Te Wiki o te Reo Māori from 14 September, but the University is always striving to revitalise te reo on campus. For example, our Kuputaka, a glossary of te reo terms you may hear or see on campus, can be found on the intranet or **staff.auckland.ac.nz/en/te-ao-maori/kuputaka.html**. It lists all job titles, so start by amending your email signature ahead of Māori language week. There's also the handy Te Kūaha app released as part of the University Language Plan for the Revitalisation of te Reo Māori.

TOP ARCHITECT RETURNS HOME

Anthony Hoete has returned home from the UK to join the School of Architecture and Planning for Semester Two. Anthony is an award-winning Professor of Architecture (Māori) who has practised in Aotearoa, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands. His urban design often incorporates Māori symbolism and he was instrumental in restoring the historic Hinemihi whare (pictured) that sits in Clandon House in Surrey, after it was taken from New Zealand in 1893. See his work at **whatarchitecture.com**.

RHYS JONES A SUPREME WINNER

Dr Rhys Jones (Ngāti Kahungunu) from the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (FMHS) has taken out the coveted Prime Minister's Supreme Award at the 2020 National Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards held online on 1 September. Auckland had three of the nine finalists – the other two were Dr Maxine Lewis (Arts) and Anuj Bhargava, also from FMHS. This is the second year a University of Auckland teacher has won the Prime Minister's prize. In 2019, it was Andrew Eberhard from Business.

THIS ISSUE

THE IMPACT RANKINGS 2020 NUMBER 1

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EMMA **ROGERS**

Emma Rogers is acting president of the AUSA after George Barton resigned to return to his studies.

Emma Rogers, acting president of the AUSA.
Photo: Elise Manahan

How long will you be acting president?
Until the end of November and then the team elected in September for 2021 will start their roles from 1 December. When the president role came up, I was education vice-president and I'd just finished my studies. It was a great opportunity to step up but I'll be trying to find a job on the outside after this. We've had more than 60 people wanting to stand for executive roles so that's great.

Is the AUSA president role full-time?
Yes, it's a paid role and 40 hours a week. It's a role you need to be passionate about and it's also deeply political when it comes to dealing with the University and outside parties.

What kind of person stands for the AUSA?
Someone who loves the AUSA and shares its values. You have to understand the power of the student voice and the opportunity for the AUSA to support students. The best people in the AUSA are really committed. It's a chance to show great student leadership and develop the relationship between the University and AUSA.

What's on the agenda at the moment?
The impact of Covid-19 on study has been on the agenda all year so continuing the work to support students is key. Aside from that, the Strategic Plan being developed by the University is something for me to get my teeth stuck into. I'm trying to engage with students over that.

How do you get students interested in that?
My job is to translate what the University is saying into terms that they care about so they will engage. So I'm framing it like, 'this is the Strategic Plan and it's going dominate every decision the University makes for the next five or ten years and we get a say in whatever they decide'.

Like you did for the Code of Conduct? That boiled down to 'don't be a dickhead'.
Ha, well it was a bit more than that but that was the essence of it. Our plan is to engage with specific student groups and then go for wider consultation. We'll run an information campaign online, as well as on campus when we can, and talk to our Ngā Tauira Māori partners, as well as go into C Space (Cultural Space) for workshops. The position papers aren't student-friendly so it's up to people like me and the AUSA team to make them understandable.

What kind of subjects are important?
The education and sustainability position papers are important. We want students to tell us how we should tackle sustainability, what they want in education and how they want to be involved. We have proactive students who'll make their own submissions but we want to make sure there are no barriers to anyone making a submission.

How has the AUSA helped students lately?
As soon as Covid-19 hit, we created a group called 'We Got You'. It was for students to access extra help when they may not have known such help was available. It has been really effective because we've been able to see what students are struggling with, such as 'I lost my job and now I'm finding it really hard to pay rent'. The AUSA pumped money into our welfare grants and have given more than double the usual number. Many students find it hard to reach out so we went to many directly, and said 'hey look, we've got this help available and we want you to access it, please do'. For the second lockdown, we made sure those services were fully operational online so students could still access them.

What was your greatest achievement as education vice-president?
It's been an awesome year and we've got so much done working as a team as well as within the education realm, despite lockdowns. The biggest thing was getting the University to agree to a 'grade bump' to reflect the conditions students have been under. We worked really constructively with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic and our Student Council to achieve that.

The Student Council – what's that?
The Student Council was created in 2019. It's made up of all of the presidents from the faculty associations. It brings all these student voices to one room and we talk about the biggest issues the University and its students are facing. Student Council can also deal with things such as 'should we take a stance on the cannabis referendum', 'should we have drug testing at our events'.

Should you take a stance on cannabis law?
We took that to the Student Council and after consulting with the students we decided no, we won't. We'll provide information and the opportunity to get educated on it, but we won't be taking a stance. We're political, not partisan.

It used to be compulsory to be a member of the student union. Would you like that?
Our membership drives are always fun and great to meet and sign up members, but yes it's an issue being an opt-in system rather than opt-out. It would be perfect if everyone belonged so we knew we had the mandate of all students. It's kind of why Student Council was created, to hear from more students in the absence of a mandate. That gives us confidence but an opt-out system would be best.

How was the taste of freedom on campus?
It was so nice to see students! We had huge turnouts for events like Bingo and pub quizzes in Shadows. For first-years, it's especially important to get involved and meet people so it was good to see students getting excited at university life. The student clubs held some awesome events that they couldn't hold online. But there's also an improvement in online engagement – making sure students can 'socialise online' if we're in lockdown.

Five minutes with the VC. What would you say?
On behalf of students, it would be that we're looking forward to a constructive relationship between AUSA and her office. It would be awesome to see regular catch-ups with her become the norm and barriers removed between the VC and students although obviously she has a lot on her plate. I'm a strong believer in the 'students as partners' model and would like to help implement that in a really workable way.

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS PROVES A TURNING POINT

Mental Health Awareness Week is 21 to 27 September. Mathew Nuttall tells his story.

