Dissecting Digitization:
An exploration of the methodologies, benefits, and pitfalls of the rapidly expanding world of digital history

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PREFACE

I wish I could have written a paper where the COVID-19 pandemic did not exist, but the truth is, in 2020 the world was pulled into a deep existential crisis. Planes were grounded, families separated, and death became a daily reality. It is difficult to say that the way in which individuals engage with the world has not been fundamentally altered as a result. And maybe, in a few years when people are no longer dying, the vaccines have protected the vast majority of the world, and life returns to normal, this time will feel like a bad, impossible nightmare. However, I believe that it is important for me to mention the feelings and reality of the world in this moment. I believe that to ignore such a looming factor in my world right now would be disingenuous. Thus, if you as a reader are tired of hearing about the pandemic and its impact in the early 2020s, remember we are only tired because it is so omnipresent in our lives now. To write about the past we must remember what life was like in the moment it is being written, as well as the legacy it leaves. Understanding the past is always defined by the present in which it is being recorded and I would like to keep the current reality present within this work. Thus, my ideas and inspiration for this thesis project are examined through the lens of this reality.

INTRODUCTION

A year and a half ago my office emailed the staff to tell us not to come into the office, about nine months ago I emailed my boss that I was leaving my position as a digital asset manager to attend graduate school, and today I am submitting my thesis by email. All of these significant moments were communicated in the digital world, a reality that has been necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021, but facilitated by the accessibility and sophistication of digital technology. The world's already frenzied obsession with digital technologies was

kicked into an even higher gear by the reality of a deadly airborne disease over the course of the past year and a half. Since Alan Turing began imagining, writing, and developing the first digital computer technology until the present day, the advancement of such has flooded the world at an incredible speed. Computers are an essential part of virtually every office, communication is digitized[1], and meetings are happening via screens across the world. According to the research firm *The Radicati Group*, out of the 7.8 billion people in the world, 6.95 billion of them have a cell phone and most studies demonstrate that of those 6.95 billion, more than half have smartphones—basically a little computer on them at all times.[2] As a world we are becoming more and more obsessed with and reliant upon digital technologies, something that is just as clear in the world of preservation, memory, and history.

Preservation of the past has evolved over time. The very first means of such was oral. Human beings told each other stories of the past, even having specialized roles for those who relayed these tales. This type of history keeping was present from the aboriginal peoples in America to the storytellers in Greece to Celtic bards in the 15th century. Over time, people transcribed these stories into texts and passed them down on paper in books, and currently many are now taking these written words and creating digital replicas to store in a virtual cloud. Further, some are even recreating written sources in visual and auditory means and storing them in the virtual world. This evolution of historical memory has allowed for an increased access to information. Previously one had to be physically close to the source—be that at the event of the storyteller or in the library housing the text. With the wave of digitization that has exploded onto

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[1] Throughout the paper I will generally be utilizing standard American English spellings, including the usage of the "z" in words like *digitize, analyze, organize*, and the dropping of the "u" in words like *labor* and *behavior*. However if I am quoting a source with the alternate spellings, I will default to the spellings used within the quote or title.
[2] The Radicati Group, "Forecast number of mobile users worldwide from 2020 to 2024," *Statista*, January 2020. https://www.statista.com/statistics/218984/number-of-global-mobile-users-since-2010/.

the scene in the past hundred years, a fervor came over much of the academic and corporate world looking to exploit these new technologies to capitalize on the massive amount of information and content that previously was inaccessible to most people. Academics saw the increase in digital technology as an opportunity make analytic connections in sources heretofore unable to be made because of the sheer volume of sources, educators saw the opportunity to share previously hidden archives physically unable to be shared before, and companies saw this as a means of capitalizing on content to make money. For each, the heady lure of technology seemed to provide limitless opportunity to research, teach, and amass capital wealth. But behind this optimistic obsession there are the consequences and realities of this digital world. As with all shiny new things, a world of ramifications and power structures lurk in the shadows. Though these obstacles should not discourage the usage of these technologies, the implications of digital technologies must be understood and compensated for. We as a society should use these technologies, but we must be cognizant of the issues and complications that correspond with their usage.

As mentioned, digitization has touched most sectors of society and for me personally, has played an integral role in my professional life. Twenty-one, newly graduated, and looking for a job, I left my undergraduate institution with no concept of the field of digital asset management, or more colloquially, digital library work. I bopped around to various positions in the administrative and media field, but it was not until I found a job at the National Hockey League called a "Coordinator, Digital Archives" that I discovered this world as a possibility. The role was to help with the digitization and organization of historical content in preparation for the hundredth year anniversary of the National Hockey League. I was tasked, alongside a team of fourteen other entry level cohorts, with sifting through photos and videos that were stored on

LTO tapes, harddrives, DVDs, VHSes, betamax tapes, film reels etc. We were to organize the physical recordings to send to the digitization company, receive the digitized copies, ingest and verify their success, and then tag and label according to the content. With these hundreds of thousands of files and petabytes of data, my group was the front line for discovering a lost treasure trove of content. We watched ice hockey games that had not been seen since they aired in the seventies, photos of Stanley Cup celebrations from the fifties, and images of rookies from pre-season matches that never made it to the team full time. I became hooked and fascinated with this field. Though its primary role is to be that of support staff for the marketing, graphics, and video editing teams, I began to understand that those within digital asset management play a vital role in what content echoes years into the future.

Throughout my career I have seen first-hand the stressors imposed upon, and results of the decisions of digital asset managers; but my first experience of such was at that first job at the National Hockey League. On one specific project, my team and I were asked to sort through all playoff games and clip out overtime winning goals. This was to facilitate the video editors in a retrospective they were creating as part of the historical celebration of the league. As we worked our way from the present backwards we hit a snag, the games from the early eighties and late seventies were gone. We were all dumbfounded, my bosses and I frantically checked our physical library and untitled digitized files trying to see how we had missed such a large grouping of games. Then one member of my group noticed something odd, within the footage from the nineties, at the very end of a clip was some scratched footage from a different game. We searched other tapes from this time period and saw the same thing—at various points, typically the beginning or end of digitized files, was a bit of scratchy footage of a different game. The realization dawned on us, those games from the late seventies and early eighties were gone,

lost forever. Sometime in the nineties someone made a decision that those games from the late seventies and early eighties had no value. The person making that decision might have done so on what appeared to be sound logic—lack of money or space, possibly legal issues, maybe distribution problems—, but the end result meant that they decided to reuse those older tapes to record new games, thus destroying those original games' footage. Since those copies were the originals, there were no backups, no extra copies, no way to recover the games lost to time. A decision made over thirty years prior echoed and reverberated into my present.

At that first position I was a lowly cog, whose job was to take instructions from my superiors and tag and sort—I had no decision making power, so I knew that my impact was limited to careless tagging (I did not even have the capability of accidentally deleting content). However, my next role would place me at the top of the pecking order. Working at the Women's Tennis Association, my job was to establish and manage the first ever digital library for the company. Because of my past experiences at the National Hockey League, especially with the lost footage, I knew how impactful decisions made by those at the top are for the future of the content available, a reality only compounded by it being the origin of this specific system. As I spent over two and a half years at the Women's Tennis Association, I was often pitted in a battle between my desire to keep every piece of content, my bosses constant refrains about monetary issues, and my legal departments fears over copyright. I wanted to keep everything because we could not know what content would be valuable in twenty years and future legal requirements. For my boss, if the company could not make a profit in the short term with the content, why keep it? For the legal department, how could we keep content we did not presently have the rights to? Or if we kept it, how did we notate it so that there was no misuse that could put the company in legal jeopardy? At the time these tensions filled my mind, occupying a significant portion of my

energies as I built the system. These problems of money, priorities, legality, and distribution were omnipresent, and yet in the scheme of the broader world these issues are confined to a singular corporate company whose goal, at the end of the day, was monetary gain.

Coming back to university in my late twenties to study history in the middle of a pandemic, I have been faced with a unique set of problems. Classes are online, the library is closed, access to physical materials has been curtailed, and the ability to travel has been ostensibly forbidden. Thus the vast majority of all the research materials and content I have consumed for my educational edification has been limited to content which has been scanned, coded, sorted, and displayed online. This very thesis has been sourced almost exclusively through content that was digitally available for me sitting in my apartment in the Netherlands, or at my parent's kitchen table in New Jersey. And for that, I am indebted to the hard working digital asset managers before me, who spent the time to create a rich and robust array of content available to me, and my fellow students. Yet, I am acutely aware that the decisions made behind the scenes have an incredible impact on what is available and the type of story that is told. The consequences of the types of decisions that plagued me within the corporate world are magnified within the academic and educational world. The choices made by digital asset managers on what content to keep and what to dump, and what to digitize and what to ignore reflect the priorities of their time and the narratives of power within their departments. Further, the decisions made in the academic and educational sphere are arguably much more serious in their consequences than what I experienced in the corporate sphere, for the decisions made there direct present and future knowledge of the world and how the past is rendered. Memory of the past is not something that occurs in a vacuum, there are numerous people involved, whose motivations push and pull them in many directions. All history is created in a social context, as Paul Thompson puts it in the

introduction to his book on oral history *The Voice of the Past*, "[h]istory survives as a social history only because it has meaning for people today."[3] The history that is kept is situated in the present in which it is remembered. It is all too easy to think that because there is a supposedly exact digital copy, that the problems of bias are erased. Instead, I would argue that society must remain just as vigilant or even more so to these biases. Historical memory at any age can be co-opted and digitization has not solved this problem. Rather, it can allow for a veneer of neutrality that hides the subjectivity that is pervasive throughout all historical memory.

In the new digital age, we must be aware of the complications digitization of histories can possess. Though there are many lenses through which to examine this issue, this paper will focus on the intersection of digital history, oral history, and Māori history.

Very briefly, New Zealand is a 600+ island country made up of two main land masses in the Southern Pacific Ocean and housing a bifurcated cultural milieu. Home to the indigenous population, Māori, since the thirteenth century, Māori remained isolated until the eighteenth century when European explorers arrived and settled the islands. This European engagement led to a severely uneven colonizer-indigenous relationship between the Europeans and Māori. Like much of the rest of the world, the indigenious population on the island was subject to land encroachment, forced assimilation, cultural erasure, and death. Though the European-Māori relationship has improved over the years, all interactions between the two must be examined via this historical context.

