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TOWARDS A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NEW ZEALAND
NEWSPAPERS

ANY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NEW ZEALAND NEWSPAPERS which was based only on newspapers for which copies can still be located would present an unbalanced view. It is wrong to imagine that the most significant New Zealand newspapers have been retained somewhere in the country, in libraries, museums, or newspaper offices. Although most of them are probably still extant, recent research towards a bibliography of nineteenth-century New Zealand newspapers suggests that the number of titles which actually saw the light of day, as distinct from the many which were projected but never attained publication, is larger than has been previously recognised.

The major problem for the newspaper bibliographer is the destruction of the primary sources. Many runs of newspapers are now lost (or perhaps only mislaid, one can hope), destroyed either accidentally or through deliberate action. Runs of some titles whose location was known as recently as 1961 fall into this category, as can be illustrated by comparing entries in three of the four union catalogues of New Zealand newspapers (published in 1938, 1961, and 1987).¹ The *Hunterville Express* from 1921 to 1938 was in 1938 located at the Hunterville Express office, but by 1961 no holdings of issues from this century were known (I exclude knowledge of the existence of a few scattered issues: complete or near complete runs are my concern here). In 1938 the Kaikoura Star Office held its newspaper from 1918, by 1961 from 1923, and by 1987 from 1970 only, with the whereabouts of the earlier issues unknown to the proprietor. The final example, of many more, is the *Stratford Evening Post*. In 1938 it was held from 1894 to 1938 by the Taranaki Publishing Company at Stratford, but by 1961 the location of this run was unknown (although Stratford Public Library had acquired a run 1913-1937), and by 1987 the only run anywhere near complete was that in the General Assembly Library, though this started only in 1911.

But is it really of interest to know that only one or two numbers of a newspaper were published, or that a short-lived newspaper was established in a now obscure town at a certain period? The answer must be a resounding yes. At one level such knowledge can help to explain some otherwise baffling publications. It can clarify why some publishing ventures were located in seemingly unlikely places: for example, that the tiny Southland town of Orepuki could in 1899 support a

newspaper seems unlikely until it is realised that the *Orepuki Miner* was one of a chain of three titles published from the more substantial town of Riverton.² More frequently, it can explain the timing of the establishment of some newspapers. An example of this is in Ashburton, which in August 1879 already had one daily newspaper, the *Ashburton Herald*, and one triweekly, the *Ashburton Mail*. That this thriving market town was considered able to support another daily, the *Evening News*, is not surprising, and the exact timing of its introduction, on 18 August 1879, is explained by the impending general election in the Coleridge electorate and the desire of Joseph Ivess, the proprietor of the *Ashburton Mail*, to give his support to the Conservative candidate, Edward George Wright. The new short-lived daily newspaper apparently ceased immediately after the election date, 15 September, its object having been achieved with Wright's election success.³ Another example from the newspapers established by Joseph Ivess explains how the pioneer South Taranaki town of Hawera could support two newspapers in 1880, albeit for a very brief period: Ivess was keen to keep the Hawera-based subscribers to his *Patea Mail* against the competition of the newly-established *Hawera and Normanby Star*, and so published the *Hawera Times*, which ran for only two numbers.⁴

Further reasons for attempting to establish a more complete record of New Zealand's bibliographic history, in this case its newspaper history, are to be found in the significance of such knowledge for the writing of more accurate and comprehensive local histories, of improved studies of communication chains and settlement patterns, and eventually of more comprehensive studies of the economics of printing and publishing in New Zealand.

How does one start to identify newspapers and describe them, if no copies exist to examine? Nineteenth-century New Zealand newspapers are referred to in a variety of sources. These sources are usually not particularly important if considered in isolation, but when the evidence they provide is gathered together then the result can considerably improve our current state of knowledge.

The first of these sources, and perhaps the most significant, is references in those newspapers which are extant. Newspapermen often noted the activities of their contemporaries and commented on them with considerable vigour, and there was always an interest in which new titles had been published, which had not stayed the course, and which newspaper proprietor was being sued for libel. Information from this source can potentially provide the fullest description of otherwise little-known newspapers, for example, by giving a description of the contemporary, or by commenting on some aspects of its history or current production. Briefer mentions, such as a passing reference to something published in another newspaper, can provide useful evidence that a particular title was still being published or can suggest a more precise date when a newspaper may have ceased. Such mentions can also be of considerable importance in allowing the sometimes inexact standard histories to be corrected and clarified.