Mathew Nuttall, who works in HR at the University, has experienced severe anxiety and now speaks publicly in order to normalise conversations about mental illness.

The spectre of redundancy at a previous workplace triggered a staff member's worst-ever anxiety attack, rendering him barely able to function and feeling so unwell he lost a huge amount of weight.

"I went off the deep end," says HR's Mathew Nuttall of the crisis a few years ago, which led to his GP diagnosing generalised anxiety disorder.

"I had to force myself out of bed. I was violently ill and did not want to do anything," he says.

The diagnosis came as no surprise. He had been an anxious child with self-esteem issues who went on to be bullied at high school, where he was an openly gay teenager. Periodic attacks of anxiety followed as an adult.

"I get fear symptoms. My body shuts down. I can't keep food down and lose weight. In that bout, I lost 15 kilograms."

A supportive partner helped enormously, keeping things going at home and "holding Mathew's hand", as did daily calls from his mother and the care of his GP.

While the diagnosis only confirmed Mathew's experience, the same doctor suggested he think back about previous triggers, list them and start planning strategies to cope.

Medication supported Mathew's ability to think constructively and clearly about how to respond to triggers. When Mathew is triggered now, he starts thinking about conversations to have with others and himself.

Earlier this year, he started work at the University of Auckland as a product owner. Mathew had no qualms about sharing his mental health diagnosis with his manager, who thanked him and said to let her know if he needed support.

So far, he says, that hasn't been necessary – his commitment to positive responses means he's thriving.

Mathew has taken the plunge to talk openly about his anxiety. He hopes it will help others, destigmatise mental illness and build understanding. "It's cathartic to talk about it anyway," he says.

Mathew now has a personal toolkit of resources that help support his mental well-being. While he is happy to share them, he emphasises what works for him may not work for someone else.

MATHEW'S TOP TIPS FOR MENTAL RESILIENCE

- Get enough sleep. Mathew turns off the screens 30 to 45 minutes before bed and reads to help him rest.
- Keep a routine going. Even at the worst times, get out of bed, have a shower, get dressed and, if possible, go out into the world.
- Talk to others. Mental illness isn't something to be ashamed of, it is just a part of your life. Talk to your manager about any support you need.
- Belly breathing is very helpful for calming anxiety and bringing a sense of happiness.
- Exercise. Taking a walk in nature is a mood booster, even walking through an urban park.
- Looking into a dog's eyes boosts serotonin in the same way gazing at a baby does.
- Meditation. It can be hard to find time, but the rewards of completely stilling the mind are great.
- Connect. Talking to friends and ideally having a laugh takes your mind off the struggles you are facing.
- The over-riding message, Mathew says, is: "Hope is your best friend." Tell yourself: "I have done this before and I will get better – maybe not today or tomorrow, but I will get better."

RESOURCES FOR STAFF

- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) **EAPservices.co.nz**
- Mental Health Foundation **mentalhealth.org.nz**
- CALM Auckland **calm.auckland.ac.nz**
- Mental health and well-being **equity.auckland.ac.nz/staffwellbeing**

If you want to talk to someone about options for managing any form of mental health problem at work, contact your HR manager or Cathie Walsh, Staff Equity Manager, cathie.walsh@auckland.ac.nz.

■ There will be a range of University activities for Mental Health Awareness Week, 21 to 27 September. Visit the intranet for details.

TESTING TEAMWORK

University staff have been at the forefront of the Covid-19 testing being done in urgency.

University of Auckland and Auckland DHB scientists banded together to help process a huge increase in Covid-19 tests after the latest outbreak of the virus. The Grafton Clinical Genomics Laboratory has analysed as many as 2,000 swabs in a single day. Laboratory scientists from the University and Auckland Hospital dropped everything to work through the weekend mid-August, ramping up after their earlier round of testing ended in July.

"It's been a massive task – we've been handling larger numbers of samples than we did during the initial lockdown," says Jason Copedo, technical manager for Grafton Clinical Genomics, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (FMHS).

Staff from FMHS, the Liggins Institute and the hospital's LabPlus facility worked split shifts from 7.30am to 11pm Tuesday to Saturday, with about 1,400 tests processed a day.

Fortunately, the Liggins lab had remained at physical containment level 2 (PC2) after the reconfiguring required for earlier Covid-19 testing, so was already compliant with safety standards. Samples brought via underground tunnel from the hospital across the road are processed to break down cell membranes to get at the material inside, and heated in biohazard safety cabinets to kill the virus, with genetic material extracted by a robot.

Ten staff work in two teams of five in their separate bubbles. "By working together, staff from FMHS, Liggins and LabPlus have played a significant role in the rapid scaling up of testing," says Professor John Fraser, Dean of FMHS.

The testing has highlighted the close working partnership between the University and the Auckland DHB through the Auckland Academic Health Alliance, enabling the research facility to quickly switch to clinical testing during a public health emergency.

HILARY CHUNG

28 May 1962 – 16 August 2020

Hilary Chung was a force of nature, writes Professor Paul Clark.

Even in Hilary's last four years, as she battled breast cancer, she never seemed to lose the energy that characterised everything she turned her hand to. All who encountered her as colleagues, students, and bike-riding or paddle-board enthusiasts will not forget that typical drive and enthusiasm. Only in the last months did that light begin to diminish.

Hilary started teaching at Auckland in 1999. A Chinese literature graduate from the University of Cambridge, she had chosen to do her doctoral studies at Durham. While there she co-edited a pioneering volume of essays on Soviet and Chinese versions of socialist realism in the literatures of those two countries. I first learned of her from an old friend who was then Professor of Chinese at Edinburgh. As an Australian and mentor of Hilary, she thought a move to this part of the world might help avoid the prejudice she had encountered and harness her skills. Happily, a vacancy for a lectureship in Chinese came up in the Asian Languages and Literatures Department that I headed, and we recruited Hilary after an entertaining late-night (for her) phone interview.