New Zealand has, along with much of the rest of the world, been included in this digital revolution. In 2006 a digital content strategy was proposed to the New Zealand government, and out of that proposal came DigitalNZ, a digital archive bringing "together over 30 million digital

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[3] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), x.

items from over 200 organisations" across New Zealand.[4] The digital catalogue serves as a way to connect content from various libraries, museums, government organizations, and community groups in one centralized location. Another digital initiative is the organization Te Mana Raraunga founded by Māori researchers in 2015. This group name, literally translating as the data authority, is a data sovereignty movement motivated by "aspirations for collective and individual wellbeing [*sic*]" as it relates to digital data collection and technology.[5] Finally, in 2019 the government announced a $21 million NZD investment in providing digital technology to the more remote Māori communities via the Marae Digital Connectivity initiative— "marae" being defined as "the spiritual and symbolic centre of tribal affairs."[6] The aim was to "assist whānau, hapū and iwi to achieve their goals and aspirations including social inclusion, cultural connections and participation in the wider community...[and] offer alternative ways to access health, social and education services."[7] In speaking with Robyn Tauroa, a Māori community member from the Ngati Kahu ki Whangaroa-Ngapuhi ki Whangaroa *iwi*, she related to me the reluctance many within her community had to involving themselves with these programs—feeling that many of the Marae are the "last bastions of true Māori practices," and allowing for digital connectivity would dilute their preservation.[8] Further there were concerns that though connectivity might exist, these communities do not have the technology required to support that new found connectivity. However, Tauroa also explained that with the COVID pandemic, leadership within many groups has significantly shifted their opinions on this

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[4] *DigitalNZ*, https://digitalnz.org/about (Accessed March 24, 2021).
[5] *Te Mana Raraunga*, https://www.temanararaunga.maori.nz/kaupapa (Accessed March 24, 2021)
[6] I. H. Kawharu, ed., *Waitangi: Māori and Pākehā Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, 313.
[7] "Marae Digital Connectivity," *Te Puni Kōkiri: Ministry of Māori Development*, https://www.tpk.govt.nz/en/whakamahia/marae-digital-connectivity (Accessed March 24, 2021); *whānau*-"family," *hapū*-"sub-tribe," *iwi*-"tribe, tribe"; all definitions from: I. H. Kawharu, ed., *Waitangi: Māori and Pākehā Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, 313-4.
[8] Robyn Tauroa, video call, March 23, 2021.

connectivity initiative, and many who were initially reticent to engage have signed up to be a part of this program. And because this technology is new and constantly evolving, engagement with such is perpetually in a state of flux and in unchartered territory.

Both the technology and time associated with digitization programs is immense and even if something can be digitized in a practical, legal, and moral sense, does not mean that it will. Further, due to the historic power structures between white colonizing New Zealanders and indigenous Māori, this tension is amplified. Thus in writings about this digital revolution, there is a gap in the historical scholarship, one which examines the parallels between the oral history revolution as it related to indigenous communities, and the present day realities of digitizing these same histories of indigenous communities, specifically Māori of New Zealand. By wedging this paper into this missing piece of historical scholarship, I will be able to elucidate some meaningful pitfalls and insight as to how best to approach digitization of these types of sources. What is that line and implications of proliferation versus preservation? How do these technologies help share the history of these people, and how do these technologies hamper it as well? How does digitization of oral histories within these cultures impact the memory and history of these people? Because of the changing nature of oral history in its original form, is preserving it saving the history they are telling or saving the moment that the history is told in?

Though each section of the subsequent thesis, I build and pull upon ideas from the sections preceding. Because this paper is, at the end of the day, about digital history, it is important to begin by historicizing the history of this field and the struggles digital history experiences more broadly. The second chapter will transition to discussing another method of historical research: oral history. In this section, I will examine the way this type of history has been undervalued within the field of academic history in contrast to its power in popular culture,

as well as the seemingly invisible ways Western scholarship biases against this form of history. Once this background to historical methodology has been presented, I will delve into the case study of New Zealand. In this manner, I will expound upon the background of the history of Māori/European relations on the islands and the ways in which this relationship informs the history and memory of the past on the islands. Chapter four will then serve as a place to bring the ideas of digital and oral history together as it relates to the New Zealand case study specifically—describing the ways in which spirituality and Western approaches to history have undermined and undervalued Māori conceptions of their past. Further I will emphasize the necessity of consultation when embarking on these types of digitization programs. Finally, the paper will conclude by providing as a meta-analysis of the preceding ideas and finish with advice for the future. By stepping through the concepts, I will provide some clarity and guidance for future researchers as they embark on digitization programs related to indigenous or other culturally sensitive histories, as well as shine a light on how our own current conceptions on history influence the ways in which narratives are honed and curated.

CHAPTER ONE

Digital history has been in vogue for decades at this point. The hype for this medium has led to countless initiatives aimed at digitizing everything within reach and each year the world seems to lean more heavily on digital technology—even more so with the pandemic that has swept the world in 2020 and 2021. But to comprehend the present iteration of digital history, it is important to examine how digital history was understood in the past, as well as some of the many real issues that are associated with this wave of digitization including copyright issues, distribution and usage fights, cultural sensitivity, monetary roadblocks, and physical vs

non-physical objects. Though digitization does not always create perfect replicas of an item, it has led to a greater connection across the broader world, thus understanding the history and the consequences of this medium is vitally important to its future.

Over the past several decades many books have been written on this rapidly evolving technology. And, sitting in 2021, it is easy to discard a book printed in the mid-2000s as woefully naive and outdated, yet when digging into sources from the past, one finds some illuminating insights that remain relevant to this day. Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig wrote their book *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* in 2006 as a way to discuss the "capacity, accessibility, flexibility, diversity, manipulability, interactivity, and hypertextuality" of digital media, as well as the dangers that are associated with this new technology, namely "quality, durability, readability, passivity, and inaccessibility."[9] These concepts are still the main issues that plague and surround the field today.

Cohen and Rosenzweig further mention a few points of advice that ring true even in 2021 around digitization, both in the corporate and educational world. The first is related to meaning within digitized documents. Accurately they discuss how "digitization turns the 'gradations that carry meaning in analog forms' into precise numerical values that lose at least a bit of that meaning. But how much of that meaning is lost depends, in large part, on how much information you [the researcher] gather when you digitize."[10] It is essential when one is digitizing to clearly mark and preserve information about the items digitized. Too often in both my experience and that of other seasoned digital asset managers, we are presented with a piece of content devoid of any corresponding information. This experience is really no different than that of an archeologist

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[9] Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 3.
[10] Ibid., 82.

digging up some bones or a coin or other artifact, and then in the future needing to ascribe or guess at the importance of the object; only this is further exacerbated by expectations and volume. The wide proliferation of information at the world's fingertips leads many outside the digital library community to assume the contextualizing information lies somewhere and is easily accessible. Yet if it is not recorded or indexed improperly, it is difficult, to almost impossible to find. Further, the vast quantities of data being digitized means that items will be lost, thereby making the money spent on digitizing a piece of content worthless. Even in the library I set up, within eighteen months of its founding, there were over 100,000 individual pieces of media. If we had left the content to just pile up with no clear direction, it would have turned into a junk drawer and rendered much of the digitized content unusable. As Jennifer Gabrys put it eloquently in her book, *A Natural History of Electronics*, "the archive is more akin to a network than a storage shed."[11] Additionally, these issues touch on the second point of sustained relevance that Cohen and Rosenzweig describe: how "[f]irst-time digitizers [and managers] typically overestimate the production costs and underestimate the intellectual costs such as those associated with making the right selections and providing the most helpful metadata."[12] The necessary manpower to make a digitized system successful is massive and without the appropriate tools and resources to do so, the digital system will fail. And it is this very human involvement within digital systems that open it to the very human problems of preference, bias, and meddling with original sources.

Another historian with strong insight about the new future of digital history was Gertrude Himmelfarb. In her November 1996 essay entitled, "A Neo-Luddite Reflects on the Internet," she writes about her fears and disdain for the rapidly digitizing world of history and education.

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[11] Jennifer Gabrys, *A Natural History of Electronics* (Anne Arbour: University of Michigan, 2011), 112.
[12] Cohen et al., *Digital History*, 84.

Though much of her article reads fairly bitter and privileged—at various points describing television as "incapacitating it [the minds of young children] for the longer, slower, less febrile tempo of the book," implying that with the proliferation of visual content children will lose the ability to critically engage with a text printed and physically in front of them, and that "constant exposure to a myriad of texts, sounds, and images that often are only tangentially related to each other is hardly conducive to the cultivation of logical, rational, systematic habits of thought"—she does make one particularly clear prediction of the future.[13] She writes that the "[i]nternet does not distinguish between the true and the false, the important and the trivial, the enduring and the ephemeral."[14] This insight is almost comically perceptive, especially in light of the past four years in the United States, where a wave of *fake news*, both actual false information and inaccurate claims about false information, swept the nation and brought significant unrest.[15] Thus, the digital world is not a place of pure truth and working within this sphere, one must be aware of that weakness. To be fair however, it is not as though books or printed media are completely free of lies and mistruths, just take the *yellow journalism* wave of the late nineteenth century in the United States when newspapers were printing exaggerations and mistruths as a

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[13] Gertrude Himmelfarb, "A Neo-Luddite Reflects on the Internet," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 1, 1996, https://www.chronicle.com/article/a-neo-luddite-reflects-on-the-internet/ (Accessed February 3, 2021).

[14] Ibid.

[15] There are a myriad of sources one could find regarding the "fake news" phenomenon in the United States from the latter half of the 2010s, but here are a couple sources that will provide a basic overview: McGonagle, Tarlach. "'Fake News': False fears or real concerns?." *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* 34, no. 4 (2017): 203-209; Meyer, Robinson. "The Grim Conclusions of the Largest-Ever Study of Fake News." *The Atlantic*, March 8, 2018. Accessed February 25, 2021. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/03/largest-study-ever-fake-news-mit-twitter/555104/; Graham, David A. "Some Real News about Fake News." *The Atlantic*, June 7, 2019. Accessed February 25, 2021. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/06/fake-news-republicans-democrats/591211/; Higdon, Nolan. *The Anatomy of Fake News: Critical News Literacy Education*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2020.

means of bolstering sales.[16] Regardless, awareness of this reality is still essentially in interpreting and managing digital sources.

Beyond awareness of truth and lies, there are a number of practical concerns when it comes to digitization of content. As mentioned above, these include issues related to copyright and distribution, cultural sensitivity, monetary hurdles, and differences between physical and nonphysical objects. Copyright law and issues over proprietary rights are a massive struggle. Even back in 2006 Cohen and Rosenzweig mention the importance of "balance between the rights of the creators of intellectual property and the social and cultural claims of sharing a community."[17] This battle has played out in real time over the course of the last several decades in many different sectors of the field. In a 2013 article by Susan Corbett titled "Copyright Norms and Flexibilities and the Digitisation Practices of New Zealand Museums," Corbett writes about the issues related to legality of works and the "flexible approach to the law" that many New Zealand museums are taking because of the outdated and insufficient laws on the books.[18] Many policy makers crafted these laws before the explosion of digitized media, or without a full recognition of its eventual omnipresence on a global stage. As Corbett's writing focuses on indigenous content, she mentions, similarly to Cohen and Rosenzweig, that there is "a balance to be maintained between the rights of indigenous owners of traditional cultural works on the one hand and the public interest in culture on the other hand."[19] But for Corbett, she feels that this deference to Māori exclusively in museums in New Zealand has gone too far. For her the

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[16] *Yellow Journalism* is a fascinating topic in American history, but beyond the scope of this paper. For a basic overview, see Alexandra Samuel, "To Fix Fake News, Look to Yellow Journalism," *JSTOR*, November 29, 2016, https://daily.jstor.org/daily-author/alexandra-samuel/, Accessed February 25, 2021; "Yellow Journalism Highlights Postanesthetic Complications: Pulitzer versus Hearst," *Anesthesiology (Philadelphia)* 128, no. 5 (2018): 890.
[17] Cohen et al., *Digital History*, 191.
[18] Corbett, Susan, "Copyright Norms and Flexibilities and the Digitisation Practices of New Zealand Museums," *Law in Context: A Socio-Legal Journal* 29, no. 1 (2013): 63.
[19] Ibid., 56.

