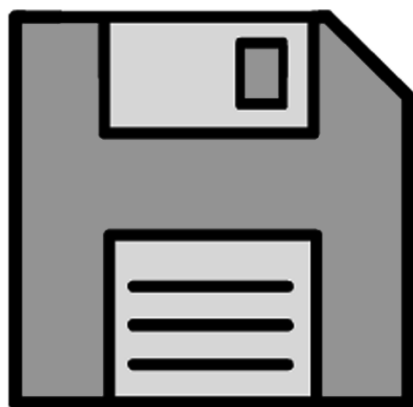


# **YOUR FUTURE HISTORIES**



## **What is this?**

This is a DIY guide for capturing/collecting/curating history in your community.

Made by someone who works in an archive.

For people who don't see themselves reflected.

# Your Future Histories

There is a void where you are yet to exist.

A space of unlimited potential, of radical possibility.

A space for your future histories.

History is not a neutral retelling of the past.

*“History is a series of strategically curated choices that can uplift some or erase others, based on the decisions by those with the power to curate it.” - Dominique Luster*

In science fiction a future history is a projected chronology outlining how we got from the present to the future. It creates a back story for a possible future reality.

The stories we tell about ourselves can shape a new reality. A reality where we exist and have always existed. There is collective power in the telling of stories.

You have that power.

The power to tell the stories about your community that the future needs to know.

The power to curate your history and save it.

## Ground Zero

Whilst the idea of curating and saving history around you might seem daunting, it can be as big or small as you make it. Perfection or completionism is not the aim. Rather, capture what you can, however you can.

Here are some steps you could take:

1. Choose the community
2. Decide the method(s)
3. Collect the content
4. Find a safe home for it
5. Share it

# 1. Choose the community

Dig where you stand.

Choose a community, movement, or space that you are part of and whose story you want to tell.

Maybe it is a longstanding group, maybe it is an evolving movement or a temporary space. Maybe it's the people around you that you don't see reflected anywhere else. Something that is not recorded or that might disappear.

Think about the scope. Maybe it's a moment in time - like one event. Maybe it's what's happened in the past month or year, maybe it's whatever you can find.

Tell other people about it and enlist them to the cause.

[A note on positionality – is this your story to tell? Could you help someone else tell the story? Whose voice needs to be heard?]

## **Example: The 5-minute Oral History**

Capture an event with a phone or other audio recording device and 3-5 questions. Ask people the questions.

E.g. Who are you? Who are your people? How did you get involved in this event? Why do you think it was important for you to be a part of this event? What is something you want future generations to know about this event?

## Chinese Erhu Meets Taonga Pūoro – Auckland Libraries

This oral history project captured conversations between Māori Taonga Pūoro artist James Webster and his Chinese friend, Liwei Fang, an Erhu musician and academic researcher in Aotearoa. Together, they explored their shared experiences in making and playing traditional instruments, discussing topics such as music education, the future of indigenous music, and the philosophical perspectives behind these instruments.



## **2. Decide the method(s)**

Decide on a method or methods.

Start with the skills you or your friends have.

You could create a photo essay, make a short film, interview people for an oral history project, build a map etc....

Maybe the content already exists and just needs to be collected. Physical stuff like posters, flyers, stickers etc. Digital stuff like photos, videos, social media posts etc. Or formal stuff like minutes, correspondence, notes etc.

Maybe it doesn't exist yet, but you want people to collaborate, so you put a call out for creative writing or imagery in response to a certain topic or theme and collate it into a zine or exhibition.

### **Example: Telling Stories through Objects**

Ask people in your community to identify an object of personal importance and to share the objects' stories. Take a photo of the object and record the story of why they chose this object and what it means to them.

## **Project 83: Small Things Matter - Te Papa**

*Project 83* enlisted Tongan students of Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate in Otara to collect objects that represent their lives. The class collected their most treasured objects including an original song composition, class photographs and a Toby's Seafood uniform. Each object was accompanied by a written description in Tongan and English demonstrating that objects can act as a vessel for personal stories and a community's language.



## **Trans Past, Trans Present: The Making Trans Histories Project – Te Papa**

Trans people from their teens to their 70s were asked to identify objects of personal importance and write up that object's story. This project recognised the power of objects to bring history to life and the importance of trans people narrating their own stories. Items included a letter, dress, and the contents of a handbag.



### 3. Collect the content

Capture what you can in your chosen method(s), whether through your own creativity or content you have asked people to share.

Be transparent with people about your plans for this content so they can give informed consent when participating.

Make a plan for how you will organise and store the content. Decide what you want to keep; you don't need to keep it all!

Keep a list of what you have collected. Describe the content e.g. What is it, who created it, where was it, when was it

Create a consistent and descriptive file naming convention for digital files e.g. 20250601\_WinterParty\_001.jpg

If it's physical, keep it somewhere cool and dry with minimal light. If it's digital, then make sure it is backed up in more than one place in either external storage or cloud storage. *\*See further preservation tips in the appendix*

#### **Example: Narrative Mapping**

Talk to people in your community about the places and spaces that are important to them. Mark these out on a map - it could be physical or digital. Capture why each place is important to your community layering stories onto the spaces around you.

## Walking Radical Wellington

A radical history walking tour through central Wellington on the Pocket Sights app. This tour invites the walker to view well-travelled streets through the history of working-class and socialist organising in Wellington. The familiar sights of shopping outlets, hotels, and innocuous street corners are also the locations of radical bookstores, social struggle, subversive socialising, and sites of violent protest. It aims to connect the walker with the city as a place of history and historical memory, and to connect past and present.



## 4. Find a safe home for it

Time to decide where you are going to keep it long term.

There are two main options here:

- create your own archive
- or donate to an existing memory institution

Consider how people in your community will access the collection. Do you want people outside of your community to access the collection? If so, how will they do this? You can set the conditions.