Hilary arrived in Auckland with her young daughter. She immediately plunged into the world of university work and bike clubs. Mia rode first on mum's bike and later graduated to her own. Through the world of biking, Hilary met her partner Trevor, a Canadian New Zealander. Mia grew up, graduated from the University of Auckland, and spent a year on exchange in Beijing, as her mother had done in the 1980s.

Hilary made her mark in her teaching of postgraduate students in comparative literature, gender and Asian studies, among other fields. Her insights, mastery of theory and ability to inspire students were memorable. Her research on the creative work of the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand and worldwide captured valuable moments in time.

Hilary's skills in administration and service were apparent from the beginning of her years here. She took on the headship of the then School of Asian Studies for three years from 2012 and had already been in charge of Faculty of Arts international relationships. She travelled with Deans to Latin America and China to build academic relationships. She was in Taiwan on research leave when she learned of the grave turn in the disease that eventually took her from us on 16 August.

Her experience of illness drove Hilary to apply her skills to the campaigns to gain Pharmac support for life-extending drugs for women like her battling metastatic breast cancer. She became something of a media star, albeit a reluctant one, appearing before a select committee and being interviewed widely.

Hilary determinedly returned from sick leave to lead the complex approvals process and launch of the long-planned cross-faculty Global Studies undergraduate degree programme. Without Hilary's drive, negotiating skills and clear vision, Global Studies would not have got off the ground. She was determined to attend the graduation of the first Bachelor of Global Studies degree students. Sadly she will not be there next autumn, but all those who encountered her will remember a forceful and funny teacher, colleague and friend.

■ Paul Clark is Professor of Chinese and Director, North Asia Centre of Asia-Pacific Excellence (CAPE)

SIR BOB **ELLIOTT**

3 January 1934 – 21 August 2020

Emeritus Professor Sir Bob Elliott has died.

Sir Bob was a Foundation Professor of Paediatrics at the University from 1970, and from 1978-1999 was Professor of Child Health Research, and the first chair of CureKids (previously the Child Health Research Foundation). He was knighted in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours for his contribution to medical research.

In February, as a finalist in the Kiwibank Senior New Zealander of the Year, he told the crowd that his "best achievement in 63 years of reseach was founding CureKids in 1971". Among his discoveries was a treatment for a fatal form of congenital heart disease in babies, pig cell transplants for Type-1 diabetes and the newborn pinprick screening test for cystic fibrosis. His research into cystic fibrosis resulted in an increased life expectancy of people with the illness from seven-to-ten years to more than 40.

Just a few weeks ago, Sir Bob appeared on TV3's *The Project* fighting for the cost of miracle cystic fibrosis drug Trikafta to be reduced. US company Vertex charges people nearly $500,000 for a year's supply. (See **tinyurl.com/SirBobCF**)

■ For a full obituary visit: auckland.ac.nz/bob-elliott-obit

FELICITY BARNES: THE BEST IS HISTORY

Felicity Barnes sees how hard her colleagues in history work and the value of their research. She's behind a new $500,000 History Innovation Fund she hopes can help.

Dr Felicity Barnes: "New Zealand's history is still being written. That provides huge scope for research."

After a year away from teaching to focus on research and her health, Dr Felicity Barnes was excited to get back into the classroom and to be mingling with colleagues.

"I've really enjoyed being back teaching. I've been concentrating on my research for the past six months, so it's been good to be actively engaged with the students face-to-face."

What happened next, a few days after this conversation, was a closed campus and a move to online teaching, but not before Felicity had shared some good news with her history colleagues in the Faculty of Arts. She and husband Michael Whitehead have donated $500,000 to set up the History Innovation Fund, which will initially support a postdoctoral fellow in New Zealand history for 2021 as well as numerous other initiatives to improve research outputs in New Zealand history.

Having recently sold two companies, Felicity says the couple was in a position to support learning, with a focus on Felicity's passion, history.

"This was something I wanted to do, but Michael was really on board with it as an idea. Both of us are alumni and we're both products of the old-fashioned free education system. Michael's training in computer science and commerce was directly relevant to what he did next – ultimately co-founding data analytics company WhereScape and services firm NOW Consulting. I also worked in business before returning to academia.

"What I saw upon my return was how hard academics work and how limited their resources are, compared to what you might expect if you're working in business."

She says academics spend years becoming specialists in their subjects, through teaching and research, but often find it tough to gain funding for what they need.

"It's abundantly clear that the whole sector is not supported to the level that it should be by government funding."

At a recent Town Hall gathering with staff, Vice-Chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater explained that the unfortunate issue is that no country has its funding model right for tertiary institutions.

"That's true," says Felicity. "But there are more generous models than ours, even Australia. Anyway, it just became clear to me that this is an area where we could make a difference.

"I wanted to support the staff. Coming from the teaching side, you understand where the gaps might be and where a little bit of money might make a lot of difference."

The History Innovation Fund will run over five years and will support world-class research outputs. One of the fund's first initiatives will be recruiting a postdoctoral fellow, initially in New Zealand history, for 2021. It will also support research grants, primarily for New Zealand history and history generally, as well as in related subjects such as art history and ancient history.

"It aligns with the university's goals more generally, and it's an opportunity to see how a little money might make a difference.

"We would imagine it will pay for at least five postdoctoral fellows for one academic year each. Alongside that, we want to help out with other staff initiatives that will help produce research, things that fall a little bit outside the traditional funding streams.

"Even paying for students or graduate teaching assistants to help with marking. Right now, an academic's research is affected when you're juggling the workload, so someone who could be writing a paper is busy marking stage-one essays. We can get that person back to producing research ... that's my thinking."

As you might expect, Felicity is an advocate for lifting the profile of history education, in school and at university.

"If there's a national problem to be written about, then let's turn to a historian. Historians can tell us a lot about past pandemics, for example, about how we handled the flu pandemic in 1918. What happened next? We have a lot of science around but not a lot of history being discussed which can tell us how societies respond."

She says while the past can't predict the present, it can be used as a way of informing what we know about the present.

"Charlotte Bennett, a Marsden Grant recipient, has worked on the history of how children responded to the trauma of World War One and 'flu. Her study is 'Understanding the 1918-19 influenza pandemic through children's eyes' and trauma amongst children is an issue, as we know with the Christchurch earthquakes.