"public interest in culture must, at some point, outweigh the preference of the owners, regardless of ethnicity."[20] Thus by not digitizing or engaging with Māori cultural artifacts out of respect, in fact the end result means less inclusion of Māori history in education and museums—less distribution and usage of the historical sources of these peoples.[21] The solution she provides is an advocation or legal provision within the law "requiring consultation with appropriate Māori communities."[22] By engaging with, rather than ignoring these communities museums will avoid the trap of the well-intentioned exclusion of Māori history.[23]

In speaking with Māori historians in 2021, many felt that a hesitancy related to preservation of these sources is fair, especially because of the much greater concern of misuse. When talking with Professor Ngarino Ellis of the University of Auckland and member of the Ngāpuhi *iwi*, tribe, she mentioned that technology has allowed for two realities, the connection to the wider diaspora of Māori *iwi* members, but also has "as opened the communities to a whole slew of new attacks."[24] By allowing for the accessibility of digitized materials, Professor Ellis is able to attend and organize important tribal meetings with members who live in London, Australia, and hours outside her *iwi*'s traditional homeland. However, this same ease of access allows individuals outside Māori *iwi* to misappropriate items that often carry hugely significant spiritual value. These contrasting realities of technology carry enormous weight and must be properly contemplated before embarking on these types of programs.

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[20] Ibid., 63.
[21] Ibid., 62-4.
[22] Ibid., 63.
[23] The historical context of this fear of misuse will be discussed in detail in chapter three including discussions on both the history of the European/Māori relations in the government, as well as the academic/museum sectors. Additionally, further discussion related to museums will be touched upon in that same chapter, as well as chapter four.
[24] Ngarino Ellis, video call, March 9, 2021.

Further, money can serve as an immense obstacle in any field, but particularly digital archives. Even in the corporate sector, concerns about return on investment become a motivating force and driver of decisions. For non-profits that rely on grants and public funding, like educational institutions and museums, these monetary concerns are exacerbated. In speaking with Sue Berman, an oral historian working at the Auckland libraries, she described how different sectors of historical research are funded at different levels depending upon how those doing to funding feel about a particular expense. In her experience, the nearly $1,700 price tag per oral history interview, is often hard to justify to those doing the allocation of funding.[25] Thus, this sector of historical research and sources are often left either incomplete or undigitized. In speaking with Robyn Tauroa who works on the history of Māori family treasures she described how digitization is something that is not done much in her own *iwi*. She explained that "due to partly to our town and region not having fast internet connectivity, and our Māori population being economically bereft - and what finances we do have, are not applied to internet-based activities, plus the predominant demographic is farmers and elderly - they're really just not that interested up where I live."[26] Thus for this type of digitizing work to be done within this community, not only do the projects need funding from outside sources, but improved infrastructure and technology are needed within the physical community.[27]

Finally there is a significant difference between various types of content to digitize. Physical object digitization varies significantly from oral or visual content. The particular challenges of 3D scanning are unique and involve a physical transformation of an object into 1's and 0s. There is some phenomenal work being done in this sector, especially at the Auckland

[25] Sue Berman, video call, March 17, 2021.
[26] Robyn Tauroa, Email conversation, March 12, 2021.
[27] These projects include the Marae Digital Connectivity initiative mentioned in the introduction of this paper.

Museum, which is digitally scanning various physical artifacts of Māori and Pacific Island origin. Due to the confined nature of a digital scan and the easy comparability, these types of digital technologies produce simple to validate copies between the original and its digitized partner.[28] For content that was already preserved digitally, like oral interviews or video, the transformation of the digital content through updated technology or filters becomes a bit murkier. Technology is constantly updating and as researcher Jennifer Gabrys describes in her book, "in the endless tale of technological evolution, electronic machines are regularly cast aside, become obsolete, or are kept in storage as inert reminders."[29] With the rapidity of changing technologies, archives once organized in digital form can become inaccessible pieces of metal in a handful of years unless they are maintained and updated.[30]

Beyond merely being out of date, digital copies suffer data loss through each iteration of transfer, and for these born-digital objects, this data loss is irreversible.[31] For objects which were originally physical, there is some hope of saving; however because of digital proliferation, these original items are too often locked away in inaccessible locations or archivists ignore necessary preservation works on physical items and these original objects suffer the erosion of time.[32] Again, this does not even touch upon accessibility of digitized objects. Literary historian Kenneth M. Price describes how "[r]estricted circulation and firewalling limit the audience who can see digital work and the scholars who might potentially reuse and build upon it," thereby creating another hurdle for this supposedly all-inclusive revolutionary medium.[33] And yet, it is

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[28] Nanda K. Surendran, Xun W. Xu, Oliver Stead, and Heather Silyn‐Roberts, "Contemporary Technologies for 3D Digitization of Māori and Pacific Island Artifacts," *International Journal of Imaging Systems and Technology* 19, no. 3 (2009): 244-59.
[29] Gabrys, *A Natural History of Electronics*, 104.
[30] Ibid., 110.
[31] Ibid., 123.
[32] Ibid., 121.
[33] Kenneth M. Price, "Digital Scholarship, Economics, and the American Literary Canon," *Literature Compass* 6, no. 2 (2009): 275.

clear that there are two sides to the coin of digitization: Professors at University of Chapel Hill Christopher A. Lee and Helen Tibbo write that these digitization efforts allow for "both wider and integrated access, representation of an increased range of human experience, persistence through redundant copying, economies of scale, and enrollment of collective expertise," as well as "bit rot, obsolescence, social inertia, technology monitoring, intellectual control, access environments, and the ability to convey meaning over time."[34] At the end of the day, these digital technologies do lead to wider engagement with materials, even if the new digitized versions cannot capture an exact replica of the original. As Cohen and Rosenzweig stated back in 2006, "[e]ncouraging broad participation is indeed part of the history of the web itself."[35]

Digitization necessarily changes objects, but the change can lead to a wider proliferation and a new means of understanding an older work. Over this past winter I returned to the United States and was able to see the exhibit *Van Gogh Alive*, an immersive digital experience in which multiple screens displayed hyper-enlarged scans of Vincent Van Gogh's artwork on the walls and floor that was accompanied by writings from Van Gogh's diaries and both classical and post rock music. The exhibit was a fully digital experience that allowed a completely innovative way of displaying this prolific artist's work and was both widely distributable and hyper mobile—the exhibit has already toured in over fifty locations around the world and planned for more in the future.[36] Coincidentally this same exhibit is also currently on display in Auckland, New Zealand. Because I have had the privilege of seeing a handful of Van Gogh's works in person before seeing this exhibit, it was quite jarring to see the flattening and projection of his dynamic pieces. However, when I took a step back and reminded myself that this is not meant to mimic the real

[34] Christopher A. Lee and Helen Tibbo, "Where's the Archivist in Digital Curation? Exploring the Possibilities through a Matrix of Knowledge and Skills," *Archivaria*, no. 72 (2011): 127.
[35] Cohen et al., *Digital History*, 247.
[36] *Grande Experiences*, https://grande-experiences.com/ (Accessed February 20, 2021).

pieces, but rather interpret them through a new lens, I began to truly appreciate the exhibit. The dynamic and engaging manner of display was truly a marvel of digitization, creativity, and cooperation across many fields. It was a beautiful display of how innovative and special this new digital technology can be, how broad its reach can extend, and the ways in which it can reinvent and retell the stories of old.

CHAPTER TWO

History has always been the story of the world's past, but the ways in which history has been recorded are constantly in flux. From oral to written to digitized sources, whichever means of storytelling is used, in the end, produces a collection of memories. And memory, at any age must be situated and understood in its historical context. Each method can be co-opted and thus, it is vital not to accept any historical source as a mere reflection of a "true" reality. Oral history is one of the oldest forms of history, and because of its aurality and reliance on humans, historians of this form have been some of the most cognizant of the issues related to subjectivity vs objectivity.

Often maligned, oral history has too often been seen as inaccurate and unreliable. For many, oral history is seen as subjective—"suffering from the interviewees' forgetfulness, dishonesty and reticence as well from the interviewer's intentionally or unintentionally misleading questions...and therefore to be particularly weak sources."[37] This critique leveled at oral history is valid in that there are quite a number of contributing factors that must be accounted for when examining oral history as a source. Besides memory, "[r]eliability depends partly on whether the question interests the informant," meaning that if something specific had

[37] Alexander Freund, "Oral History as Process-generated Data," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 34, no. 1 (127) (2009): 38.

no interest to the interviewee they often will not recall that item with any specificity.[38] A simple example from my own family is my great-aunt, Marilyn Gries. At ninety-eight years old she has almost a century of lived experience and thankfully she is still astute and has not lost her memories. She can tell me stories about being pulled out of school early every summer to spend time at her grandparent's house in Atlantic City, a random rabbi in Newark from the 1930s who was supposed to marry her and her husband but had retired a few years prior, and her trips across the United States during World War II while her husband trained to be a flight navigator, and yet if I ask her things about the genealogy of our family (details about family relations and extended cousins) I hit a wall. It is not that she is lacking in ability to remember, but rather family history does not concern her, she has always been a rather self-interested person, thus memories of her grandfather's brother who died in a trolly accident seem unimportant and are almost never mentioned when speaking about the past. And yet, her inability to remember or describe some aspects of her past does not negate or denigrate the truth of her life story.

Historian Alexander Freund describes in his 2009 paper titled "Oral History as Process-generated Data," that oral histories are "not simply...sources to be mined for facts….but rather...complex social constructs that are inherently subjective and thus offer multiple layers of meaning."[39] Oral history requires two human beings interacting to craft a story, the interviewee and interviewer (or teller and transcriber/recorder)—each human coming to the interaction with their own personal background and together having a specific interpersonal relationship. The way in which these human beings relate with each other and the material they are telling or recording has immense consequences as to what history is actually set down. Further the relationship is not expressed in a singular manner as oral historian Paul Thompson describes:

[38] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 103.
[39] Freund, "Oral History as Process-generated Data," 23.

> It should be emphasized that it is not necessarily true that an interviewer of the same sex, class, or race will obtain more accurate information. If the social relationship in an interview becomes, or is from the start, a social bond, the danger towards social conformity in replies is increased. Nor does increased intimacy always bring less inhibition.[40]

These interpersonal relationships impact the ways in which all oral history is articulated and thus, interpreting oral histories is necessarily complex and must be done with a wide lens of contextualization, as well as picking apart what is said and unsaid.[41] In this way, when studying oral history it is important to understand the construction of memory.

In discussing this thesis project with various oral historians, Dr. Cheryl Ware of Auckland University mentioned the idea of *composure* related to oral history, a concept which, I believe, encompasses the ideas of messiness around oral history. In the introduction to her 2019 book *HIV Survivors: Memories of the Epidemic*, Ware discusses oral history as a general practice and the role of narrators. She writes how "[n]arrators therefore often compose stories in ways that their given audience will recognise and affirm" and that they "often subconsciously, reconstruct their memories and stories to make them more emotionally manageable."[42] Thus the narrator, while not merely relating past events, is actively shaping and crafting their narrative as the situation arises. Ware's ideas about composure reflect back to the prolific oral historian Alistair Thomson, in his book *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* from 2013. In this text Thomson defines the concept of composure thusly:

> In one sense we 'compose' or construct memories using the public language and meanings of our culture. In another sense we 'compose' memories which help us to feel relatively comfortable with our lives, which give us a feeling of composure. We remake or repress memories of experiences which are still painful and 'unsafe' because they do not easily accord with our present identity, or because their inherent traumas or tensions

[40] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 116.
[41] Ibid., 110.
[42] Cheryl Ware, *HIV Survivors in Sydney: Memories of the Epidemic*, 5.

