



## President's Annual Report - November 2021

Last year's Annual Report was dominated, as this year's version will be, by Covid-19. The Friends of the Hocken Collections share an affection for, and a determination to sustain, an institution whose primary task is to maintain and learn from the past. There is a certain irony in the fact that the continuing threat that the virus poses is that it affects your committee's ability to plan for the future. Of course we have plans, but bitter experience shows that such plans 'gang aft agley'.

Instead of the planned five there were just three. In February Dr Pat Langhorne spoke on a subject in which she is a world authority: 'Why care about sea ice?' - timely in the light of the inability of world leaders to come to meaningful agreement on matters relating to climate change. In May Professor Henry Johnson spoke on a matter of more local interest, 'Uncovering the hidden history of Chinese music in Aotearoa.' His presentation revealed an aspect of Chinese culture important to the diggers but little known to readers of New Zealand history. In July it was a pleasure to hear from the recently appointed University Librarian, Mike Wall. He has come at a crucial time in the history of Hocken, and his audience appreciated his grasp of the major issues facing both the Central Library and the Collections.

There have been four issues of *Flotsam and Jetsam* this year - one less than usual because of the uncertainty over dates for our Talks Programme. It's worth noting here that it is exactly 30 years since the Friends of the Hocken Collections became an entity. This happened over a period in late 1991, and the public work of the Friends began early the following year. It is appropriate to recall the foundational work of Ian Farquhar and George Griffiths, and some of us well, remember the hours of discussion we engaged in at George's bookshop in Great King Street.

One particular concern over the last year has been the need to acknowledge the work of the FOHC Award winner, Dr Jonathan West. Two attempts were made to arrange a date for his presentation but were foiled by Covid 19. Now a third attempt will be made at the beginning of 2022. The Award is a major responsibility for the Committee, and Friends will be invited to share in the setting up of a further Award next year. This provides significant funding for original research using Hocken Collections.

It is not for this Report to offer its own survey of the work of Hocken. What the Library has achieved in these exceptionally difficult times has been quite wonderful. Each meeting of the Committee receives a report from the Librarian and some of this news is shared through *F&J*. The Committee is reassured by what it hears, being aware, as the public is generally aware, that these are difficult times for the University. The case for staff appointments and extensions of facilities requires much detailed work from the Librarian and her staff. The Friends have good reason to be confident for the future. And now the Hocken Collection is the subject of a Review, the first such for some time. The Friends accepted the invitation to make its own submission, and we are all waiting for the presentation of the Review Panel's report.

Following the Annual Meeting the Friends will hear a farewell address from Sharon Dell, the Hocken Librarian. She has been in this position since 2008 and she retires after 13 very demanding years. There will be an occasion when more can be said to her, but she and her constant support for the work of the Friends will be greatly missed.

Finally, I offer my own thanks to her and her staff as I complete my short term as President, but after 30 years with the Committee. And I thank the present Committee for their contributions and remember with gratitude the work of scores of good people who have shared with me a deep affection for Dr Hocken and his collection.

Donald Phillipps