"So it's not that it's predictive or necessarily going to pop out a model, but it tells us about how humans behaved in similar circumstances in the past. That could give us some kind of enlightenment."

Felicity says it is important for New Zealand history to be taught in schools too, and the government's plan is to make it compulsory from 2022. But she's anxious it's done well and that making it obligatory doesn't put people off taking it at university.

"Many students equate New Zealand history with Treaty history and that's a critically important thread, but there's a lot, lot more that needs to be covered. So as they head off to uni, they might think they already know all there is to know about it.

"But the thing about New Zealand history is that there's so much more to learn. There's terrific new work on the New Zealand Wars being done, for example. Our history is still being written, it's nowhere near complete and that provides huge scope for research."

The former Avondale College student didn't initially think history would be a passion.

"I toyed with science and when I came to university I took a botany paper as well as my arts ones. But, typical student, I didn't think much of all those science labs!"

Now a historian and history teacher, she acknowledges there seem to be fewer New Zealand women historians than men.

"There's Claudia Orange and Judith Binney as examples but probably the people we think of first are Keith Sinclair, Jamie Belich, Michael King and Bill Oliver. They've all attempted to write national histories, that's what they have in common.

"Women have written national histories too, such as Philippa Mein Smith's *Concise History of New Zealand*. But Sinclair and Oliver were the first to write modern histories of New Zealand as national projects and that led to them becoming well-known."

"History tells us about how humans behaved in similar circumstances in the past. That could give us some kind of enlightenment with Covid-19." – Dr Felicity Barnes

A modern contribution from women historians is *Tangata Whenua: An Illustrated History*.

"Two of the three co-authors are women, Aroha Harris and Judith Binney, and there's very important storytelling in their book. If you're interested in the history of New Zealand, it's one of several must-reads.

"New Zealand is extremely fortunate in the quality of its historians, and they're high-calibre writers. So, even though the Sinclair and Belich books are older now, those general histories are terrific reads. As is Vincent O'Malley's 2016 landmark book on the Waikato War, *The Great War for New Zealand: Waikato 1800-2000* and *Dancing with the King: The Rise and Fall of the King Country, 1864-1885* by Michael Belgrave. They're accessible and lively and full of ideas."

Felicity herself has written a book: *New Zealand's London: A Colony and Its Metropolis* (Auckland University Press) was based on her doctoral thesis, for which she'd won the award for the University's best doctoral dissertation.

"My postgraduate work was supervised by James Belich and as an undergraduate I was taught by Keith Sinclair. I was very fortunate and that's one of the great things for students at Auckland – the best New Zealand historians are extremely accessible."

What began as a masters thesis of 40,000 words soon turned into a PhD.

"I was as surprised as the next person that it won the thesis prize because arts theses aren't often the big winners."

But the win reaffirmed her decision to have returned to study and academia.

"It's an incredibly validating experience to have that happen because when you're working on a thesis, as anyone who's done it knows, you become very inturned.

"You do an intense amount of work and it's quite easy to say to yourself 'who else in the entire universe cares about this?'

"It endorsed the subject area and what I was trying to do with it. It was a huge thesis and was a hugely enjoyable process, but turning the thesis into a book was not so hugely enjoyable!"

However, it came to be by moving the arguments forward from the thesis and adding fresh material.

Asked if such historians are always objective in their framing of New Zealand history, she pauses.

"There are quite strong narrative voices running through sole author projects. Yes, most of them are advancing an argument and they've got a point of view and I think that's what makes them interesting. We want people to come through with an idea, with a thesis."

She says her students often discover there's more to New Zealand history than they expected.

"One of the things my third-year class has been doing is going out and photographing commemorative items, statues, school gates, even household items and interpreting what they mean. So, they're shifting their vision of what constitutes history, and realising the archive isn't just acts of parliament, it's material culture around them. They just need to go and find it."

Earlier this year, Felicity wrote an opinion piece on statues for Newsroom, saying: "[I'm] not convinced that Marmaduke Nixon, or Sir George Grey, should take up much more historical space than they already have. If it is no longer right to have them on a public pedestal – which is the literal function of statues, then perhaps we should not grant them the dignity of a display case."

She received a lot of feedback on her opinion and wasn't suggesting we try to rewrite history.

"No, we could follow the example of other countries where they have 'redundant statue' parks. For example, post-Soviet countries have piles of statues of Lenin they don't look at anymore. They just bundle them off.

"I don't think we're duty-bound to do anything much with them. This is a funny thing, suddenly people are claiming, 'these are precious objects'. You know what? New Zealand has been putting the wrecking ball through precious objects for years, whether it's His Majesty's Theatre in Auckland or colonial villas in streets near you.

"Suddenly we become precious about this one little thing. What's interesting is not the object but the provocative nature of the suggestion. It exposes a little bit of a raw spot in the New Zealand psyche … we're getting energised about that and being uncomfortable about our history."

She says some of the statues aren't even good examples of art.

"We could always offer them to descendants of the sculptor's family and they could stick them on their front lawns and put up the appropriate plaque saying, 'I only like this because my dad did it'.

■ Denise Montgomery

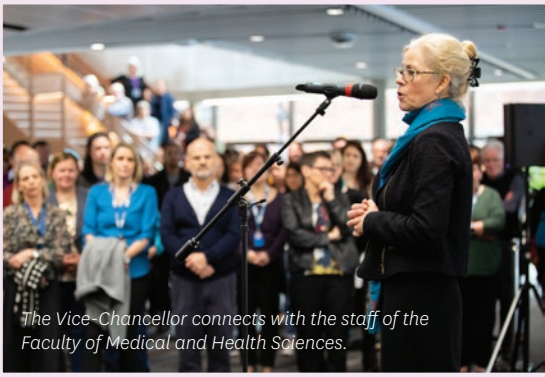
NGĀ WHAI PĀNGA

Vice-Chancellor Dawn Freshwater holds a 'town hall' talk with the Faculty of Science.