That so much of this kind of comment is present in newspapers is best explained by a natural interest in the activities of one's contemporaries and competitors. It is also likely to be related to the nineteenth-century journalist's self-perceived role

as educator of the masses. An extreme version of this responsibility was expressed in the *Jubilee Herald*, published in Wellington by Thomas Dwan. The first number of this title (16 July 1887, p.2 c.4-5) noted in its editorial that

The extent of the enlightenment of a people can be arrived at and prudently gauged, by the extent of newspaper literature circulation among them

and that

we are now well aware of the immense good resulting to them [the public] from the practice of newspaper study; a literature only inferior to one other work . . . One-third of the education of the poorer masses . . . is due . . . to the exemplary writings of some few journalists.

Examples of newspapers which are mainly known about through references in their contemporaries are readily available. Reports in the Auckland newspaper the *New-Zealander* in 1846⁵ provide most of the available evidence about two of its contemporaries. Although the *Antipodean* was noticed by Main in his brief history of the newspaper press of Auckland⁶ the value of his information is suspect because he claims this newspaper was published in 1849. The *New-Zealander* references make it clear that the likely date of first publication of the *Antipodean* was 27 July 1846, and that its second number, also its last, was on 3 August 1846, and not three years later as Main suggests. It also adds that the *Antipodean* was a weekly, and was immediately continued by another title, the *Auckland Press*. This continuation, also a weekly, was probably first published on 6 August 1846 and finally ceased publication in November of the same year. Its disappearance was noted in late August, but it was again noted in a letter to the Editor of the *New-Zealander* in November, and its final cessation was noted later that same month.⁷ Only one other mention of the *Auckland Press* has been noted. C.A. Street, presumably its proprietor, wrote on 12 September 1846 to the Government to ask if the type and press in the possession of the New Zealand Government, and at that time lying idle, could be made available for use in printing the *Auckland Press*.⁸ Another example of a mention in a contemporary newspaper relates to a projected title which was not, however, ever published. A prospectus for the *Bulletin and Auckland and Bay of Islands Free Press* was published in the *Auckland Chronicle* of 11 October 1843 (p.1 c.1). This newspaper was intended to succeed the *Auckland Chronicle* and was to be a weekly conducted by the *Chronicle*'s editor, R.C. Joplin. However, the *Auckland Chronicle* on 18 October 1843 (p.2 c.2) noted that the *Bulletin* would not now appear, because of the 'depressed state' of finance and in particular the difficulty of getting debtors to pay what was due. The evidence strengthens conclusions already reached by historians, that newspapers existing in Auckland were not adequately expressing the needs of the settlers, and that the northern regions of the infant Colony were lusty enough to contemplate another newspaper but that their financial situation was not healthy enough to support it.

A more thoroughly documented example is the *Grey Valley Times*, published in Ahaura on the West Coast of the South Island. It probably ran from 1870 to 1874,

being suspended from 23 June 1871 until perhaps June 1872. No copies have been located. It closed on 23 June 1871, the reason, as given by the *West Coast Times*, being that it was 'too good for the district', and its plant was sold at auction at Ahaura on 2 September 1871 to Alexander White, the mortgagee, for £50.⁹ It had been resumed by June 1872,¹⁰ and frequent mentions of it have been located in the *Inangahua Herald* from 26 October 1872 to 18 October 1873. Its closure is noted in 1874.¹¹

A second fruitful source for newspaper history is the registrations legally required for newspapers after 1867. The Printers and Newspapers Registration Act 1868 required that affidavits be lodged at the Supreme Court giving the name or names of the proprietor, publisher, printer, and place of publication; any changes in these were also to be notified when they occurred. Registers compiled from the affidavits were publicly available at the Supreme Courts (now High Courts). Later acts (for instance, the Printers and Newspapers Registration Act, 1908 and the Newspapers and Printers Act, 1955) required very similar depositions to be made. The significance for the newspaper bibliographer and historian lies in the fact that the registers, and in some cases the affidavits themselves, can be located for nearly every Supreme Court in New Zealand, although their accessibility varies from registry to registry. They are a significant source, firstly for ascertaining the personnel associated with newspapers and tracing their movements around New Zealand, and secondly for alerting us to some newspapers whose existence would otherwise be unknown. Evidence in this second category should be used with considerable caution: it must properly be used in conjunction with other evidence, for these registrations may sometimes represent only an intention to publish, an intention not always carried out.

