

more than once pointed out the seeming discrepancy between my critical demolition of the daily paper as a faithful contemporary record and the seemingly blind faith with which hours are spent searching files sanctified by age rather than accuracy. The current record is of course the trace for historians and in my defence I can only say that I have maintained a fairly extensive cuttings system which after twenty or thirty years acquire some slight significance. Here as elsewhere one should follow what I say and not what I do in that the pitfall is to be greedy and try to cover too many topics.

For the local historian it is not too much to say that if the newspaper has disappeared so has the history of the district for which it spoke. Our guide of course is the *Union Catalogue of New Zealand newspapers* . . . (2d ed 1961) but it is a saddening exercise to compare this with Scholefield's *Newspapers in New Zealand* (1958). The number of small town journals for which files have virtually disappeared is distressingly large. Two places may be mentioned, Carterton and Taihape. Carterton's first paper began in 1881 but there is no file until 1923. The loss includes the *Wairarapa Leader* edited by one M. Hornsby, the son of the Wairarapa member, with an individual, perceptive manner of reporting . . . The *Taihape Post* was edited by a man of peace and temperance, rare qualities in the town at the turn of the century. It is a casualty. Fortunately copies were received by the *Wairarapa Daily* whose editor took a fancy to the *Post* and preserved for us in his own pages such gems as *Sunday in Taihape*. For the Wairarapa as a whole we have a fairly complete run from 1869 and the odd files sometimes turn up despite massive destruction into the recent past. For example we were last year fortunately able to arrange with the Borough Council to take custody of files from 1883 until 1940 which had been found in the strong room inside the disused Masterton's women's rest room. These have been microfilmed and we are now embarking upon systematic copying of local files. Preservation of the survivors is of course the main problem. Already our wood pulp papers are disintegrating literally under our hands and in another twenty years few students will be able to search other than microfilm for files down to 1920. I do not need to elaborate upon the difficulties of searching microfilm rather than the original and can only be thankful that I have lived as a historian when I did. With the present techniques available print-outs which bring the copy back to original size are too expensive other than for the very early files.

It is essential to press on with newspaper indexing. The General Assembly Library some years ago made a selective index of Wellington files through to 1860 which file has been transferred to Turnbull and Miss Walton in the interstices of other commitments is working on a highly selective index of the *New Zealand Mail* beginning in 1875 and