> have never been resolved. We seek composure, an alignment of our past, present and future lives. One key theoretical connection, and the link between the two senses of composure, is that the apparently private process of composing safe memories is in fact very public. Our memories are risky and painful if they do not conform with the public norms or versions of the past. We compose our memories so that they will fit with what is publicly acceptable, or, if we have been excluded from general public acceptance, we seek out particular publics which affirm our identities and the way we want to remember our lives.
>
> Some critics of oral history have claimed that the fact that we compose our memories invalidates the use of memory by historians. That might be true for oral historians who have sought to use memory as a literal source of what happened in the past. But if we are also interested, as we must be, in the ways in which the past is resonant in our lives today, then oral testimony is essential evidence for analysis of the interaction between past and present, and between memory and mythology.[43]

For Thomson the construction of memory is not something to shy away from or a reason to dismiss oral history as a valid source, rather, by understanding how memories are articulated and the layers that are involved in the construction of these stories, they become valuable pieces of the history.

In 1998 Alistair Thomson and Robert Perks compiled a seminal collection of essays on the subject titled *The Oral History Reader*. The essays chosen throughout the book perform two functions: one, to discuss the theory of oral history, and two, to describe the practical means of how to perform oral history. For oral historian Paul Thompson in his essay "The voice of the past: oral history," he describes that ultimately "[o]ral history is a history built around people." Thompson sees this form of history as community based and shifts the focus from the elite to everyday people.[44] By including a broader range of individuals into a narrative, oral history provides a new perspective that is vital in understanding the past. Further at one point, while defending the validity of oral history, Thompson remarks "[m]ost historians make implicit or

[43] Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia," *Oral History* 18, no. 1 (1990): 25.
[44] Paul Thompson, "The voice of the past: Oral history," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2000), 24.

explicit judgements," thus highlighting that admonishments made towards oral history regarding its subjectivity are narrow-minded since all history has such biases.[45]

This defense of subjectivity is echoed by scholar Alessandro Portelli in his essay "What makes oral history different." Portelli defends the subjectivity, going insofar as to claim that the reckoning with subjectivity makes oral history all the more powerful:

> But the unique and precious element which oral sources force upon the historian and which no other sources possess in equal measure is the speaker's subjectivity...Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they do.[46]

This focus on narrative and perception of history is an aspect that is too often forgotten in historical memory. For example, during the current COVID pandemic it is important to tell of the catastrophic death toll and infections, but writing down the memories and experiences of people's everyday lives, the emotional and physical isolation of the ones who are trying to stay healthy, the tales of nurses in Emergency Rooms dealing with the patients who disbelieve their diagnosis until the end, are all arguably more valuable to understanding how 2020 was experienced by people on the ground, than merely seeing the raw historical fact of a death count.

Once one accepts oral history as a credible means of historical preservation, it is important to understand the various shifts in the field. Though obviously oral history has had a myriad of iterations throughout its long history, in the past century there have been four key shifts. In his article published in *The Oral History* review in 2007 titled "Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History," Alistair Thomson described these transformations as follows:

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2000), 67.

> [T]he postwar renaissance of memory as a source for 'people's history'; the development, from the late 1970s, of 'post- positivist' approaches to memory and subjectivity; a transformation in perceptions about the role of the oral historian as interviewer and analyst from the late 1980s; and the digital revolution of the late 1990s and early 2000s.[47]

Each of these revolutions within the field has impacted the trajectory and preservation of the words of the people. Historians began to accept the validity of the word of the working class, to doubting the authenticity and reliability of oral sources, to seeing oral history as a more objective way and a means to see non-Western cultural history, to the recognition of the power new digital technologies have on these sources. Regarding this final point of change, he writes how "digital technologies are transforming the ways in which we record, preserve, catalogue, interpret, share and present oral histories."[48] Preservation of oral histories provides not merely the history of an event, but insight into the time and the people who are being recorded. Thus it is incumbent upon researchers to understand and interpret that nuance. Related to digital technology specifically, for Alistair Thomson, even fourteen years ago, technology had already revolutionized the ways in which oral history was experienced and transmitted. He found the prospect exciting and with the potential to open new doors by allowing for "imaginative, unforeseen interpretations" of oral histories, as well as the ability to break "down the distinction between the oral history document source and the oral history documentary product."[49] Oral histories, because they are based in aurality, have generally benefited from digital technologies. Various technological advances over the years have transformed their preservation from transcription to audio to visual. Each of these steps, bringing the original form of oral history telling back to its more traditional verbal method thereby making the "medium...part of the

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[47] Alistair Thomson, "Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History," *The Oral History Review* 34, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 2007): 49.
[48] Ibid., 68.
[49] Ibid., 69.

message."[50] Thus, by allowing for the ways in which these stories are told to return to its original aural form, historians are empowering for a more accurate representation of the source materials—something that is of greater importance to those from communities where oral history reigns supreme, like Māori.

Prior to the digital revolution the preservation of oral history was confined to two methods, the traditional means of one person speaking the story to another, and the transcription of spoken words onto paper. And though much of oral history in certain groups remains in the aural sphere, for those within the research, education, or diasporic communities, voiced histories were an impracticality, if not an impossibility. Thus, transcription of these aural versions was necessary, and yet by doing so, a significant amount of meaning and contexts has been lost in these written sources. Dr. Nēpia Mahuika, oral historian at the University of Waikato, describes how the "aural transmission is arguably more nuanced and 'living', while the printed and written is more fossilised and therefore removed from the people and places they originated."[51] Dr. Ware explained in speaking with me that her preferred method for handling oral histories is not to fully transcribe them; instead, she makes reference notes about the conversation every so often. In this way, she forces herself to go back and listen to the original aural versions, so as to ensure she does not misinterpret or gloss over the context and connotations of the spoken voice.[52] This is also the preferred method for the Auckland Libraries as Sue Berman addressed, telling me that interviews done in the context of her job are preserved with a time-coded abstract to go alongside the recordings for that very same reason.[53] Reading the voice to the oral history allows for some

[50] Ibid., 70.
[51] Nēpia Mahuika, "'Kōrero Tuku Iho': Reconfiguring Oral History and Oral Tradition," (PhD diss., University of Waikato, 2012), 20.
[52] Cheryl Ware, video call, March 7, 2021.
[53] Sue Berman, video call, March 17, 2021.

meaning to be reflected back into these oral sources and enables a more open interpretive framework for those engaging with the oral source.

As such, though digital technologies do fossilize a source in one way, capturing it at a specific moment forever, it does allow for engagement with the source in a way that an exclusively transcribed version does not permit. And various oral history projects have capitalized on the proliferation of digital technologies and their refreshed ability to engage with oral sources. Staff at the Illinois State Museum outline the Oral History of Illinois Agricultural exhibit from the early 2010s. For this project they tried "restoring the human voice" to exhibits in their museum.[54] After so many years of the transcription of oral stories, through usage of new digital technologies, researchers recorded the stories of various farmers and individuals in the community. The idea was to animate the static words of people, make the tales more dynamic, and allow for searchability and accessibility beyond the physical locality in Illinois.

This idea of telling stories in a more engaging manner is clearly on display when one watches documentaries on television or listens to podcasts. Both work by attaching a story to people with personalities and opinions, pulling audiences into stories they had otherwise been uninterested in. In 2014 *Serial*, a podcast investigating and casting doubt on a convicted murderer Adnan Syed, was released to critical and popular acclaim. One that could be argued to have kicked off the podcasting revolution, *Serial* was a true-crime podcast whose basic conceit was that "it sounds like your smart friend is investigating a murder and telling you about it."[55] *Serial* employed interviews and archive recordings to paint a compelling and popularly engaging

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[54] Robert E. Warren, Michael P. Maniscalco, Erich K. Schroeder, James S. Oliver, Sue Huitt, Douglas Lambert, and Michael Frisch, "Restoring the Human Voice to Oral History: The Audio-Video Barn Website," *The Oral History Review* 40, no. 1 (2013): 109.

[55] Sarah Larson, "'Serial': The Podcast We've Been Waiting For," *The New Yorker*, October 9, 2014. https://www.newyorker.com/culture/sarah-larson/serial-podcast-weve-waiting. Accessed February 4, 2021.

picture of a situation. Human voices were used to create empathy with the audience for its protagonist and draw the public into the story. With these interviews, the audience was presented with the role of judge, jury, and witness in the events.

This obsession with personal narratives can be termed as a "witnessing fever," a concept that sociologist Fuyuki Kurasawa describes this in his 2009 piece, "A Message in a Bottle: Bearing Witness as a Mode of Transnational Practice."[56] Kurasawa describes how due to the various horrors that have permeated the twentieth century, the result was a huge number of individuals with stories to tell—stories with factual, judicial, or psychic power. Capturing these stories is done with increasing levels of sophistication of digital technology, but for Kurasawa, his writing is more concerned about the power structures that lie behind these produced witnessings. Kurasawa writes how these stories are communicated and transcribed within a hierarchical structure, one which "shapes how states and components of civil societies respond to accounts of mass suffering."[57] Those bearing witness experience what Kurasawa describes as "ethico-political labour"—meaning witnessing and sharing what one witnesses is difficult work on the part of the witnesser.[58] Additionally, those receiving the witness have their motives and actions wrapped up in political machinations. Ultimately, Kurasawa's piece asks audiences to remember the work that goes into witnessing and sharing that witnessing—important work which must be done with awareness of the power structures that subsume it. This is especially true with indigenous memory and history. Dr. Mahuika also mentions this, describing that the various power structures mean that "[o]ral history and traditions are produced and contested in multiple ways that reflect the underlying political aims and aspirations of individuals and

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[56] Fuyuki Kurasawa, "A Message in a Bottle: Bearing Witness as a Mode of Transnational Practice," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 1 (2009): 92.
[57] Ibid., 98.
[58] Ibid., 92.

collective groups."[59] The ways in which these histories are crafted and preserved does not occur in a void, but rather is fully immersed in the socio and political realities surrounding it. Thus, the social histories of these peoples are often subject to mis-memory by the powerful. Again, in his book Paul Thompson provides some insight:

> For the social history of any minority group the limitations of written documentation are such that the use of oral sources introduces an entirely new dimension to the subject. This is equally true, for example, of the history of the American Indians, or the gypsies in Europe: both persecuted minorities, misleadingly documented by a hostile majority, but preserving their own strong oral tradition, through which a more understanding approach to their past becomes possible.[60]

Thus these oral histories can provide the path forward in crafting a more nuanced and accurate picture of various peoples throughout history.