Considerable information can on occasion be determined from these Supreme Court registrations; one example is the *Ashburton Standard and Farmers' Advocate*, of which no copies have been located. References from other sources indicate that it was a triweekly, published on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings in 1899,¹² and that it was a morning daily by 4 August 1900.¹³ Supreme Court registrations¹⁴ allow the following to be added. Joseph Ivess established the *Ashburton Standard* in October 1896 with J.J.B. Blakemore as printer and publisher, and by June 1897 was listed as the printer and publisher as well as proprietor. He leased the paper to the Ashburton Newspaper Company Limited (John McTeague, Manager) in January 1898, but at some stage during 1900 returned to Ashburton and resumed control. It was sold in April 1901 to Isaac William Tyrell Baxter and William Henry Higgins.

Information about another group of newspapers illustrates the value of evidence from the Supreme Court records. This group was a chain of titles based at Geraldine from 1898 onwards, of which no holdings have been located with the exception of a fragment of a single number of the *Pleasant Point Mail*. The Supreme Court registrations⁵ allow the connections between these titles to be established and their later dispositions traced. The flagship title of the chain was the *Geraldine Advocate*, established by Joseph Ivess at Geraldine in October 1898. Other titles were

based at Geraldine and covered South Canterbury: the *Fairlie Star*, the *Mackenzie County Chronicle*, the *Pleasant Point Mail*, and the *Temuka Times*. By September 1899 the *Geraldine Advocate* had been sold to Henry Thomas Rix and Henry Blair Stewart, who moved it to Temuka. That there is no Supreme Court registration for the sale of the *Fairlie Star* to Rix and Stewart in September 1899, as there is for the other four titles in the chain, confirms Scholefield's view that it ceased after a few weeks.¹⁶

Much helpful information can be derived from official records other than the Supreme Court registrations, the third source to be noted here. There are three particularly fruitful groups of records: various documents in the *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, the lists of newspapers registered with the Post Office for transmission through the postal service, and documents covering a very wide range of activities present in the official files in the New Zealand National Archives.

The most significant lists in the *Appendices to the Journals* for newspaper study are those which note amounts paid for Government advertising or printing. These are present for the financial years 1871-72, 1878-79, and 1883-84 to 1897-98.¹⁷ They provide important information for students of the economic aspects of the newspaper trade, a difficult area of study because of the paucity of any data which might allow informed estimates of the costs and benefits of operating a nineteenth-century New Zealand newspaper. They also allow us on occasion to be more precise about newspapers of which no copies now exist. An example is the *Weekly Record* published at Inglewood during the 1890s. Another source tells us that in 1899 it was published on Saturday mornings.¹⁸ Entries for sums paid to it for advertising¹⁹ further add that it was being published in 1896 and 1898, and that it was associated (in what manner is not specified) with the Inglewood-published *Record and Waitara Age*. Another example from these lists is for the *Timaru Evening Mail*: again, no copies have been located, and an *Appendices to the Journals* entry allows the final year of publication to be estimated at 1891, as the payments for government advertising from 1887 end for this newspaper at the entry for the financial year 1890-91.²⁰

Other useful sources in the *Appendices to the Journals* include the reports of special committees or commissions, such as that of the Press Telegrams Committee,²¹ which concerns the transmission of news by telegram. The report of the Sweating Commission²² has some description of work practices in newspaper offices. Also present are some lists of newspapers published in New Zealand, giving details of place of publication and usually also the day or days of publication and whether a morning or evening newspaper.²³ However, similar lists are more readily accessible in the official publications of the New Zealand Post Office, compiled from registrations required so that newspapers so registered could benefit from preferential treatment when transmitted through the postal system.²⁴ These were probably first published in 1879 and appear to have been issued annually.

Present among the files at the New Zealand National Archives are many documents relating to newspapers. These are especially to be found in the Colonial

Secretary's papers, now in the archives of the Internal Affairs Department (IA record group). Two examples to indicate the wide range of material there will have to suffice. Much is present relating to some government advertising from 1876 until 1883. Such advertising had previously been carried in the provincial gazettes, but as these were no longer issued after the abolition of the provincial system of government in 1876 substitutes had to be found in which to place certain government notices, many of which carried legal status. Tenders were called and the tender documents have survived. They give information about title, type size, cost, and method and place of insertion of the advertisements, and the average circulation of the paper. I have noted these documents in more detail elsewhere.²⁵ A second example from these files about which there is considerable documentation is that of John Moore, the first contractor for government printing in New Zealand. Moore was also a newspaperman and printed Auckland's first newspaper, the *New Zealand Herald and Auckland Gazette*, was the first printer of the *Auckland Chronicle* and *New Zealand Colonist*, and printed and published and was also a joint proprietor of the *Auckland Standard*.²⁶ In fact there is very likely to be some documentation present in these files about any dealings which New Zealand newspapermen had with the Government. This is a significant source where many treasures still await discovery.

