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Tupu - Promoting 'New Growth' through Innovative Resources and Services to Youth

Daniel G. Dorner

Victoria University of Wellington
Wellington, New Zealand

Introduction

This is the story of Tupu - the Dawson Road Youth Library. Tupu is located on Dawson Road in the Clover Park area of Otara in Manukau City, which is one of six municipalities that form New Zealand's largest city, Auckland. Otara is the poorest part of Auckland, and indeed, is most likely the poorest urban area in all of New Zealand. Today I am going to talk with you about the innovative resources and services offered at Tupu to the youth of Clover Park, and more importantly, about how and why those services came to be.

The data that support this paper were gathered through interviews with many of the key people involved in creating Tupu, during a five-month period around the time of its official opening on 1 August 2001. These key people included the mayor of Manukau City, two Manukau City Councillors who were representing the people of Otara and were the main political proponents for the creation of Tupu, local primary and secondary school teachers, community gatekeepers such as the minister of the Samoan Church located right next door to the library, teachers from local schools, families in the Clover Park area of Otara, and the Manukau City library staff who helped create and staff Tupu. Official documents relating to Tupu were also gathered from the Manukau City Council and Library staff and provided some background information. The research was funded by a grant from the Faculty of Commerce and Administration at Victoria University of Wellington.

The word *Tupu* means 'new growth' in many Polynesian languages. It was selected as the name of the Dawson Road Youth Library by popular choice. In this instance, *Tupu* refers both to the young people of Clover Park and to the new knowledge that the residents of the Clover Park area, especially its youth, will gain through the use of the library's resources and services.

Tupu and Social Inclusion

Tupu's story began in 1996, but at that time it was still only an emerging idea in the minds of the then Manukau City Librarian and two Manukau City Councillors. After some political manoeuvring and much consultation it started taking shape in 2000, and finally its official opening took place on the first of August 2001. At last year's annual conference of the Library and Information Association of New Zealand/Aotearoa, Tupu was named the winner of the 3M Innovation in Libraries Supreme Award for 2003. Indeed, Tupu's story is so far one of success. If there is a major theme in Tupu's story to date, it is one of successful innovation achieved through *social inclusion*. Social inclusion is achieved by understanding and addressing the needs of the community being served in order to provide its members with the resources and services that they need to participate in society. So the plot of Tupu's story focuses primarily on close consultation with the community within which it is meant to support and promote 'new growth'.

Samoan people make up approximately 50% of the population of Otara, and Maori people compose 45% of its population. The remaining 5% include some Tongans and Nieuans and no doubt other Polynesians. As a result, Otara is composed of a rich and unique blend of Polynesian peoples, which is a key component of Tupu's story.

There are many components in the Tupu story that have led to the range of innovative resources and services aimed at promoting 'new growth'. However, a key issue for the design of Tupu was not only which resources and service to offer, but also how to make Tupu different from other libraries so that the youth of the Clover Park area would come to the library.

The Conceptualisation of Tupu

The seed of the idea for Tupu came long before the library opened. In 1996, the Manukau Public Library established a branch library in a store front located in a shopping centre in Clendon, about 10 km south of the Otara town centre. The storefront branch proved highly successful. The Manukau City Council, however, was also interested in pursuing other possibilities for libraries, such as locating a branch library within a school. The City Council already had partnerships with a couple of high schools for the use of their swimming pools as public facilities on the weekends and during school holidays in exchange for the pools' maintenance costs being paid by the Council. The school option was investigated but it was turned down because it was beginning to create friction among the local school officials and because the Council thought that ultimately it would be better to have a neutral site so that all young people, regardless of the school they went to, would feel welcome in the new library.

In 1999, the Council developed a Library Strategy, which reinforced the idea that libraries should be where the people are -- in neighbourhoods and shopping centres. It also reinforced the notion that libraries should have a focus on Information Technology to support the increasing use of IT in formal education, for life long learning, and to help the people of Manukau participate in and benefit from the knowledge society. A shopping area on Dawson Road was investigated as a possible site, but it would have been expensive to renovate an existing shop, and the shopping centre is somewhat rundown, and it has a pub and a betting shop. In the end, the shopping centre was considered not to be the kind of place in which to locate a youth library and the park reserve just down the road was considered a better choice. However, locating the new library in the Clover Park area and focusing it on Information

Technology were two key elements from the Library Strategy that impacted on Tupu's development. Yet for the library to be innovative and socially inclusive for Polynesian youth, it needed political and community support as well as good planning and extensive consultation.