Dawn meets Buckley-Glavish Professor David Noone, from the Department of Physics.

Dawn experiences the tradition of the old staff greeting the new at her pōwhiri.

Kaiārahi Hirini Kaa shares a cuppa with Dawn after her official welcoming pōwhiri.



The Vice-Chancellor connects with the staff of the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences.

CATCHING UP ON CAMPUS

Ahhh, Level One. The days when we could get together and connect like we did in the days before Covid-19.

After having taken up her role as Ihorangi, Vice-Chancellor, ahead of Level Four lockdown, Professor Dawn Freshwater was formally welcomed to the University during Level One.

The official pōwhiri onto Waipapa Marae by Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei saw Dawn joined by guests, including partner Gary Jeneson, Vice-Chancellor Cheryl de la Rey (University of Canterbury), Vice-Chancellor Harlene Hayne (University of Otago) and Chris Whelan, executive director of Universities NZ.

The Vice-Chancellor told the gathering that the University needs to walk the talk of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. "Under my tenure I want to see greater success for Māori students and staff, more research being done that benefits Māori communities, and of course greater integration of te reo Māori into our everyday lives."

Prior to the most recent Level Three lockdown in Auckland, Dawn also caught up with many staff in a number of 'town hall' meet-and-greet events around the campus.

LIGGINS RESEARCHERS FIND CLUES TO PARKINSON'S PUZZLE

New Zealand researchers including from the Liggins Institute have decoded a gene that plays a major role in regulating and delaying the onset of Parkinson's disease.

Working with the Garvan Institute of Medical Research and University of Otago they discovered that components of the gene GBA have a significant role in regulating and delaying the onset of Parkinson's disease, the world's second most common neurodegenerative disorder.

The leading journal on Parkinson's disease *Movement Disorders* has highlighted the findings.

"We believe we've come up with a plausible understanding of how GBA contributes to the disease, that opens new approaches to treating Parkinson's and delaying its onset," says Associate Professor Justin O'Sullivan, who co-led the project.

Despite the number of people it affects, doctors do not know why people develop Parkinson's and there is no cure.

Justin and his colleagues, who specialise in research into gene control, decided to look closely at the gene GBA, which is associated with a higher risk of developing Parkinson's and has been used as a biomarker for the disease.

"The question we are asking is why do some people with GBA mutations develop Parkinson's and others do not?"

PhD candidates Sophie Farrow (Auckland), Oscar Graham (Otago) and Dr William Schierding from Liggins looked for answers in the non-coding parts of the GBA gene that were once thought of as 'junk DNA'. The team screened 128 sites in the non-coding part of the GBA gene and found that if it has a particular combination of three short non-coding DNA sequences, the result is a delay of the onset of Parkinson's by five years. They also identified six other regions that act as 'switches' to control how the GBA gene is turned on or off in the cognitive centres of the brain.

The idea is to discover the molecular basis for the delay in disease onset which could provide a target for therapies to delay its progression.

Research that led to a better understanding of GBA's role in Parkinson's was funded by the Michael J Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research and the Silverstein Foundation for Parkinson's with GBA.

MOPHEAD TAKES TOP PRIZE

***Mophead: How Your Difference Makes a Difference*, written and illustrated by Associate Professor of English Selina Tusitala Marsh, won the Margaret Mahy Book of the Year on 12 August.**

As well as taking out the top prize in children's publishing at the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults, the graphic memoir also won the Elsie Locke Award for Non-Fiction. The judges said Mophead was "a taonga that should be placed in the hands of every child in Aotearoa". The book was published by Auckland University Press.

INNOVATIVE TOOL **TO CONNECT**

Lockdown sparked an idea to help new university students virtually feel at home.

Like many people who found their creativity revived during the Covid lockdown in Semester One, Vanessa McQuinlan used her innovative thinking skills to devise ways to engage with potential students.

Vanessa leads Connected Experiences, a 'lean start-up' under Digital Services that created Kahu Virtual Campus, Your World Your Way (yourworld.auckland.ac.nz).

"We were tasked with coming up with something that addresses the fact that Covid has affected our face-to-face recruitment model."

Vanessa started looking at what other universities around New Zealand, and overseas, were offering and found most were variations of the same theme. "They all had virtual tours, but we wanted something that differentiated us ... something that would really appeal to 15- to 20-year-olds," she says.

"We wanted people to go online, explore and have fun. The University of Auckland is seen as highly academic so we wanted future students to experience the rich social and cultural dimensions of our spaces and places. We wanted to create a 'home' for future students."

Vanessa and the team partnered with an agency, Method Digital, and used creative technology to showcase the University and engage with future students.

Kahu Virtual Campus phase one was launched on 26 August and is aimed at students who have not yet enrolled.

"It's a creative and interactive experience where future students and their whānau can explore in a way they're familiar with, through growing up in the age of gamification. They expect experiential ways of doing digital things."

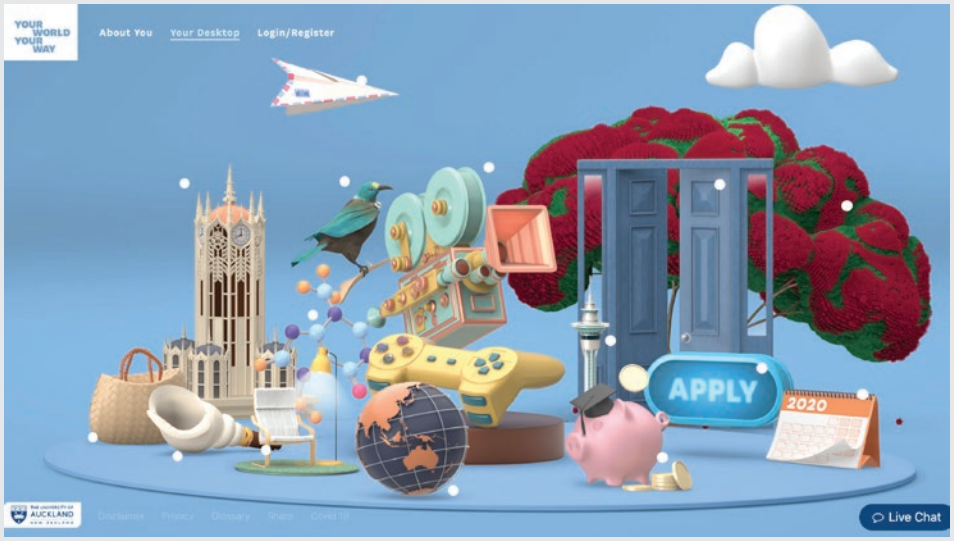
The Kahu Virtual Campus on desktop is a "connected experience".