A final note of importance in the study of oral history is to understand its usage within the broader historical field. What is the value and usage of oral histories? Are they meant to be a means to learn about history or do they serve as a form of history themselves? Dr. Mahuika describes this tension:

> As a field of study oral history continues to be thought of predominantly as a methodology, or an approach, rather than an area of scholarly activity with sophisticated interpretive theories. Indeed, for much of the twentieth century the practice of oral history operated in what has been described as the 'reconstructive mode', but following the dynamic shifts in thinking during both the cultural and linguistic turns, oral history is now thought to be a much more 'interpretive' practice.[61]

To the mind of many oral historians, the oral histories themselves are of value and do have import as a separate field. It might feel obvious to say that being an oral historian necessarily biases one to that opinion; however for more traditional textual historians, not viewing oral

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[59] Mahuika, "'Kōrero Tuku Iho': Reconfiguring Oral History and Oral Tradition," 190.
[60] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 88.
[61] Mahuika, "'Kōrero Tuku Iho': Reconfiguring Oral History and Oral Tradition," 119.

history as anything more than a means to the end of written history is also steeped within a deep seated bias of their own. This fight for validity is further complicated when looking at histories of non-Western cultures. For Māori historians and historical discussions within Māori scholarly circles, this debate over the value of oral history or the implications of its usage are not typically mentioned. As Danny Keenan of the Ngāti Te Whiti, Te Ātiawa *iwi* describes in his article "The past of the paepae-uses of the past in Māori Oral History," "oral testimony...is accepted as an integral part of Māori knowledge transfer…[and] are readily acknowledge by Māori as perfectly valid history."[62] Thus even debating the validity of oral history as a source, is one deeply steeped in the privileging of Western history and historical methods within the field. Thus it is essential to remember this subtle but important lens when examining oral histories. Further because much of Western scholarship is performed within a written framework, those biases against oral history can also be seen through the lens of Western domination. As Julie Cruikshank, a Candian historian focusing on First Nation history, writes in her article, "Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues," researchers must "be cautious about attempts to codify oral traditions—to articulate within a Western framework concepts embedded in indigenous frames of meaning."[63]

To truly provide a clear-eyed understanding of the past, it is vital to remember those power structures, ones that are created by money, power, class, race, etc. Preservation of any history is caught up in messy complications of legality, memory, and who is doing the preservation. And all of these issues also occur within oral history and digitization. When speaking with others within the corporate sector of digitization, many share concerns with the

[62] Danny Keenan, "The Past From the Paepae: Uses of the PAst in Māori Oral History," *Māori and Oral History: a collection*, by Rachael Shelby and Alison Laurie (eds), Oral History Assn of NZ, (2005): 92.
[63] Julie Cruikshank, "Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues," *The Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (1994): 414; Further discussion on this Western framework as it relates to New Zealand history will be discussed in Chapter four.

disconnect between content, digitization, and access. All of these issues overlap and, at the end of the day, are predicated on a hierarchy. Who has the money to pay to create the content, the ability to access the technology to digitize, and the funds and desire to remember that particular slice of the past? With witnessing and oral histories, these issues are exacerbated because of the truly personal nature of this sector of history. This has led to censored interviews, protection of interviews until after the subject's death, and other alterations to the attribution or content to protect the interviewee's privacy. Though many are willing to go on record and do record themselves, with the increasing proliferation and longevity of digital records, some individuals are reticent to do so.[64] There is also the issue of misuse that greater proliferation allows for. We as historians and educators have not always been the most graceful or best conservationists of history even prior to the digital age, especially in relation to groups not part of the Western hegemonic society.

CHAPTER THREE

When I was ten years old my family and I boarded a plane to Billings, Montana. We landed, got in a rental car, and drove over two hours to my Aunt and Uncle's house—a log cabin they had designed themselves, set against plains filled with alfalfa and horses. The trip was planned in order to visit with a family member we had not seen in many years and as a chance to experience Yellowstone National Park, but while we were in Montana we went to where my uncle worked, the local Indian Reservation. My uncle was a dentist on the reservation, but he did not bring us there to see teeth cleanings, rather to experience a pow wow that was happening one afternoon.

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[64] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 50.

Because I was so young I do not remember much about the reservation or even the pow wow, but I do remember one visual and one feeling—the garbage littered everywhere and feeling a bit put off by the entire ordeal. I know it was probably very interesting and new and exciting; however something did not sit well with me. It was not until years later that I have come to understand that feeling was probably because the entire ceremony was a hollow exhibition, done as a means of performative action for the non-native Americans in the audience. There might have been kernels of truth within the performance, but at the end of the day, it was commodified and packaged for my entertainment and did not give me much insight into the actual culture or history of the peoples I was watching. This same vacant feeling was experienced by my mother as a little girl in the sixties when she went to a museum exhibiting Native American culture, she too felt it was hollow—not presenting her with any truth about the people the exhibit was about.

Museum displays and exhibits are inherently subject to the historical and social context in which they are displayed. In his 2007 book *Exhibiting Māori: A History of Colonial Cultures on Display*, Conal McCarthy lays out in vivid detail how "[e]xhibiting is socially and historically determined"[65] Depending on the political mood, social dynamics, and power relations of various groups, curators have altered and changed how history is preserved and memorialized within museums over time. This is especially true of preservation of histories of colonial areas. The power imbalance within these relationships has led to quite a number of issues related to preservation. Though there has been some engagement with the various colonial narratives and power dynamics that have been codified by museums, this is often too little. When discussing museums and their function in her 2018 article, Francesca Nava argues that museums themselves offer an illusion of neutrality, and thus instead of focusing on museums as places to merely view

[65] Conal McCarthy, *Exhibiting Māori: A History of Colonial Cultures on Display* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 8.

objects, they should be seen as places to initiate discussion.[66] When dealing with the history of non-Western peoples this preservation of history is put under even more pressure. Dr. Mahuika describes this in his doctoral thesis:

> Of most immediate concern to many indigenous scholars is the legacy of control and oppression that has denigrated and subordinated our ways of telling and understanding the past in favour of the supposedly superior western practices that now dictate the way history and even oral history should be defined and applied to research.[67]

Not only is this battle for control and power over history of concern, but also what is actually defined as history. It is this heady mixture of issues that effuses scholarship and is exacerbated by spending decisions of institutions that are necessarily complex and multifaceted. Again, literary historian Kenneth Price discusses how "the creation of digital editions is expensive, and the demand for external and internal grant support always exceeds the money available. We need to reflect, then, on what gets funded and what does not and to take care not to institute an even more narrowly conceived canon than in the past."[68] The funding of these places of history is tangled and even with intentions of neutrality, the objects chosen, the topics discussed, the content held within, and the items given the green light for preservation and digitization is dependent upon third parties.

And even with this inequity, McCarthy warns that to solely " view...museums as instruments of colonial power can obscure the ways in which minority groups such as Māori engage in international networks and the exchange of ideas."[69] For McCarthy there has always been engagement by Māori within these cultural exhibits and to fully deny their involvement is

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[66] Francesca Nava, "Heritage, Hegemony And The West: A Panoramic View Of Power Dynamics In The Heritage Sector," *The Oxford Student*, October 29, 2018. https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2018/10/29/heritage-hegemony-west-heritage/. Accessed March 1, 2021.
[67] Mahuika, "'Kōrero Tuku Iho': Reconfiguring Oral History and Oral Tradition," 14.
[68] Kenneth M. Price, "Digital Scholarship, Economics, and the American Literary Canon," 280.
[69] McCarthy, *Exhibiting Māori: A History of Colonial Cultures on Display*, 11.

to erase their participation.[70] Additionally there is a tendency to see the world as advancing in a linearly progressive fashion and yet, according to McCarthy's research, "[i]t is clear that Māori exhibitions today are not better or more progressive than their predecessors, and that current categories are merely the latest episode in an ongoing story."[71] It is very easy to feel the present day of historical scholarship is better than the years before, but that is not necessarily true. And it is that feeling of progress and forward momentum, which the digital community feels acutely. Because technology today is almost inevitably more advanced than technology from decades earlier, it can feel as though today's methods and forms of preservation are necessarily better. But that is not always the case. With the more advanced technology comes both new and recontextualized questions about historical preservation and memory, especially so within history related to indigenous peoples, one example of such being Māori.

New Zealand, named *Aotearoa* in the Māori language, remained completely devoid of people until fairly recent history. And yet, even though the settlement of these islands occurred, most likely, within the last thousand years, there is quite a bit of contention as to the specifics within scholarship and oral Māori sources. According to popular mythology, the discovery was a bit earlier, in 950 C.E., but the actual settlement of the country did not come until 1350 C.E.[72] This idea of origin was promoted by *The New Zealand School Journal*, a "major source of teaching materials used in Aotearoa's Primary schools" and also was utilized, according to Stuart R. Miller in his thesis "Identifying with Empire: *The N.Z. School Journal* from 1907-1940," "for disseminating an official state ideology…[and] constructing of a national identity."[73] These

[70] Ibid., 12.
[71] Ibid., 200.
[72] Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 38; Note on usage of "C.E." Unless from a direct quote, I will be using "Common Era," abbreviated "C.E" to discuss dates. This is in place of the more colloquially used notation "A.D."
[73] Stuart. R. Miller, "Identifying with Empire: The N.Z. School Journal from 1907-1940," (Thesis, Massey University, 2013), 1.

educational pamphlets largely influenced and established the lens through which much of early Aotearoa history is viewed. Further, the journals served as "an explanation and justification for British presence in New Zealand."[74] The origin of settlement has also encountered the "Moriori Myth" and the "Waitaha Myth." Both of these contentions are thoroughly disputed today, but their existence is important for understanding power dynamics and relations within the land.

The Moriori Myth posits that the land of Aotearoa was not settled originally by Māori, but instead an earlier people, the Moriori. The claim states that the Moriori people remained in Aotearoa until Māori came and violently displaced them to the Chatham Islands, a group of islands about five hundred miles off the East coast of Aotearoa.[75] This myth is examined in great detail in Peter Clayworth's 2001 dissertation written for his Doctor of Philosophy in History at the University of Otago titled "'An Indolent and Chilly Folk': The Development of the Idea of the 'Moriori Myth.'" In his dissertation he discusses "the creation of the myth that New Zealand was originally populated by a Moriori people totally distinct from the Māori," as well as "the intellectual context set up in the nineteenth century by the spread of progressive evolutionary ideas...and by the pervasiveness of race as a concept for defining and categorising peoples."[76] His paper concludes by stating much of the *Pākehā*, European, ideas were birthed from their own Western perspective and as "the Myth became solidified in Pakeha [*sic.*] literature, in the official education system and Pakeha popular culture[,] it changed and became a tool in the discourse of ideas used by Pakeha to reinforce control by the coloniser."[77] Clayworth makes a clear case that this myth was born from and persisted due to these complicated and evolved power structures. The Waitaha Myth is another attempt to decipher and designate the first colonizers of the land.

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[74] Miller, "Identifying with Empire: *The N.Z. School Journal* from 1907-1940," 1.
[75] Peter Clayworth, "'An Indolent and Chilly Folk' The Development of the Idea of the 'Moriori Myth'" (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2001), ii.
[76] Ibid., 7, 9.
[77] Ibid., 279.