Two other relatively unexplored areas remain to be noted here. The first of these is the trade journals, which provide useful detailed information, particularly about the personnel involved in the printing trade. *Typo*, edited by Robert Coupland Harding, covers the period 1887-1897 and contains a wealth of small news items about newspapers, and in particular about changes in ownership, personnel, and equipment. Complete copies are rare, but a selection from it has been published by the Wai-te-ata Press.²⁷ Another trade journal is the *Colonial Printers' Register*, later *Griffin's Colonial Printers' Register*, published at Dunedin from 1879 to 1881.²⁸ It contains, like *Typo*, small news items about ownership, personnel and equipment, but in addition there are some lengthier articles which give the history of certain newspapers. The *Colonial Printers' Register* was preceded by the *New Zealand Press News and Typographical Circular* (1876-1879).²⁹ These two titles note events from the point of view of the Typographical Society, a trade union, and thus can sometimes provide a balance to reports found in newspapers, which usually represent the proprietors' opinions.

The second still largely untouched area is that of contemporary diaries of newspapermen or accounts which document newspaper operations. They are scarce, to be sure, but a few do await the diligent searcher. From these a little of the detail of the nineteenth-century newspaper press can be established. One example is the minutebook of the meetings of the Trustees of Wellington's *New Zealand Colonist and Port Nicholson Advertiser*, covering the period 1842-1843.³⁰ This is one of the very few documents relating to the management of an early New Zealand newspaper to exist. It clarifies much about the *New Zealand Colonist*, which was owned by a joint stock company and was established to represent the view of the settlers, rather than that of the New Zealand Company as expressed by the other Wellington newspaper, the *New Zealand Gazette*. It contains information about

the structure of the company, the names of shareholders and personnel, and the purchase of printing press and type from Sydney.

Another example, again from an earlier period, is the diary of David Burn, editor of two Auckland papers, the *Southern Cross* and *Te Karere o Nui Tireni*, in the 1850s.³¹ Although Burn was not the most thorough of diarists, his records indicate the daily routine of the editor of an early weekly, later biweekly, newspaper. Much effort was, not unexpectedly, put into acquiring copies of other newspapers, especially those published overseas, as soon as possible after they arrived in Auckland, and most time was spent in 'gleaning' them, as Burn puts it. Another aspect to become clear from this diary is the extent to which William Brown, one of the two owners of the *Southern Cross* and a prominent Auckland merchant, controlled the content of the paper, frequently writing editorials and regularly vetting what Burn wrote.

The third example of a contemporary account comes from a decade later. This is a collection of letters, invoices, shipping notes and miscellaneous letters, totalling about 45 items from 1871 and 1872,³² which relate to the establishment and first year of operation of the *Inangahua Herald*, published at the new goldmining town of Reefton. The bulk of the items are the correspondence of one of the newspaper's partners, Charles Mirfin. Although a complete picture cannot be built up of the *Herald's* first year of operation from these documents, they do provide a considerable amount of detail. The earliest letter in the collection, undated but almost certainly written in late 1871, reports on a visit made to Reefton to investigate the prospects for the new paper's success. Letters follow from one of the partners who had been sent in advance to prepare an office on a site already chosen by another partner; he was, however, hampered in this task by the non-arrival of most of the plant except for the platen and the plate of the press. There is much to confirm the importance of job printing to a fledgling newspaper office, and there is much about advertising in the new paper. Possibly the most interesting documents in this collection are invoices for the printing equipment and stationery ordered to establish the paper and fully equip its jobbing office.