If you want to create your own archive, then consider where it will be stored, and how it will be managed and accessed.

National memory institutions can provide advice, guides, and training for communities. *\*See links in the appendix*

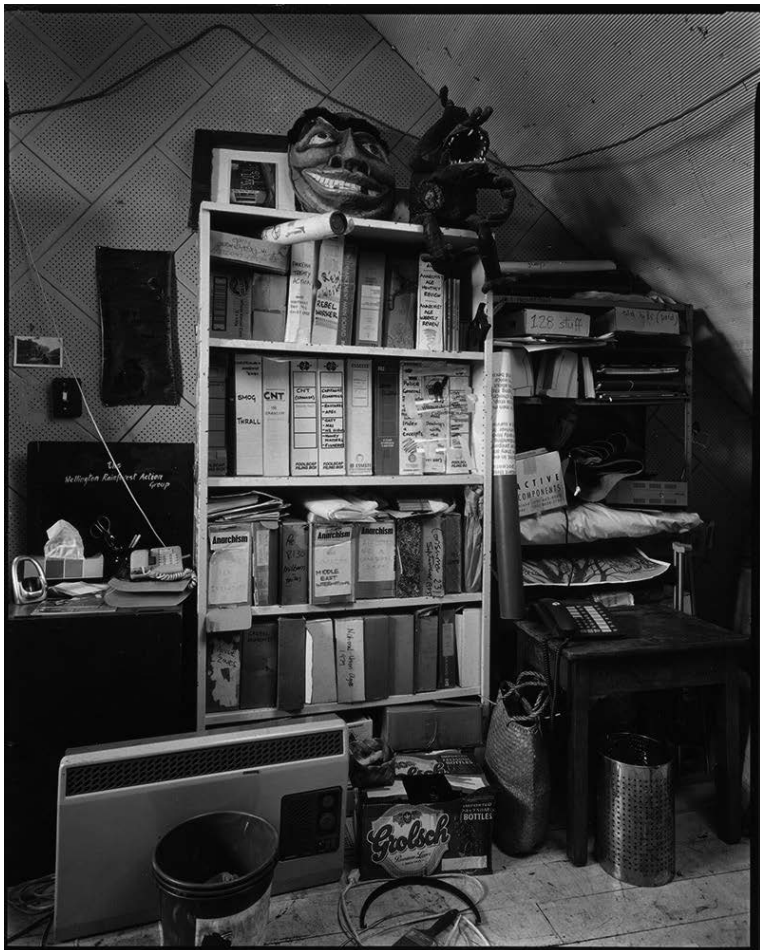
The purpose of a memory institution like a library, archive, or museum is to hold stories for people to find them. They have four major functions: to collect, describe, preserve, and share.

Research your local area to find out what institutions exist and what type of content they collect.

Different institutions collect different things. If one place cannot take your collection, then ask them to suggest somewhere else that might be able to.

## A visual history of Wellington's anarchist house

After the heritage listed anarchist house burnt down in 2020, a short news article collated the history of 128 Abel Smith St. It used archival information alongside photos and stories from people who were part of the 128 community to tell its diverse and complicated legacy.



*128 Abel Smith St, a collection of files - mostly meeting minutes - 28 May, 2007*

## 5. Share it

Make sure whatever you have curated, the community involved gets to know about it and gets to share it.

If your chosen method was one that created something original like a zine, film, or map, consider also donating a copy and associated material to a memory institution.

Whatever it is, let people know it exists and how they can find it. The more people that can use what you have created, the more stories that can be told.

### **iMpOrTanT iNfOrMaTiON - 5ever books**

Collecting posters from whoever would donate them, 5ever books created a five-volume archive of past independent posters in Wellington as part of an exhibition showing layers of posters from the street. This exhibition also included a series of workshops around postering that encouraged people to create and paste their own posters.



## **Appendix – further preservation tips**

For storage of physical archives, factors to consider are temperature, relative humidity, light, pests, mould, risk of leaks or flooding, and handling. Keep archives in a climate-controlled space, avoid extremes in temperature and relative humidity.

The simplest way to protect your archive is to keep items in boxes. They provide an initial barrier to light, water, fire and mould and make handling (with clean dry hands) a lot easier. Any strong standard office boxes will work.

You can get archive-quality packaging; however, it can be expensive and will not make much of a difference if your space is humid, damp, and mouldy. Keep your archive areas clean (food attracts pests) and dust free. If you can't store items flat, then roll them rather than folding. Avoid metal such as staples and metal paper clips (plastic paper clips are ok).

If your archive is digital, it is best to make sure that you are backing up your records regularly. Store copies of your digital archives on two separate hard drives or on hard drives as well as cloud storage.

Digital hardware and software usually last about 5 -10 years so you will need to have a plan to check and update the files and storage. Use open formats for digital files where possible like PDF (text and image), RTF (Rich Text File), ODT and ODS (Open Office), MP4 (audio), WAV (audio), JPG (image), TIFF (image), PNG (image).

## **For more details on managing archives:**

Te Papa – How-to Guides

<https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/learn/for-museums-and-galleries/how-guides>

The National Library – Caring for Collections Guides

<https://natlib.govt.nz/collections/caring-for-your-collections/caring-for-collections-guides>

Archives NZ – Resources for community-based archives

<https://www.archives.govt.nz/researching/directory-of-community-archives/resources-for-community-based-archivists>

Digital NZ - Make it Digital guides

<https://digitalnz.org/make-it-digital>

This zine is inspired by *Document Your Culture* by Emma Warren alongside many other community history projects.

Feel free to use, adapt, and share this zine.

Written by Emma Cullen

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<https://yourfuturehistories.neocities.org/>

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