The claim is that the actual first people to arrive in Aotearoa travelled from Easter Island more than 2,000 years before the first Polynesians and originated from Africa, Asia, and South America.[78] They were said to have lived in complete harmony with nature, thus leaving virtually no ecological or archaeological footprint. Yet, even without evidence and no real buy in by scholars, the myth persisted. Michal King in his seminal work *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, published in 2003 writes the following:

> For Pakeha [*sic.*] supporters, they outnumbered Māori, the story has multiple appeal. It carried on the popular Victorian notion of cultural diffusion, which held that any cultural innovation displayed by a 'primitive' people, such as the moai statues on Easter Island, had to have come from a more 'highly civilised' people elsewhere. It incorporated the neo-Darwinist conviction that the representatives of 'higher civilizations' were pale-skinned, as some of the ancestors of Waitaha were said to be. It supported New Age beliefs about the desirability of living in a sacramental relationship with the natural environment…And completely undercut contemporary Māori resource claims against the Crown [New Zealand civil government] by arguing Māori were not in fact descended from the first inhabitants of New Zealand.[79]

King goes on to explain that beyond the media appeal of mysterious and off-beat stories, it played into an idea that the "reputable scholars sought to 'suppress' the Waitaha story because it conflicted with paradigms on which their careers and employment depended."[80] And while that is an issue that can arise in scholarship funded by various parties—even Paul Thompson mentions the issues with private funding related to oral historiography—, the fact that absolutely no physical evidence has ever been found to corroborate this tale, relegates it to the realm of fantasy.[81]

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[78] King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 58.
[79] Ibid., 59-60.
[80] Ibid., 60; This idea is also mentioned, but not named as the "Waitaha Myth" by Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney and Aroha Harris in their book *Tangata Whenua: A History*, from page 90-93.
[81] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 60.

That being said, both of these myths do clearly share one common element, a desire to erase Māori claims of legitimacy to the land to which they first settled. In both instances "the very notion that Māori had displaced and colonized a more primitive people was both evidence of *their* superiority and an implicit justification for what the Europeans, representatives of a still higher order of civilizing, had done to Māori in turn."[82] These myths play into implicit justification for the control and domination that the Europeans were to have over the islands in the coming centuries. And remembering this, it is clear that much of Aotearoa's history even before digitization has been intertwined with colonial power structures and relations.

Moving to accept Māori as the first human settlers of Aotearoa, today most scholars agree that people made landfall in the thirteenth century.[83] The people that landed on these islands were most likely of Polynesian descent—seafaring people who intentionally navigated to the islands to search for the resources that did indeed exist on the islands to an abundance. Once establishing the wealth of this land, the peoples returned to settle the land and proceeded, within one hundred years to ravage the previously untouched natural environment. Overhunting led to the extinction of the Moa and other flightless birds, seals were hunted down to extremely small populations, and eventually intentional fires destroyed huge swaths of native habitats.[84] With the lack of large game and the clearing of land by the fires, a more agricultural lifestyle was adopted on the islands in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[85] This also corresponds to a development of tribal polities, which then allowed for the development of a unique Māori cultural and artistic identity, different from the Polynesian culture of these peoples' ancestors.[86] As King writes, this

[82] King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 57.
[83] Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney, and Aroha Harris, *Tangata Whenua: A History* (New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books, 2019), 62; King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 48.
[84] Anderson, Binney, and Harris, *Tangata Whenua: A History*, 109; King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 66-7.
[85] King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 70.
[86] Ibid., 72

process of time and isolation allowed for an indigenous culture to be created, "Te Ao Māori"—a Māori world view which offered "those human inhabitants a comprehensible place in the cosmos and a prospect of physical and spiritual security."[87]

Though some broad strokes of Māori history can be articulated, as historian Anne Salmond makes clear in her book *Two Worlds: First Meetings Between Māori and Europeans 1642-1772*, "[i]t is not easy to generalise about early Polynesian life in Aotearoa, if only because the habitats in which different communities lived were so diverse."[88] And yet when the Europeans first landed on the islands, various logs and writings about the voyages attempted to do just that. In 1642, Dutch explorer Abel Tasman was the first European to have recorded sight of Aotearoa. But, as Salmond writes, during that trip the "contacts were brief and tenuous, and all attempts at communication [between Europeans and the Māori] failed" and it would take more than 120 years before James Cook would 'discover' the islands in 1769.[89]

English explorer James Cook arrived to Aotearoa on his ship the *Endeavor* in October 1769 and stayed around the islands until March 1770. During this month's long journey, he and his crew kept a series of daily journals, charts, botanical records, ethnographic logs, sketches, and language compilations. Within these sources, a wealth of information about the islands and its inhabitants were transmitted back to Europe. Yet even with this wealth of information, there were some severe limitations. Salmond writes, "[t]he contacts with Māori groups were brief…, seasonally restricted…., and none of the *Endeavor's* people ever travelled far inland…Communications throughout were limited and often hostile…[and] fundamentally, the *Endeavor* records were shaped by the standards and expectations of the eighteenth-century

[87] Ibid., 74-5.
[88] Anne Salmond, *Two Worlds: First Meetings Between Māori and Europeans 1642-1772*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 38.
[89] Ibid., 84; usage of the word 'discover' to indicate the European 'discovery' of the islands.

societies from which they came."[90] The history of the peoples provided by Cook and subsequent travelers were necessarily biased, thus it is important for future historians to interpret the sources with the appropriate level of scrutiny and skepticism. Since these sources are necessarily one-sided, it is essential to be mindful of the power dynamics at play, especially as these sources become digitized.

The history of the Māori-Pākehā relationship from the eighteenth century to today has ebbed and flowed. Violent engagements between the two groups have persisted throughout the centuries. In the nineteenth century, a "[p]ersistance of tribal feeling as the very essence of Māori identity prevented Māori from acting as a pressure group commensurate with their numbers," thus much of their influence and power within the New Zealand governmental apparatus was blunted.[91] Further, many Māori lived outside European settled areas, leading to lack of full integration or intimate contact between the two groups, which led many Pākehā to fully believe there existed a "distinctively Māori way of life...that seemed indistinguishable from place to place."[92] This led to misunderstandings over who had authority to speak for Māori, as well as practical difficulties with language translation and communication. Thus when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in February 1840, a document with significant consequences for the Māori-Pākehā relationship going forward, very disparate views on what the document said and guaranteed were held by both parties. The treaty itself was written in both the Māori language, *te reo Māori*, and English, but due to poor translation it had a vastly different meaning to each of the two parties signing it. University of Auckland Professor David V. Williams in his essay "Unique Relationship Between Crown and Tangata Whenua?" writes that, "[t]he Māori text predicates a sharing of power and authority in the governance of the country between Crown

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[90] Ibid., 295.
[91] King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 241.
[92] Ibid., 242.

and Māori. The English text is about a transfer of power, leaving the Crown as sovereign and Māori as subject."[93] Thus the two parties entered into a relationship without a real understanding of what their fellow in the deal expected. Because much of the historical literature and eventual control of Aotearoa was placed into the hands of the British immigrants and thus the English version of the treaty, as M. P. K. Sorrenson, another University of Auckland professor, writes, "Pākehā New Zealanders have generally assumed that these provisions of the Treaty have been upheld," which is in stark contrast to the sentiment of many within Māori communities.[94]

Though seeming to guarantee sovereignty to Māori when read in *te reo Māori* these assurances were not a part of the English version of the treaty; this type of conflicting opinion has thus haunted interpretations of the document going forward. King writes because of this discrepancy, the Treaty was truly just another means of colonization, a "transfer of people from one side of the globe to the other, exploitation of the country's material resources for the benefit of both settlers and distant investors."[95] The impact of the Treaty of Waitangi persists to the present day, with multiple court cases attempting to clarify its meaning and interpretation. But one of the immediate impacts was the encroachment upon Māori lands and people who had previously had more separation from the Pākehā settlers. This intrusion contributed to the huge population decline within Māori communities in the middle of the nineteenth century and fed into the growing sentiment among European settlers that suppression and assimilation of Māori

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[93] David V. Williams, "Te Tiriti o Waitangi — Unique Relationship Between Crown and Tangata Whenua?" in *Waitangi: Māori and Pākehā Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, ed. I. H. Kawharu, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 77-8.
[94] M. P. K. Sorrenson, "Towards a Radical Reinterpretation of New Zealand History: the role of the Waitangi Tribunal," in Waitangi: Māori and Pākehā Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi, ed. I. H. Kawharu, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 158.
[95] King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 166-7.

by the British was inevitable and truly the "only option that would enable Māori to escape the otherwise inevitable fate of extinction that awaited them."[96]

Moving into the twentieth century, King describes how "Māori and Pakeha societies, running on separate but parallel tracks in New Zealand in the years preceding World War II, each displayed considerable internal cohesion and conformity."[97] Each side saw the other in a manner that benefited their own world view and kept their world views on these separate spheres. And yet, it was still expected that success within Aotearoa society meant assimilation to the Pākehā majority.[98] With the heavy migration of Māori families to cities and suburbs post World War II, a redefinition of Māori daily life and social connections occurred.[99] There was a sentiment "taken for granted by most Pakeha, including the political leadership of the day, that 'integration' in fact meant 'assimilation'. And assimilation required Māori to become Pakeha."[100] M.H. Durie of Massey University in New Zealand discusses this urbanization more in his essay "The Treaty of Waitangi: perspectives for social policy" that "[w]hile it [urbanization] has not been a uniformly bad experience, the consequences have been rapid loss of cultural and social values and, contrary to the expectations of the sixties, limited integration into the life of wider community."[101] Though the assimilation was expected, it was not fully permitted within society.

This assumed assimilation was pushed back hard by those within Māori community from the 1970s through the 90s. In 1975 the protest demonstration, Māori Land March, occurred which spurred the New Zealand legislature into passing the Treaty of Waitangi Act, which "bore

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[96] Anderson, Binney, and Harris, *Tangata Whenua: A History*, 501-3; King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 233, 150.
[97] King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 364.
[98] Anderson, Binney, and Harris, *Tangata Whenua: A History*, 550.
[99] King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 475-7.
[100] Ibid., 484.
[101] M. H. Durie, "The Treaty of Waitangi perspectives for social policy," in *Waitangi: Māori and Pākehā Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, ed. I. H. Kawharu, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 290.

witness to a Māori cultural resistance which in recent years has increasingly impinged upon the long unchallenged Pākekā hegemony over social and legal institutions."[102] During this time Māori asserted their power and visibility within New Zealand society and "for the first time, all the country's institutions were bending slowly but decisively in the direction of Māori needs and aspirations."[103] The Treaty of Waitangi Act of 1975, specifically, established a tribunal to deal with disputes over the Treaty of Waitangi from 1840 and explicitly recognized both the English and *te reo Māori* translations of the text.[104] The 1975 law shifted the power dynamics and allowed for recognition of the legitimacy of Māori interpretation and was reflective of the growing voting power those of Māori descent had in the primarily European New Zealand governing body. Though this has not been a straight line of progress, the trend in the past forty years has pointed into a more equal sharing of power between New Zealanders of Māori and European descent. Thus, it is incumbent upon historians and researchers to remain cognizant of the power relations and structures as they are preserving and writing history.[105]

As discussed above, historical record keeping has inevitably had its issues. From the very first European writings about the islands and its people, to the origin myths that pervaded society, to museum collections, these physical forms of history are rife with interpretive transgressions. And though it might be easy with the digital revolution to discard these concerns as relics of past research and historiography, it is essential to be aware of these issues when it

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[102] David V. Williams, "Te Tiriti o Waitangi — Unique Relationship Between Crown and Tangata Whenua?," 84.
[103] King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 502.
[104] M. P. K. Sorrenson, "Towards a Radical Reinterpretation of New Zealand History: the role of the Waitangi Tribunal," in Waitangi: Māori and Pākehā Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi, ed. I. H. Kawharu, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 160.
[105] I want to make it clear that the preceding was a very brief summary of over 500 years of Māori history and its intersection with Pākehā history. It is by no means comprehensive and much has been omitted for brevity and focus. The goal of this section was to provide some preliminary understanding of the context to allow for discussion related to digitization and the power relations that this issue sits within. The full history would serve to fill many books.

comes to digitization programs. The authority and power attributed to digital programs makes the need to be careful and aware of cultural missteps and issues of power even more important.