The need for a revised history of New Zealand newspapers is great. The standard history, written by Scholefield in 1958, is often imprecise, although reliable enough in broader detail. Scholefield had the benefit of referring to a large body of data collected for an earlier attempt at a bibliography of New Zealand newspapers, but this has not been located, and we can probably assume that it has been destroyed.³³ Those who follow Scholefield must start afresh. From the sources noted above it will be possible to compile a detailed bibliography of New Zealand newspapers, and from it an updated history — especially one which takes greater account of those newspapers and other sources to which Scholefield did not refer. Such a bibliography and a revised history would be of great benefit to students of the New Zealand press, of the New Zealand book trade, and indeed of New Zealand social, political and economic history.

Ross Harvey,
Monash University.

NOTES

1. G.H. Scholefield, *A Union Catalogue of New Zealand Newspapers Preserved in Public Libraries, Newspaper Offices, etc.* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1938); *A Union Catalogue of New Zealand Newspapers Preserved in Public Libraries, Newspaper Offices, and Local Authority Offices*, 2nd ed. (Wellington: General Assembly Library, 1961); D.R. Harvey, *Union List of Newspapers Preserved in Libraries, Newspaper Offices, Local Authority Offices and Museums in New Zealand* (Wellington: National Library of New Zealand, 1987).
2. The *Orepuki Miner* is further noted in Guy H. Scholefield's *Newspapers in New Zealand* (Wellington: Reed, 1958) p.208.
3. See D.R. Harvey, 'Joseph Ivess, "celebrated country newspaper proprietor"', *Turnbull Library Record*, v.21 no.1, May 1988, p.11.
4. Further noted in Harvey, 1988, p.12.
5. *New-Zealander* 1846 Aug 1, p.3 c.1; 1846 Aug 8, p.2 c.4; 1846 Aug 29, p.3 c.2.
6. G.M. Main, *The Newspaper Press of Auckland* (Auckland: Wilson and Horton, 1891) p.2.
7. *New-Zealander* 1846 Aug 8, p.2 c.4; 1846 Aug 29, p.3 c.2; 1846 Nov 21, p.4 c.3; 1846 Nov 28, p.3 c.1.
8. New Zealand National Archives, Colonial Secretary's papers, IA1, 47/577.
9. *West Coast Times* 1871 Sep 6.
10. *Inangahua Herald* 1872 Jun 26, p.2 c.5.
11. *New Zealand Government Gazette (Province of Nelson)* 1874, p.27.
12. *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (hereafter abbreviated as *AJ*) 1899 H.46.
13. *New Zealand Mail* 1900 Aug 4, p.4 c.3.
14. Registrations at the Christchurch Supreme Court dated 1896 Oct 8, 1897 Jun 16, 1898 Jan 10, 1901 Apr 16.
15. Registrations at the Christchurch Supreme Court dated 1898 Oct 15, 1898 Nov 5, 1899 Jan 4, 1899 Sep 22.
16. Scholefield, 1958, p.237.
17. *AJ* 1872 G.22, 1879 B.9, 1895 H.32, 1895 H.32A, 1896 H.32, 1898 H.26.
18. *AJ* 1899 H.46.
19. *AJ* 1896 H.32, 1898 H.26A.
20. *AJ* 1895 H.32.
21. *AJ* 1880 I.5
22. *AJ* 1890 H.5.
23. For example, *AJ* 1883 H.22, 1899 H.46.
24. *List of Newspapers Placed on the Register at the General Post Office, Wellington* [title varies] (Wellington: Government Printer, 1879?-1966 or after).
25. In 'Circulation figures of some nineteenth-century New Zealand newspapers', forthcoming.
26. I owe thanks to Rachel Salmond of the Graduate School of Librarianship, Monash University, for pointing out the existence of this information about John Moore.
27. *Selections from Typo, a New Zealand Typographical Journal edited by R. Coupland Harding* (Wellington: Wai-te-ata Press, 1982?).
28. *Colonial Printers' Register* (Dunedin, 15 Oct 1879-11 Sep 1880); *Griffin's Colonial Printers' Register* (Dunedin, 16 Oct 1880-12 Dec 1881?).
29. *New Zealand Press News and Typographical Circular* (Dunedin, Mar 1876-Sep 1879).

30. Held at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, MS 1842.
31. Two volumes of Burn's diaries are held at the Mitchell Library, Sydney, call number ML B191-B192. They cover the period 1850-51 and 1855-58.
32. Held at the West Coast Historical Museum, Hokitika.
33. Ross Harvey, 'An unsuccessful attempt at a bibliography of New Zealand newspapers', *New Zealand Libraries* v.45 no.1, March 1986, p.11-14.

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