Political Support

For Tupu to achieve its level of success, it needed strong political support. From the time the idea for a library for the Clover Park area was put forward by the city librarian and by the two city councillors who represented Otara on the Manukau City Council, it was wholeheartedly accepted by the mayor. One of two Councillors told me that the Manukau City Council worked 'collegially' in the sense that its members acknowledged that it was Otara's turn to receive some public expenditure. The other Otara representative on the Council was a local secondary school teacher, a Maori man who was a reluctant politician in that he claimed to have been talked into running as a councillor by the Maori community. After speaking with this man, it was easy to see why his community respected him so highly. He pointed out to me that many of the youth in Otara come from homes where there might be two or three families living together, so bedrooms are crowded and meals are eaten in shifts. One of the impacts of this level of crowding is that it is difficult for these young people to find a quiet place to spread out their books and do their homework or to study for their exams. To help secondary school students in his neighbourhood who were living in these overcrowded conditions, this councillor established an informal 'homework centre' in his own home at exam time, letting a group of students use his kitchen table and his garage as a study centre. He would be present to help the students learn how to study and to assist the students when they had questions about the work they were covering.

The other councillor pointed out to me that when he and his Otara colleague started advocating for a library in the Clover Park area, they demonstrated to the other Council members that the residents of this part of Manukau City had fewer accessible resources than most other parts of the city, and that the residents here had a lower level of mobility than other residents - about 20% of the population did not have access to an automobile. This was an important factor because the Library Strategy mentioned previously established a principle that no new public library should be built within a set distance of an existing library. If sited in Dawson Road, the new library would be inside this limit, so an exception had to be made to allow this branch to go ahead. The two councillors added another point to their argument. They raised the issue that the population of the Clover Park area of Otara has a higher concentration of youth than other areas. In Manukau City as a whole, approximately 40% of the population is under 20 years old, but in Otara it is even higher. Based on these facts, and the collegial notion that it was Otara's turn for some council support, the two councillors were able to get approval in principle for a new youth library in that area with an IT focus. This is not to say there was no debate about this concept. Some members of the Otara Community Board, for example, voiced concerns about the fact that the library was targeted at youth. They felt the Council should aim to provide a more comprehensive service, with a floor for adults and another floor for youth.

The Mayor of Manukau City, Sir Barry Curtis, at the time of his interview, had been in office for six consecutive terms, and he told me that he has always been a strong supporter of free access to libraries. He pointed out to me that Manukau City is a city of extremes in that there are distinct areas with high concentrations of youth and other areas with high concentrations of elderly people, and similarly of wealthy people and poor people. Some parts of the City

have many Chinese people living in them, whereas other areas, such as Otara, have very high concentrations of Polynesian people. The Mayor noted that according to the last census, Manukau City is the most ethnically diverse city in New Zealand, with 154 different cultures residing in it. He said:

Now this presents the Manukau City Council with a challenge that no other unit of local government in New Zealand really needs to confront - not only does it have an impact on provision of facilities for learning or education, such as libraries, information centres, but it also has a profound impact on the provision of facilities and services for leisure, recreation, sport and culture. So the provision of the purpose-built library in this strategic location, branded Tupu, targeting our youth is very much in accordance with the strategy of the City Council.

The Mayor also said that free access to libraries is necessary because it is very important in the information age for young people who are poor through no fault of their own to have free access to information.

Thus, from the outset there was strong political support from the head of the Library and the Manukau City Council for a youth library with a strong IT focus in the Clover Park area. Funding for the new library was approved in the Manukau City Council Annual Plan for 2000/2001. To find out what the local residents needed from and wanted in a library, and to get local community support for the project, the library planners needed to conduct extensive consultations.