CHAPTER FOUR

When performing any sort of digitization it is essential that proper planning and preparation is executed prior to the start of the actual digitization work. From my own personal experience in digitizing within the corporate world and speaking to others in that sector, too often digital content managers are thrown into projects that are half way started by those not in the field. These projects have little to no consultation and no proper prep work. Researchers Joseph A. Williams and Elizabeth Berilla wrote an article in 2015 titled "Minutes, Migration, and Migraines: Establishing a Digital Archives at a Small Institution," where they discuss a number of these issues. They touch upon the very real tendency for those funding digital archives to be misinformed of the work required:

> Perception is another problem in establishing a robust digital archives [*sic*]. Administrators commonly believe that a digital archives is cheaper and less work intensive than a physical archives. This is a gross misunderstanding. Digital curation can be as expensive as print curation. Becker [another researcher] noted that constant migration of data into more stable electronic formats, the maintenance of appropriate software and hardware to sustain the archives, and ensuring digital backups are just a part of an ongoing commitment by the repository to maintain the quality and accessibility of its records.[106]

These misconceptions also lead to lack of funding and poor planning related to the initial set up of the archives, which then results in wasted money, time, resources, and lost content.[107] The consequences for lack of consultation is even more severe when discussing the history of peoples

[106] Joseph A. Williams and Elizabeth M. Berilla, "Minutes, Migration, and Migraines: Establishing a Digital Archives at a Small Institution," *The American Archivist* 78, no. 1 (2015): 87.
[107] Ibid., 88.

and minority groups. According to researchers Supriya Singh, Meredith Blake, and Jonathan O'Donnell in their article "The Digitization of Pacific Cultural Collections: Consulting with Pacific Diasporic Communities and Museum Experts," "[c]onsultation is essential in resolving issues of access—digitized or physical—to parts of the cultural collections."[108] This consultation, regardless of cultural sensitivity, is typically the most time consuming and costly of the steps that must be executed for a successful archival and digitization program. But, when dealing with content from indigenous populations, this complication seemingly increases tenfold as it forces the institutions and individuals acting on digitization to wade through complex ethical and legal dilemmas. Thus in exploring how native and indigenous cultures deal and interact with this new wave of digitization, one not only has the practical concerns of money, but also the moral issues surrounding both colonialism and Western sorting methods.

While exploring this topic I have seen some writings call out this issue more generally in the library and archivist field. In Hēmi Whaanga's article, "He Matapihi Mā Mua, Mō Mur: The Ethics, Processes, and Procedures Associated with the Digitization of Indigenous Knowledge–The Pei Jones Collection" he and his co-authors describe how traditional libraries and museums are consumed with these problems. They state how in New Zealand these "institutions, libraries, archives, and museums has [*sic*] traditionally been associated with the process of colonization" and their "systems are based on Western organization principles and are biased toward Western classification of knowledge."[109] Thus with museums and subsequent digitization of collections there can be almost a second or third 'colonization' occurring if these

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[108] Supriya Singh, Meredith Blake, and Jonathan O'Donnell, "Digitizing Pacific Cultural Collections: The Australian Experience," *International Journal of Cultural Property* 20, no. 1 (2013): 102.

[109] Hēmi Whaanga, David Bainbridge, Michela Anderson, Korii Scrivener, Papitha Cader, Tom Roa and Te Taka Keegan, "He Matapihi Mā Mua, Mō Muri: The Ethics, Processes, and Procedures Associated with the Digitization of Indigenous Knowledge—The Pei Jones Collection," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 53 (July 2015): 522, 527.

practices are not done in a careful and respectful manner. Museums and digitized objects broadly, create a feeling of neutrality and objectiveness that again Francesca Navara discusses:

> The problem with this sense of objectivity is that it makes the viewer absorb information imparted by the museum without questioning it. A Western-centric vision of the world is a common idea presented by museums that we take for granted. The West is presented as the pinnacle of modern human civilization, and with everything that took place in the world happening prior to Western culture existing. Many collections situate and curate objects so that the viewer has the feeling of moving through a sort of line in time, reaching Western Culture as an end point.[110]

Thus by default the Western hegemony, which most museums are housed, creates an imbalance and funnel through which history of indigenous peoples are viewed. In a project on co-creating history with First Nation peoples, researcher Benjamin Ridgeway discusses digital media specifically citing the following:[111]

> Digital media can just as crudely negate and disrupt through acts of objectification and misrepresentation. This can leave First Nations people's cultural content at the mercy of cultural reappropriation practices, thus reasserting the power of the Western 'gaze' and effectively 'displacing' First Nations people's remembering.[112]

Again, it is fictitious to believe that a Western lens is erased or fixed by the growing digitization age, but rather it is reconsecrated for a new time and by a new medium. Thus, as researchers, historians, and educators, it is imperative to not allow the veneer of digital neutrality cloud the reality of these multi-layered influences.

In her article "Oral History in Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-first Century," archivist Ellen D. Swain discusses the very real role librarians and archivists have

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[110] Francesca Nava, "Heritage, Hegemony And The West: A Panoramic View Of Power Dynamics In The Heritage Sector."

[111] Note, "First Nation" refers to the native populations living within the Canadian borders.

[112] Benjamin Ridgeway and Olivia Guntarik, "This Sense of Place/ This Living Archive: Cocreative Digitization and First Nations Peoples Remembering," *Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archive Professionals* 13, no. 2 (2017): 195.

within the historical record. Their actions, both what they preserve and what they choose to let fall by the wayside, are conscious decisions that are important in understanding the past. Thus it is the "gaps in documentation [that] affirmed certain historical realities and reflected archivists' biases as well as the constitutive role that status quo institutions played in defining both the historical record and history."[113] There is no way for archivists to be completely unbiased and assertions of archivists merely being a vacant, uninfluential collector establishes a false sense of security within the archival community.[114] Additionally the idea that archival procedures are immutable, belies the reality of the changing preservation patterns over time, something further clarified with the digital revolution.[115] But though digital technology has led to a consciousness around change within archival procedure, it has unfortunately shifted the archival field towards a self-perception as an empirical science. As such, "archivists and librarians over the past decade have tended to align themselves with the more technological sciences, rather than the historical profession."[116] Though her article was written back in 2003, those sentiments of the scientific nature of library work persist to 2021.

When I was looking to return to graduate school to attain my masters, I was heavily encouraged to pursue a Masters in Library and Information Science (MLIS) instead of History. Due to my work within digital libraries, it was almost expected that this would be the most practical next step in my career. Even when I went to various conferences related to my chosen career, those of my colleagues who had higher degrees, had them as an MLIS accreditation. And yet when I began to investigate these degree programs, I realized that though they do a good job of teaching mechanisms of library work, I believe that the most important part of library work is

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[113] Ellen D. Swain, "Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-First Century," *The American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (2003): 146.
[114] Ibid., 144.
[115] Ibid., 146.
[116] Ibid., 157.

understanding complex historical relationships and consequences. I had learned how to catalog and organize content while employed and I had kept up with the demands of various digital technologies when I was challenged at work. But the most influential guides to how I worked within the field was my understanding of history and memory, and knowledge of how to synthesize information into discrete pieces to pass on. All of these topics are thoroughly explored within the field of history. Thus, like Swain, I would argue that though an MLIS degree might be beneficial to some within the field, the knowledge of history and historical based studies are just as, if not more important to professionals in this sector. Archives, and digital archives, do ingest memory, but by their nature they inevitably change, bias, and interpret that information. Thus, it is incumbent upon those doing the preserving, especially in this digital age, to be aware of such issues and take them into account when dealing with history, especially of history where power relations play a large role.

Indigenous cultural history, as mentioned above, is consumed not only with power relations, but also certain spiritual and cultural elements that are not part of other Western historical memory. These histories, as University of Queensland in Australia Professor Pradip N. Thomas puts it, contain traditional knowledge, which is a "highly emotive issue" that researchers tend to "absolutize and romanticize."[117] This leads to misunderstandings of traditional knowledge by those outside its community. Thomas goes on to describe that the very nature of this cultural history is sometimes in direct conflict with digitization methods. Digitization as a matter of course converts elastic memories and histories into a static object, thus "digital archiving of traditional knowledge unfortunately fixes TK [Traditional Knowledge] as immutable knowledge when in fact it is dynamic and is updated constantly in the light of the

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[117] Pradip N. Thomas, "Traditional Knowledge and the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library: Digital Quandaries and Other Concerns," *The International Communication Gazette* 72, no. 8 (2010): 664.

experiences of local communities."[118] In that way, when a history is digitized it makes a huge impact on the actual memory of the history. This is true of Western stories, as interpretations change over time, but the issue is exacerbated within non-Western cultures who often perceive the stories of their past with more flexibility.

In a similar way that oral histories are subject to composure based on their recorded environment, many non-Western histories experience an analogous reality.[119] Conal McCarthy writes, "[c]hanges in Māori culture of display in the late twentieth century should not be seen, not as 'inauthentic' but as a creative recoupling, or rearticulation of constituent elements in response to social and political forces in settler colonies."[120] By forcing Western ideas regarding historical objectivity onto these histories, a fundamental misunderstanding of the function of the histories of peoples like Māori occurs.[121] When oral histories are transcribed, a freezing of narratives takes place, one which can be more inauthentic to the culture than that of a story changed over time. And the paralyzing of an oral history via transcription is being repeated again with the wave of digitization. When an object, story, or memory is digitized a snapshot is created of a particular time, one which is, though not completely immutable, much more stagnant than it would be in its original form. Thus in some ways the original conversations had around the difficulties of transcribing oral histories, are similar to the ones that must now happen in understanding the impact of digital history.

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[118] Ibid., 667.
[119] See discussion in Chapter 2 near footnotes 42 and 43 for a refresher on *composure*.
[120] McCarthy, *Exhibiting Māori: A History of Colonial Cultures on Display*, 12.
[121] In a 2016 panel, historian Dipesh Chakrabarty makes a similar mention of this flexibility of facts regarding peasant histories in Indian and Africa. The histories they tell of their past might be termed "belief" by western historians, a term that falsely denigrates these stories to the mystical/false realm. Instead, these stories told by and for these individuals felt true for them in the way most Western individuals feel about what they might call history. "Minor archives, meta histories: GLASS Faculty Roundtable," in *Práticas da História*, no. 3 (2016): 93-9.

