

Correspondence¹

Dear Editors

My attention has been drawn to . . . Linda Bryder's review of *Archives New Zealand 3: Medicine and Public Health* . . . in the April 1992 *New Zealand Journal of History*.

. . . Ms Bryder has, in effect, passed judgement on an archives guide by condemning it for not being something which it is not intended to be.

Let me mention two examples. It is noted with disparagement that the entries are not based on actual perusal of the documents, but on finders' aids and responses to questionnaires. This is a standard methodology for compiling general guides to original documentation on particular subjects and themes. To criticize it as a method, is akin to criticizing an historical bibliography of secondary works because the bibliographer had not examined the primary stuff on which they were based.

The guide is said to be 'not comprehensive' because it gives insufficient help to researchers unfamiliar with their subjects. Quite so. What is a researcher unfamiliar with her subject thinking of, plunging into the primary sources without first exploring and becoming familiar with the more accessible and reflective secondary sources? The research skills are different, as is the level of expertise

Mark H.S. Stevens
City Archives, Sydney

Dear Editors

. . . In the first instance, I did not pass judgement, disparagingly or otherwise, on the methodology used to compile *Archives New Zealand 3* but simply reported faithfully the author's own introductory explanation. Mr Stevens mistakenly states that I described the guide as 'not comprehensive' because of its failure to provide adequate help to researchers. The review quite clearly distinguished these as two separate issues. For an acknowledgement of the partial coverage of sources Mr Stevens need look no further than the second paragraph of Mr Rogers' introduction where he confesses that 'There is deliberately only token representation' of some subject areas and types of record. Although relevant professional organizations were invited to submit details of their holdings the list on pages iii-iv demonstrates that a substantial number chose not to do so.

In demanding that researchers come to the guide pre-armed with knowledge gleaned from secondary sources Mr Stevens is both naive and unrealistic. Anyone at all familiar with the history of medicine and health in New Zealand will be only too aware of the

¹ These letters have been slightly abridged since both were longer than Dr Bryder's original review: Editors.

dearth of secondary source material in many subject areas. In particular, his suggestion ignores the needs of BA/MA research students, who cannot be expected to come to the bibliography with the depth of knowledge available to more experienced researchers. It also overlooks the needs of overseas scholars who might reasonably expect to use such a compilation for comparative purposes

Linda Bryder
University of Auckland

The Polynesian Society

Editor: Richard Moyle

Centennial Year Publications

Pawley, Andrew (ed.), 1992. *Man and a Half: Essays in Pacific Anthropology and Ethnobiology in Honour of Ralph Bulmer*. 642pp. Price \$73.50 (including postage in N.Z.).

Sorrenson, M. P. K., 1992. *Manifest Duty: The Polynesian Society Over 100 Years*. 160pp. Price \$33.50 (including postage in N.Z.).

Brown, Dorothy (comp.), forthcoming. *Centennial Index of the Journal of the Polynesian Society*. 290pp. (available mid-1993)

Order from: The Assistant Secretary, Polynesian Society, Department of Maori Studies, University of Auckland, PB 92019 Auckland.

Membership fees of the Polynesian Society, which includes quarterly copies of the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, are currently NZ\$36.00. Student members are entitled to a 50% discount (maximum tenure: three years).