Community Support -- the Consultation Process

The consultation process started just around the time that the idea for a library in the Clover Park area was being formed. Consultations started at a broad level, but as the thinking for the library became more sharply focused, so too did the consultation process. There were four kinds of consultations undertaken in preparation for Tupu: (1) consultations with specific cultural/ethnic communities; (2) consultations with the education community; (3) consultations with the gatekeepers of community groups; and (4) consultations with the youth themselves;

Consultation with Cultural/Ethnic Communities

The first consultation was with the Maori community and was followed by one with the Pacific Island community.

Maori Residents of Manukau City, August 1996

In August of 1996, Manukau City Libraries and Information Services hired a research firm to conduct a study to understand the library needs of its Maori residents (see Manukau City Council Libraries and Information Services, 1996). Focusing on areas of the City with high densities of Maori population, the research team interviewed a total of 87 users and 113 non-users, all Maori of at least 16 years of age. For the library users, the questions focused on the types of resources they used, especially in relation to Maori cultural resources. The non-users were asked questions such as when they last used the library or indeed if they ever used it and what stops them from going to the library.

Some of the more interesting results included things like the library user tended to be slightly younger than the non-user and more likely to have a school qualification. The users also tended to have a better knowledge of the Maori language both written and spoken and they and their family were more likely to be involved in Maori culture and activities than were the non-users (Manukau City Council Libraries and Information Services, 1996). When asked about what stops them from visiting the library, non-users gave responses such as lack of time or interest, and difficulty or lack of inclination to read. Barriers to their use of the Library included reasons such as poor reading ability, lack of a library card, too many big words in the books, and books with too many words. The responses to many of the questions about which types of resources and services would attract them to the library were very similar from users and non-users. Some differences are of interest in that they directly reflect the characteristics of the users and nonusers. For example, non-users scored higher for things like *listen to music tapes* (65% for non-users to 46% for users), *watch videos* (59% to 53%), *play computer games* (50% to 45%), whereas users scored higher than non-users for things like *Maori history storytellers* (81% to 69%), *courses to trace genealogy* (81% to 72%), and *arts and crafts demonstrations* (79% to 69%). We can see that, in general terms, services and resources that are not based on reading, would be highly attractive.

Pacific Island Residents of Clover Park/Flat Bush, November 1997

In November 1997, when the idea for a library in the Clover Park area was taking hold, the Manukau City Libraries undertook another study, this time to understand the library needs of the Pacific Island residents in the Clover Park/Flat Bush area (see Manukau City Council Community Development Group, 1997). Among the study's topics of interest were: the image of libraries to both users and non-users; reasons for and frequency of use by users; ease or difficulty in visiting libraries and other access issues and ideas for overcoming them; students' views on relationship of the city library to their school library; likes and dislikes about Manukau City Libraries; ideas for the ideal library, particularly with regard to the different services it would offer; the best location for a library; and the benefits that would accrue to the community as a whole if a library was established there. This time, only the Pacific Island residents of the Clover Park/Flat Bush area were consulted as the Maori residents were studied in 1996.

Rather than using a survey, which tends to provide quantitative data, the study team used focus groups to represent different segments of the community. Groups were differentiated by characteristics such as whether the residents were library users and non-users, and by characteristics such as age. The emphasis was on young people with focus groups for youth between 13 and 15, 16 and 19, and 20 and 25 years of age, and also for families and for people over 50 years old. In total, 72 residents participated in 9 different focus groups.

The findings of the study indicated that the residents strongly associated libraries with books, computers, information, learning and teaching. For all the user groups as well as the non-users over age 20, the associations were either positive or neutral. For the younger non-users, the associations, however, were negative, with words such as "dull" "boring" "nothing ever happens" "silence" and "security alarms" coming out of the under 20 year old non-users. The young people tended to feel that there were too many rules, for example about noise and restrictions on food and drink and that they had to wait in queues to get access to things. Some older people as well as some of the younger ones felt that libraries were difficult places because the books are difficult to read or they are hard to find.