Beyond the change in stories that occurs through retellings, the purpose of history is different. Again Julie Cruikshank describes how for Māori specifically, the objective of historical memory is unique:

> Maori [*sic*] history is conveyed by narrative, song, and proverb to listeners. Its concerns are with family and genealogy. Its purpose is to establish meaning for events and to validate family claims to power and knowledge. Pakeha [*sic*.] history is conveyed in writing to readers. It is inscribed as a political narrative whose purpose is to erase other interpretations. Its notions of causality and consequence are every bit as cultural as Maori concerns; they are just different.[122]

It is too easy to forget, as a Western historian, even the very basic purpose and elements of history are not constant across all cultures. That blindness to one's own implicit biases requires historians working with cultures outside their own to actively engage with and highlight members within the communities they are discussing. Even for this thesis, I have attempted to source and elevate Māori voices specifically. By doing such, I hope that I have been able to participate in a more nuanced discussion of concepts within Māori historiography.

A very specific concept in Māori understanding of the world relates to spirituality. When examining Māori, spiritual associations have a massive impact. Two important aspects to understand are *taonga* and *mana*. Though there are many translations, I will employ the definitions provided by I.H. Kawharu book *Waitangi: Māori & Pākehā Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, Kawharu being a Ngāti Whātua *iwi* chief. *Taonga* is defined as "treasures, cultural heritage" and *mana* as "authority, prestige, sovereignty."[123] Together these two spiritual elements inform and guide how scholars examine and understand the ways Māori cultural artifacts should be preserved.

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[122] Cruikshank, "Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues," 410.
[123] I. H. Kawharu, ed., *Waitangi: Māori and Pākehā Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, 313-4.

Taonga of a particular object depends upon its relationships to other parts of history. In their paper "Te Ataakura: Digital *taonga* and cultural innovation" researchers Wayne Ngata, Hera Ngata-Gibson, and Amiria Salmond describe how *taonga* works on an artifact:

> [T]he *taonga*-ness of an object, digital or otherwise, is determined by the quality of its relationships, so that something that to one person might appear as 'just an artefact' could be a *taonga* to someone who knows and/or is part of its history and kinship networks. Artefacts that have become detached from their stories and *whakapapa* are only potential *taonga* until these connections are re-animated and the object is restored as the living face of those relationships...Since the *taonga*-status of an object is relationally determined (i.e. it is the quality of a person's relationships with the artefact, including his or her knowledge of its history, that determine whether it is a *taonga* to them) the particular form *taonga* may take is subject to infinite variation. Any artefact is a potential *taonga*.[124]

With the advent of digital technologies, handling the concepts of *taonga* become more complicated: if an object or history is digitized in ones and zeroes, does it still contain the same spiritual power? And if so, how does a digital object become imbued with that power? Ngata, Ngata-Gibson, and Salmond argue for the ability of this spirituality to be valid in a digital form; however the only way to ensure the transmission and appropriate handling of this type of spiritual meaning is to work with those within the community.[125]

The recognition and power of this spirituality in digital forms is not without precedent within Māori history according to Professor Deidre Brown. Brown writes that "Māori have been interested in the possibilities offered by new 'offshore' technologies, and digital media is no exception."[126] Similar to the discussion in Chapter Three around Conal McCarthy's book *Exhibiting Māori: A History of Colonial Cultures on Display*, though power dynamics do play a role, Māori have participated in various historiography of their past and it is important that

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[124] Wayne Ngata, Hera Ngata-Gibson, and Amiria Salmond, "Te Ataakura: Digital Taonga and Cultural Innovation," *Journal of Material Culture* 17, no. 3 (2012): 242; *whakapapa*-Māori genealogy.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Deidre Brown, ""Ko to ringa ki nga rakau a te Pakeha"—Virtual *Taonga* Māori and Museums," *Visual Resources* 24, no. 1 (2008): 60.

scholars not deny their agency or engagement. That being said, consultation and working with Māori on their history on a case by case basis is important to ensure these digitization projects are not turned into kitsch and lose their value.[127] Thus, it is imperative that "[f]or new technologies to be seen by Māori to be culturally appropriate in a museum environment, they must be located within Māori custom."[128] Additionally the *taonga* that is provided to a digital object must be performed with the appropriate *mana*—authority—by the appropriate Māori emissary. Further, it is essential that in digitization programs, part of the recognition of *mana* means knowing when to step back and allow a specific Māori *iwi* to take full control of the program. As Dr. Mahuika, a member of the Ngāti Porou *iwi* writes, "[r]emaining steadfast in the affirming of our autonomy should not be misinterpreted as a rejection of the outside world."[129] This sentiment is echoed by Julie Cruikshank when she writes that "the very act of constructing, remembering, and transmitting narratives continues to be a reassertion of autonomy" for indigenious groups.[130] Thus, often the best means of assisting in these digitization programs of Māori history is to provide support rather than direction.

The value of digitization can also be acutely important and impactful for those of indigenous communities. In their article "Digitizing Pacific Cultural Collections," Singh, Blake, and O'Donnell articulate this difference as the following:

> Museums use digitization to extend their reach to new audiences, provide access to hidden collection "treasures," and keep up with the potential of new information and communication technologies.
>
> Indigenous populations see digitization as a way of revitalizing their culture, projecting their own voice, and connecting across generations and with other indigenous groups.[131]

[127] Ibid., 69.
[128] Ibid., 62.
[129] Mahuika, "'Kōrero Tuku Iho': Reconfiguring Oral History and Oral Tradition," 221.
[130] Cruikshank, "Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues," 418.
[131] Singh, Blake, and O'Donnell, "Digitizing Pacific Cultural Collections," 79.

This mismatch of goals can lead to different values and principles guiding the implementation of these technologies. Thus when pursuing digitization programs, it is essential that deference and collaboration with communities is taken. These issues are complex and nuanced and engaging in these types of digitization programs requires a full contemplation of these ideas to bridge the gap.

CONCLUSION

As a Jewish little girl in America I had a reoccurring frustration with my world. I had been taught that the United States was a country with separation of religion and state, and that religious doctrine did not dictate how the government and society was structured. And yet, as I looked around my everyday reality, this notion felt false. Between the days we got off for Christmas and Easter break, to the assumption I would know about the basic Christian beliefs in my history classes, to the politicians claiming 'moral high ground' around certain social issues, I became frustrated that those around me seemingly did not see the veil of Christian thinking that permeated every aspect of American society. It was not until I lived in Israel, a country which explicitly acknowledges its religious bent towards Judaism—between the way they structure weekends Friday/Saturday instead of Saturday/Sunday, to the holidays off, to the food stuffs available in supermarkets—that I was able to really see the explicit Christian lens through which virtually every aspect of life in the United States is filtered. And once I accepted this Christian tilt of American society, I felt much more settled and at peace within my life in the country. By having the tools and knowledge of such biases of my world, I was more at peace engaging with and deconstructing the history and everyday reality of my world.

And my ability to recognize this unspoken bias and lens of American society before I even attended my undergraduate education, has allowed me to engage with history with the understanding that every story, every action, and every moment studied is subsumed within a specific societal structure. I recognized that 'neutrality' in history is a myth and does not and cannot exist. As such, I believe that historians, instead of attempting to brand themselves as unbiased arbiters, should approach the tales of our past by acknowledging the context and structures that exist within a particular moment, both the moment itself and the moment the story is being preserved and told.

History is not neutral and we as historians should not try to perceive the past or even ourselves as such—we are inevitably a conglomeration of our own personal histories, interests, and perspectives. It is the job of the historian telling the story to be aware of those biases and work to contextualize their research and uplift various voices that have different perspectives. Much of Western scholarship has historically been quick to utilize their power to subjugate and oppress. The preceding thesis is to be seen as more of an opening salvo to these ideas and to bring awareness to the pitfalls that come with our rapidly digitizing world. By focusing on the necessary conversations and collaborations with Māori (or any other groups) in digitization programs, I hope I have laid out the problems that continue to persist within historiography even in its digital form, including colonization, funding, and power dynamics. Further, in exploring the case study of New Zealand, one can understand a single example of the ways in which this colonizer-indigenous relationship has played out in history and continues to play out as the digital revolution continues. The advent of digital history does not diminish this imbalance of power or misappropriation of sources, but rather, allows for a veneer of neutrality that does not exist.

The parallels between the digital revolution and oral history are striking: between the artificial freezing of the history of these communities, to the filtered perspectives that occur when it is engaged with by outsiders, there are a great number of recurring themes between these two types of historiography. The conversations that were had around oral history need to be revisited as the world continues its march towards a more digital future.

This paper is aimed at those outside the Māori community who want to engage and be a part of this new digital revolution. There is nothing wrong with a desire to share this new technology and include these communities in the digital revolution, but the manner in which to engage should be one of collaboration and assistance, as opposed to exclusive control and unilateral decisions where the digitization is performed on one's own whims with one's own 'expertise.' Though we as digital historians, archivists, and librarians might have the knowledge on how to use and best practices for digital history broadly, our role is to share and teach that knowledge to those within various populaces and provide them the resources to perform this digitization respectfully within their own communities. It is essential that Māori voices are centered and highlighted, so as to ensure that one's outside assumptions and perceptions are not applied to their history.

For myself, the Jewish tradition is more heavily steeped in questioning and living life for the present, not an assumed afterlife, thus when others speak to me about accepting things 'just because' or how I must act because of some nebulous punishment in the distant future, it does not make sense to me. Rather, the way I operate is to question almost all things I encounter and do, and subsequently, to act in ways that enrich the world I currently live in because I believe one should live their best life now. In a similar manner, those within Māori communities imbue and perceive objects and stories with spirituality that most within the Western world do not. Thus in

digitizing this history, unless there is active participation with those of Māori descent and within the community, there is no way to properly engage with this content.

FURTHER REMARK

I think it is important to make one more note on the preceding work. In crafting this paper, a sort of meta approach was employed. I used digital and oral histories to write about digital and oral history. Due to the COVID pandemic of 2020-21, my access to physical content was severely restricted, thus the vast majority of the sources I was able to utilize were digitized. Further, in attempts to supplement the digitized written sources, I engaged in a series of conversations with various New Zealand professors, researchers, and archivists in the field. In this way I was also restricted to individuals who had access to digital technologies and whose names were able to be found either via the internet or in a series of telephone calls with those I had spoken to before. This was only exacerbated by the impossibility of travel to New Zealand by non-residents of that country. Thus I was unable to actually visit the country, and am fully indebted to digital technologies. In that way, I am very grateful for how far technology has come and continues to move. I am fully aware that this creates some boundaries on the research, but in some ways this was a perfect paper to write within the limitations imposed upon me by the reality of the world in 2020-21. I encourage those in subsequent research to push the boundaries I was confined to and expand these ideas to other indigenous groups including those within the Americas, as I believe there are quite a number of parallels, as well as unique challenges that the digitization of indigenious material has across those continents. I am of the opinion that this digital revolution is an overall net good for society and I hope that the preceding paper can serve

as a guide on best practices for engagement, rather than be seen as a condemnation of this revolution.

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MAORI WORDS

All definitions (except Aotearoa and te reo Māori) sourced from: I. H. Kawharu, ed., *Waitangi: Māori and Pākehā Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, 313-4.

Aotearoa - New Zealand
hapū - sub-tribe
iwi - tribe, tribe
mana - authority, prestige, sovereignty
marae - the spiritual and symbolic centre of tribal affairs
Pākehā - European (non Māori)
taonga - treasures, cultural heritage
te reo Māori - Maori language
whakapapa - genealogy
whānau - family