"We want to transform the way we connect with our future students and, ultimately, our current students.

"We've co-designed it with the Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori teams led by Michael Steedman, Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific Damon Salesa, and the International Office.

"We've made sure it underpins and reflects the values of a Māori and Pacific world view. It's all about inclusiveness and connectedness, and that really suits our kaupapa," says Vanessa.

"The University of Auckland's place within Tāmaki Makaurau has special significance to us, as a university in the South Pacific."



Kahu Virtual Campus lets future and current students explore the social and cultural aspects of campus life.

"We want to transform the way we connect with our future students and, ultimately, our current students." –Vanessa McQuinlan

Kahu Virtual Campus can be personalised in many ways, including 3D items for a personalised desktop which appear after a user answers a few questions. The items are tailored to reflect students' interests and can even detect if students are international and float up information that's most relevant. It also includes videos featuring a wide range of students who tell their stories.

"Students answer a few simple questions which are interactive and fun, they are then welcomed by a digital pōwhiri and then they are presented with a personalised and tailored desktop just for them – a virtual gateway into all the university has to offer in one place."

Vanessa says beta testing revealed prospective students spent around 19 minutes on the site, having a look around and personalising it.

"That's huge, and it's probably because it's designed based on questions we know potential students ask.

"If you are looking around as a prospective student you don't need to register but once you do, you can save your personalised desktop which has a built-in response to questions you've asked."

The idea was prompted by the extensive student journey-mapping the University did with high school students in 2017-18. That resulted in the student digital strategy.

"So that's really provided us with an opportunity to do something like this using what they told us."

The whole concept and much of the work was done during Level 4 lockdown.

"We just worked very agilely to get this done over that lockdown and it worked because we were working without guidelines. [Chief Digital Officer] Stephen Whiteside just said 'create something' and I think that made a difference."

"We've had a lot of interest from schools who say there's nothing like this out there and it will really help answer Year 12 and 13 students' questions."

Kahu Virtual Campus will be integrated with information on the regular university website and with the contact centre for communications and events. The Connected Experiences team is working on a number of other innovations.

"Phase two of Kahu Virtual Campus is planned by the end of the year. It will include 3D modelling of the campus, extending our map into a 3D virtual world of Auckland."

The modelling of the campus will enable digital wayfinding, a dramatic improvement on the PDF maps of the University. Kahu will even be able to lead students from one classroom to another and tell them the best route.

In 2021, the team plans to add the final layer, the Kahu Unified Campus.

"The third phase is the Unified Campus, the concept of a digital kaitiaki or personal assistant for students who are already enrolled. Work is beginning on that now and will hopefully be ready before Semester One, 2021."

Vanessa says when the Unified Campus is launched it will "do some amazing things".

"It will amalgamate around 25 systems with some really useful and practical organisational tools. So, for example, the digital personal assistant will tell you if your library books are due back or you have an assignment coming up."

University with a personal assistant. Not bad.

PROFESSOR GETS **PERSONAL**

Educator and award-winning author Alison Jones has written a memoir that's also an insight into New Zealand's social history.

Professor Alison Jones: one of the strong messages in her memoir is for Pākehā to face up to the past.

Professor Alison Jones' first foray into academic study saw her become something of a minor expert on the mating behaviour of the mallard duck.

It was the early 1970s and she had given up on studying soil science for a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Massey University after she realised the subject was better suited to young male farmers. She switched to science, despite her father telling her science was "a waste of time for a girl", and gained a BSc in 1974.

"But being a woman in science was not much fun in the 1970s," she writes in *This Pākehā Life: an Unsettled Memoir*.

"I was dismayed at the profusion of white men in white coats (one of whom tried to seduce me); discouraged by the dearth of women lecturers and devastated when I was barred from applying for a coveted summer job overseeing a gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers simply because of my gender..."

Perhaps it was good fodder for Alison spending a lifetime exploring feminist theory, the sociology of education, and the complexities of Māori-Pākehā educational relationships.

Alison began teaching at the University of Auckland in 1978 as a tutor, and part of her role today involves running academic writing workshops at Te Puna Wānanga in the Faculty of Education and Social Work.

She is committed to writing well and her own efforts include *He Kōrero: Words Between Us – First Māori Pākehā Conversations on Paper*, in 2011, and the 2018 Ockham New Zealand Book Award winner *Tuai: A Traveller in Two Worlds*, with long-time friend and collaborator Professor Kuni Kaa Jenkins.

But Alison says writing a memoir tested her skills. "I've never written anything that's so personal, self-revealing and so self-consciously oriented towards a popular readership," she says. "But I always try to write in an accessible way, even in my more academic work. That's what I try to get my students to do too."

So how did the daughter of working-class British migrants, born in Auckland but who spent her formative years in Dannevirke, come to feel so comfortable – she says "comfortably uncomfortable" – with Māori culture?

"If we see ourselves as saviours, rather than in real relationships with Māori, we're stuck in a self-serving charity approach."

That's the journey travelled in her easy-read memoir, which despite dealing with some weighty topics in New Zealand social history, including the Springbok Tour and Māori land protests, feels relatable to many who grew up in the 1960s and 70s. "I try to present the issues in a way that's personal and anecdotal. I hope people see I'm trying things out.

"I'm not someone who's got it all sorted and has written a book about how to live. Far from it!"

