Introduction
Digitisation and Knowledge: Perspectives from Aotearoa/New Zealand

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This issue of *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural & Policy Studies* is drawn from a conference hosted by Auckland University of Technology in February 2001. The conference, "Digitisation and Knowledge: Perspectives from Aotearoa/New Zealand" was organised by AUT's Centre for New Media Research, the former incarnation of the AUT Faculty of Arts Centre for Communication Research (CCR). Selected papers from that conference were originally published as the CCR's inaugural online publication, *Working Papers in Communication Research*.

The "Digitisation and Knowledge" conference framed its agenda in the following terms:
The conference initially posed the question as to what are the relationships between digitisation, knowledge formations and cultural productions? "Digitisation and Knowledge" aimed to open this question for examination through a range of papers, presentations and demonstrations which focused on, and explored issues around new media technologies and the 'knowledge society'.

The still recent emergence of digitised knowledge systems and the global proliferation of technologies of visualisation information systems based on digitised processes were seen to present an opportunity to profoundly question the role of knowledge and visuality in the construction of our understanding of 'the real'. This panoply of technologies, generically referenced as 'New Media', opened a space for negotiating once again the relations between technology and cultural productions. Thus the aim of the conference was to delineate the problem field posed by digitisation for renewed considerations of our modes of knowing.

The conference established a series of thematic groupings of papers, and three of these groupings are represented in this published selection. These are 'Digitisation and Society', 'Virtuality and Space' and 'Digital Resources.' Each of these themes focuses on a vital arena of concern regarding the widespread implementation of digital technologies and their implications in the social sphere.

The collection opens with the work of Brian Opie from the School of English, Film and Theatre at Victoria University, Wellington, and previous president of The Humanities Society of New Zealand (HUMANZ). Opie carefully addresses each of the thematic arenas raised by the conference. The paper, "The Knowledge Society: Innovation, multimedia and the postmodern city," examines the broad impact of digital technologies in defining our cultural life-world. His paper presents the research of HUMANZ on the issue of designing a knowledge society for a small democratic country. The underlying position is that the 'knowledge society' requires understandings of both global and local distinctiveness rather than taking large-scale advanced societies as the implicit model. As with those addressing resourcing, the paper emphasises the relations between communications media and the construction of a knowledge society. These are explored with respect to everyday and ongoing practices in the context of constructing our social spaces of habitation. Relations are established between innovations in technologies of information, knowledge formation and access, and the design of social spaces, in particular the role of the city in the formation of the knowledge society.

The theme of 'Digitisation and Society,' opens the concerns from the specific defining feature of 'cultural knowledege' and the institutional milieu to broad philosophical considerations of the political economy of digital technologies and identity. From the starting point of death, questions are raised and explored philosophically in the paper, "From Cemeteries to Cyberspace: Cartographies of identity in a technologised age," by Elizabeth Grierson, from the School of Art and Design at AUT. Grierson addresses problematic issues of being, time, and tests of truth in ways of knowing self and the world. The question of death and concern with the self's relation to, and formation by social spaces, poses a series of fundamental questions about the constitution of identity in virtual environments. In doing so, it begins to draw parallels and fine distinctions between the cemetery as space

of occupancy and digital space as architecture of inhabitation. In addressing these concerns, the paper draws significantly on the writings of Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault, two philosophers who continually emphasised the intimate relation between knowledge formation and spatiality.

Following the theme of 'Virtuality and Space', Mark Jackson, also from the School of Art and Design at AUT, addresses directly the contributions currently being made by a range of design theorists and practitioners to the field of architecture and cyberspace. The paper questions some of the more radical claims currently being made in this field, particularly with reference to new modes of subjectivity afforded by virtual reality and the uneasy imbrication of information technologies and building systems in what is termed "pixel architecture." In her paper, "Virtual(ly) Universities? An examination of two digitally contextualised 'Universities'" Sharon Harvey assays the impact of digitisation on the constitution of knowledge in the information age, via an analysis of the institutional configuration of the university. Harvey, the Associate Dean (Research) in the Faculty of Arts at AUT, explores two specific case studies of 'virtual' universities, those of the Universitas 21/Thomson Learning joint venture and the Malaysian Multimedia University. In this analysis, she references the important work of Jean-François Lyotard on knowledge economies and questions whether either of these two emerging models of the new university adequately addresses the politics of social equity.

'Digital Resourcing' and information management are addressed in papers that focus on two key institutional sectors, each paper emphasising the extent to which rapid change in information technologies leads to crucial issues of equity of access. Brian O. Cusack, specialising in research on Information Systems at the AUT Faculty of Business, approaches the issue of the current 'knowledge revolution' and, like Harvey, draws on the resources of Lyotard. Cusack argues for a radical "dis-aggregation" of scientific knowledge in order to recognise relations that subtend social spaces and the self, other than those inferred by techno-science paradigms. Steve Knight, from the Digital Initiatives Unit at the National Library of New Zealand, examines recent initiatives in digitising collections, and measures taken for establishing national standards for digital archiving. As issues of information management are brought to the fore we might be reminded that, in our institutional practices, we are called increasingly to adopt the role of 'knowledge managers'.

In the arena of knowledge construction, design and social space, Jonathan Woodham, Director of the Design History Research Centre, University of Brighton, gave the concluding plenary at the conference: "Designing Design History: From Pevsner to postmodernism". The paper details the close relation between the disciplinary emergence and formation of Design History and the institutional and economic imperatives that steered its course, with particular attention to the British situation. Woodham outlines the contemporary impact of digitisation on the field of Design History, particularly with respect to initiatives for the construction of image databases, and the availability of such resources. At the conference, Woodham's address coincided with the conference launch of the New Zealand Design Archive, a web-based research initiative of the School of Art and Design at AUT. The NZDA may be located at http://www.nzda.ac.nz/graphics/.

This selection of papers is indicative of the breadth of analyses that begin to approach the impact currently being made by technologies of digitisation. Yet, while the thematic issues of digital resourcing, institutional sites and socio-political implications have been addressed here, the theme is hardly exhausted. *ACCESS* will continue to publish on this and related concerns, and welcomes submissions from researchers in a broad spectrum of disciplines who may further the debate on the proposition of a future driven by cybernetic systems.