

National Library: Matapihi

Matapihi - at www.matapihi.org.nz - is a free web-based service that lets people search the online collections of multiple cultural heritage organisations at the same time. Launched on 9 September 2004, it provides a single point of access for around 50,000 selected images, sounds and objects from:

- Alexander Turnbull Library
- Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
- Auckland City Libraries
- Christchurch City Libraries
- Otago Museum

Matapihi will continue to grow and change as new partner organisations join in the future.

The purpose of Matapihi is to promote New Zealand culture and heritage, and in particular to showcase cultural organisations and their heritage collections. The pilot project to develop Matapihi also aimed to:

- test the degree of convergence possible between different cultural heritage disciplines (archives, galleries, libraries and museums), and
- build capability in partner organisations by upskilling staff in use of metadata standards.

Matapihi is for anyone interested in New Zealand's culture and heritage, including:

- **Educational:** Students and teachers at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, as well as students and teachers in a lifelong learning context like community education or self-directed study.
- **General:** Users with general rather than specialised needs, e.g. 'cultural tourists' and people browsing for leisure rather than for work or study. These users may not have detailed knowledge of the collections held in organisations across New Zealand.
- **Professional:** Professional and semi-professional users such as librarians, archivists, publishers, researchers and genealogists. These users may already know about New Zealand collections, but searching Matapihi could be a good 'first step' in a larger research or reference process in which they may move on to the more specialised information services provided by individual organisations.

Matapihi is a successful example of collaboration between central and local government. Discussion at the inaugural National Digital Forum in May 2002 centred on the concept of a pilot project. In December 2002, the National Library Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa offered to lead development of a distributed service and five organisations with existing digital collections agreed to contribute.

These partners provided metadata exports and documented their compliance costs. Two system vendors, InfoSpecs and Vernon¹, assisted their clients with data conversion and have provided the National Library with feedback on documentation and processes.

Representatives from the National Library, Archives New Zealand, Te Papa and the New Zealand Film Archive gave advice on requirements for branding (resulting in the name Matapihi), and on the design features and functionality that would be desirable for various user communities.

Users can do a simple keyword or an advanced search. The search results contain a thumbnail for each retrieved item, along with the title and the name of the contributing organisation.

¹ InfoSpecs is the New Zealand distributor for DBTextworks software, which is used by Auckland City Libraries for their Heritage Images Online. Vernon Systems is the development company for Vernon collection management software, which is used by both the Auckland Art Gallery and Otago Museum.

Users click on the thumbnail to open a new window for viewing the full version of the item and further information at the partner's website.

Matapihi also provides Showcases. These theme-based selections include highlights from the contributors' collections. Showcases are added regularly and will cover a range of topics.

A Lucky Dip function selects an item at random that users can use as inspiration for further searching.

Although Matapihi seamlessly displays multiple collections, its underlying architecture is distributed. At its heart is a Dublin Core metadata repository that is hosted by the National Library. Only metadata is stored centrally: all digitised items (including thumbnails) remain with the partner organisations. The metadata records contain URLs that link to the digital objects available on the partner websites. Users need to contact the contributing organisation if they want to order a copy of an item or reproduce it.

Matapihi benefits both end users and the partner organisations.

Matapihi brings together works from different organisations into instant mini-collections relating to specific topics, types of material, works of particular artists and so on. A search for New Zealand artist "Frances Hodgkins" will find artworks by Hodgkins, photographic and painted portraits of her, pages from a family sketchbook and a handwritten letter. These items come from the Auckland Art Gallery and the Alexander Turnbull Library and through Matapihi are brought together.

Matapihi also brings together objects of different digital formats. This will become more apparent in future when Matapihi's flexible architecture enables organisations with collections of audio and video resources to participate.

Upskilling in the area of metadata standards was a project objective for Matapihi, and this has been successful. The Otago Museum registrar identified a benefit of participating in Matapihi as "a greater awareness of database construction and the benefits of good metadata - which has helped a lot in recent digitisation projects like our correspondence files and an images digitisation project".

An aim of Matapihi is to increase the number of visitors to the partners' websites, and this is being achieved. In the first month after Matapihi was launched, the Auckland Art Gallery experienced a five-fold increase in the number of external referrals to its website.

In October 2004, the Telecommunications Users Association of New Zealand (TUANZ) awarded Matapihi the top Crème de la Crème Innovation prize at its (e)-vision Awards. The judges noted the innovative use of metadata, the successful collaboration, and the scalability of the distributed architecture, which will enable Matapihi to grow as more and more organisations digitise their collections.

Negotiations are underway with a range of other organisations interested in having their online collections made accessible through Matapihi. Within the next year we hope to double the number of Matapihi partners.

Since the launch, Matapihi has been visited more than 25,000 times and a great deal of positive feedback has been received:

"We've just been gathered around looking at the website. Everyone in Mitchell Pictures loves it."
- Robert Woodley, State Library of New South Wales, Australia

"I have just been pre-checking the site for individual topics for NCEA History. Just great! Thanks."
- Pat McKenzie, Woodford House Library

"Having just now personally gotten lost 20 minutes in the beauty of the site, many more congratulations to you and the whole team of good people... Your work stands as a most exceptional example of what is possible."
- Christopher Rennie, Endeavor Information Systems, Chicago, US