One thing she has got sorted is writing. Although she teaches academic writing to mainly Māori and Pacific education students, she teaches with the knowledge that writing skills are a critical part of every subject.

"My approach to academic writing is to make it straightforward, good writing. There are basic ways of writing that make it enjoyable to read but we don't often encounter that in academic contexts."

She says a lot of academic writing is simply bad writing.

"University teachers don't give any serious attention to writing as a skill. Yet writing is what universities are all about. It doesn't actually matter what you think or can say, everything has to be written down in the world of research.

"Writing is our primary task in a university, yet we are never told that we are writers and that writing is a very specific kind of skill."

She says it's assumed everyone knows how to write when we tell students to write essays. Unfortunately, they look at bad academic writing and mimic it, even if it's impenetrable.

"Students who want to be scholars can be quite frightened of writing. They've not been trained to express themselves in a clear and logical way. I hear their wonderful ideas, but they don't know how to write them well."

With that bugbear off her chest, it's back to her memoir. Alison admits a couple of events she recalled while writing it ended up not being accurate when she contacted the old school friends involved.

"With memoir, all we can do is rely on what we have inside ourselves and that's notoriously unreliable, though I try to report my memories faithfully".

She says some writers call their memoirs fiction, even though they are mostly true, because they deliberately change some aspects to make the narrative more effective.

"I haven't done that. But there are plenty of people from my past who'd say 'well I don't remember it like that'. But that's okay. I don't have a problem with that. The purpose of a memoir is to tell a particular story. It's not an autobiography."

This Pākehā Life reveals Alison's mature reflections from a young age on Māori-Pākehā relationships, perhaps indicative of the path she was to take.

"I clearly recall various moments, such as when I was driving with my father and he told me Māori were letting their land go to rack and ruin. I have this memory of sitting there looking at all the gorse and wondering about 'who is looking after it?'. And what does it have to do with Māori? I wanted to know."

The book weaves social history through her friendships or connections made with the likes of Ripeka Evans, Donna Awatere Huata, Kuni Kaa Jenkins and William McCahon, son of Colin McCahon, with whom she had two sons, Finn and Frey McCahon Jones.

Despite her time spent traversing and

immersing herself in the Māori world, and being embraced by it over time, Alison says there's a sentiment in the book that still holds true today.

After encountering Māori activist Dun Mihaka arguing with a group of Pākehā male students, she writes in the memoir: "For the first time I witnessed Māori oratory and became aware of a raw Māori anger ... I felt Mihaka's anger directly and took his accusations of Pākehā racism and destructive colonisation personally ... I had an unnerving sense that Mihaka's accusations were correct, but I could not bear to be the object of Māori criticism."

She says she still feels a bit like that, but she can now absorb that anger thoughtfully.

"I think a lot of us Pākehā like to think of ourselves as doing the right thing. We find facing up to our collective past quite difficult.

"That's always there for us, but my view is that it should not be crippling. It shouldn't create anxiety, fear, avoidance, paralysis, or 'white fragility'.

"One of the big messages to Pākehā in the book is 'face up to it!' Read history, and understand who you are and how your experience today is a product of that past.

"So many of us get stuck, either getting all defensive or trying to ignore the past. Or we try to make up for it for being by being a kind of humble 'what can I do for you?' type of Pākehā.

"If we see ourselves as saviours, rather than in real relationships with Māori, we're stuck in a self-serving charity approach that reminds me a bit uncomfortably of the early missionaries who came to 'help' Māori.

She says Pākehā also have to "just grow up".

"All of us. Don't go around looking all grim about the past. Recognise we are all part of the great swathe of colonial history which has had different effects for different groups."

Alison, who has won numerous teaching excellence awards over the years, can't imagine working anywhere other than the University.

"I've built up over time, without really thinking about it, a whole range of relationships and friendships with Māori.

"That gives me a certain amount of confidence to speak this way. I don't have Māori whakapapa, but I have whakapapa and loyalty that connects me to a number of Māori scholars, students and friends. We've worked together over a very long period of time."

She says at its roots, education, like life, is all about such relationships.

"What I hope this book does is allow people to observe 60 years of New Zealand social history through me. My task as a writer and researcher is to seek and create knowledge, always moving in the direction of social justice."

■ Denise Montgomery

NEW NORMAL FOR LIBRARIES

On 30 September a shush of librarians will gather in an online panel to discuss 'Libraries Looking Forward'. Okay, the collective noun isn't really a 'shush', which shows up the limitations of Google. Other suggestions on Researchgate include a 'sheaf' and a 'catalogue'.

The panel of experts from New Zealand, Australia and other Pacific nations will discuss the uncertainty created by Covid-19's 'new normal' and what it means for the adaptation of library services. The event is being hosted by LIANZA, the NZ Library Association. One of the experts on the panel is the University of Auckland's director of Te Tumu Herenga, Libraries and Learning Services, Sue Roberts.

"For the recent outbreak we opened click-and-collect and study spaces within a week so we were much quicker this time. We learned a lot about how to operate in this different environment from last time."

Sue says she was quite surprised by the demand for physical books. "We've been doing digital for 20 years at least and that's given us a massive platform to adjust in this virtual environment. But what struck me was people's desire for the 'real thing'. Academics and students in certain disciplines have been telling us that books are essential, and that's reflected around the world."

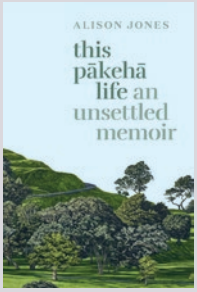
Sue Roberts, director of Te Tumu Herenga.

Sue says the library has overcome concerns about multiple handling of books. "We follow the standards for how you handle material in a pandemic, so if we get a library item back we quarantine it. For books in very high demand we don't loan them out, we offer a digitisation service and that's been well received. We've also offered that to our students overseas."

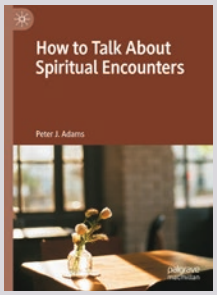
A number of adaptations will continue when Auckland moves to Level Two.

"We have regular cleaning and rules around physical distancing that students may need a nudge about when they return. And of course mask-wearing will be a thing this time, along with the Covid check-in requirements. We'll have someone on the door reminding people."

PUKAPUKA



This Pākehā Life: an Unsettled Memoir
A memoir by award-winning author, Professor Alison Jones. It's an account of a life spent traversing Pākehā and Māori worlds and an insight into New Zealand's social history of the past 60 years.
Alison Jones, Bridget Williams Books, $40



How to Talk About Spiritual Encounters
Written in the style of café conversations, Professor Peter Adams, from the School of Population Health, probes the language people use when discussing their spiritual encounters.
Peter J. Adams, Palgrave McMillan, hardback, $150

The Telling Time
This first novel by Pip (P.J.) McKay (Master of Creative Writing, 2017) won the 2020 First Pages prize, judged by a panel including Sebastian Faulks. *The Telling Time* is the story of Gabrijela, a young Croatian exiled to New Zealand from the town of Korčula in the 1950s, who is harbouring a secret.
P.J. McKay, Polako Press, $35

The Girl from Revolution Road
The essays of Ghazaleh Golbakhsh, alumna, Fulbright scholar and filmmaker, are based on her experience as an Iranian immigrant. Subjects range from a night spent in prison as a six-year-old, to learning English at her Auckland primary school, and dating in the days of Covid-19.
Ghazaleh Golbakhsh, Allen & Unwin, $37
WIN: We have one copy to give away.
Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz by 1 October.

BACK TO **DIRTY POLITICS?**

Dr Mark Boyd wonders if media coverage of the 2020 election campaign will be a replay of 2014's 'dirty politics'.

Mainstream media is still the main source of election news for most voters in New Zealand, especially television, with audiences sometimes topping a million, although online is growing.

But just as important as how much coverage media outlets give to the election campaign, is the quality of what the media presents. Do they cover policy or trivia, and is the campaign framed positively or negatively? Do the various parties get a fair share of the coverage? How are the debates conducted?

My study of television news coverage of the past nine New Zealand election campaigns found that using those indicators of quality, the so-called 'dirty politics' election of 2014 hit an all-time low, but in 2017 it rebounded to levels not seen since the 1990s. A parallel study of both television and newspaper coverage of the 2014 campaign showed close similarities between the two media. So what do past election campaigns tell us about the 2020 election coverage?

So far, it's not looking good. This year seems to be much more like 2014 than 2017. Of course 2020 is also unique, with the campaign being mostly fought on the battleground of Covid-19, on two main fronts: the immediate management of the health crisis; and the longer-term effort to get the economy back to full strength.

Until early August, it looked like the health issue was largely behind us, and the economy was what the campaign would be all about. But then health resurfaced as the big issue and now it isn't the strong suit for Labour and Jacinda Ardern that it was in July.

The failure to adequately test all staff working at the border and in isolation facilities for returnees from overseas, and what appears to be a lack of complete candour on the part of the Government on that inadequate situation, has provided ammunition for the Opposition and its allies in the media commentariat. By its very nature, the coverage of such revelations is going to be negative.

In 2014, National offered little fresh, substantive policy, choosing instead to campaign on its record of six years in government and the managerial competence of John Key. The media went looking for new narratives and seized control of the agenda with negative coverage of the scandals revealed in the Nicky Hager book *Dirty Politics* and the circus that followed the Internet Party's merger with the Mana Movement.

Dr Mark Boyd has been studying New Zealand election campaigns for three decades.

"With an extra four weeks of campaigning and an ongoing health emergency, this campaign will be like no other in living memory."

But in 2017, momentum was on the side of the politicians, with a new face in the role of Opposition Leader, who vowed to campaign with 'relentless positivity', and succeeded in doing so. Not only did the politicians seize command of the agenda from the media, but unusually, Jacinda Ardern and Labour had the upper hand, overcoming the usual 'advantage of incumbency' enjoyed by governing parties.

Labour's campaign strategy this year is very similar to National's in 2014: 'we beat Covid-19 under Jacinda Ardern's 'kind' leadership, stick with us but, by our own admission, don't expect a lot of hard policy'. That's an open invitation to the media to go looking for stories elsewhere, particularly scandals or headline-grabbing attacks on the Government from a reinvigorated Opposition under new leader Judith Collins.

The problem for Collins is that unlike 2014, the majority of scandals have come from within her ranks, with a slew of resignations, both in and out of Parliament: Andrew Falloon, Michelle Boag, Hamish Walker, Roger 'Merv' Bridge.

The Government also hasn't been without its troubles, with the resignation of David Clark from Cabinet and Iain Lees-Galloway leaving Parliament.

Scandals have been a constant of New Zealand election campaigns for the past two decades such as 'Corngate' in 2002, the 'Brethren pamphlets' in 2005, 'Teagate' in 2011. The question this year is whether more scandals will pop up, and how much play the media will give them.

Another key area of media coverage to watch out for is the opinion polls – the so-called 'horse-race'. The media is often criticised for the emphasis they place on the polls, but this year they are important.

With the election date pushed back a month, there's a lot more time for a volatile electorate to move its support around, not least at the margins, with both the Greens and New Zealand First dangerously close to the 5 percent threshold, and no obvious electorate seat in the bag.

The leaders' debates will also be keenly watched – New Zealand has one of the longest histories and highest audiences for debates in the world. How Ardern's positivity and 'kindness' will fare against Collins' more combative stance in one online and three television debates will influence many voters, as will the tone of the media commentary.

With an extra four weeks of campaigning and an ongoing health emergency, this campaign will be like no other in living memory. If the politicians don't take the high road of policy and positivity, the media certainly won't.

■ Dr Mark Boyd has a PhD in Politics and International Relations and most recently taught Journalism Studies in the Media and Communications Department. He was a journalist for more than 30 years, covering many elections.

The first live leaders' debate with Jacinda Ardern and Judith Collins is on TVNZ1, 7pm, 22 September.

The views in this article reflect personal opinion and are not necessarily those of the University.