The distance from Clover Park/Flat Bush to the existing libraries was problematic in that some of the people (most notably the younger ones and those with young families) said that they had to walk or take a bus which meant it was time consuming and/or expensive to visit the library - and for the families with preschoolers, it was awkward taking the bus -- which at times stopped people from using the Manukau City libraries.

One of the most striking outcomes of the study was that the overriding motivation for visiting the library was education, school and study. Those still at school saw the library as a source of material for assignments and a place in which to actually study because their homes were noisy and crowded. For the family and over 50 age groups, the main reason for visiting the library was to take their children or grandchildren to look up material needed for schoolwork. These groups felt it was important to expose their children and grandchildren to the library so that they would continue to use it as they got older. Some of the older people used the library for reading the newspapers and magazines as well as for borrowing books to take home.

The younger people tended to visit the library with at least one friend so that they have company when taking a break as they were often at the library for several hours. They also tended to combine a visit to the library with another outing - such as visiting a food shop or looking in shop windows. The family group and over 50 group who were library users tended to use the trip to the library as a family outing and to take the opportunity to visit commercial establishments in the area of the library.

The youth who were users of the public library tended not to use the school library, seeing it as inferior to the public library with the exception of the computers and electronic reference resources. The public library had better atmosphere and a greater depth of resources and allowed greater numbers of books to be borrowed. Those younger people who were non-users tended to use the school library for assignments, but as they got older their motivation waned and they ceased to use the library at all.

As for the ideal library, the various age groups and the users and non-users all had very similar ideas. The library was not just a place for information, but also a place to relax and socialise and spend some recreational time. They saw the library as having sections:

- a quiet study area with tables and chairs for people who wanted to do homework or study
- a computer area or room for access to the catalogue, to electronic reference resources and to the Internet; some people thought that different software packages (e.g. wordprocessing) and printers should be available; young people thought that computer games of an educational variety should be available but older people thought this might be distracting
- a TV and video room in a separate room - but again the focus was on educational materials
- a café or canteen either in the library or just by the door
- a separate area for small children with books, games and puzzles; some suggested story tellers should be part of the room

So, from the consultation with the Clover Park/Flat Bush residents, the City Libraries had a very strong indication about what the local people had in mind for an ideal library in their area. However, the consultation didn't stop there.

Consultation with the Education Community

Early in the development of the conceptualisations of the new library, the Library Planners identified a link between the new library and the education community. School principals and teachers were consulted on a number of different occasions. Several of these consultations are discussed here to demonstrate the kinds of ideas that flowed from these meetings.

Consultation Meeting with School Principals and Chairpersons of School Board Trustees, 19 May 2000¹

The local educational leaders were asked for input into the new library through a formal consultation meeting with principals and chairpersons of local school board trustees. At the meeting, the education community expressed the idea that the Manukau City Libraries had a role in supplementing the local schools' educational resources and services - because the schools don't have the required level to fill the needs of their students. The issue of sharing information to avoid duplication of the stock in the school libraries and the public libraries was also raised, as was the issue of security of the children and whether parents would allow their children to go to the library, given the necessity for evening and weekend access to it. Other ideas of how a new public library could do help the education system included support in the areas of family literacy, parent literacy, and IT literacy for parents, all of which could be facilitated by the library; the provision of training to the parents of school children to help them understand how to help their children to study and how to use information technology for educational purposes; providing the parents with access to videos that would help them understand the education system; exploring with the Ministry of Education the provision of study group activities to assist the students in the library outside of school hours using trained teachers seconded to the library from the schools; sharing IT staff between the new library and local schools and having network links between the library and schools to help share resources and staff. The attendees to the session raised the point that although the intermediate and secondary school students needed a homework centre, primary school students didn't need one, but they did need access to computers and to junior level books since many homes can't afford books or computers. Another idea was that the consultations should move to the schools themselves so that the children could have some input.

In addition, separate interviews were held with principals from two of the local primary schools. Ideas that came out of one of the meetings were the need to foster a love of books, and to get children into the habit of going to the library - thus a local branch was needed that was easily accessible to the children. It was also important to get parents into the habit of reading to children and taking them to the library. This principal noted the difficulties associated with getting teenage boys to read. The other principal noted that a local library could provide an after school venue where children could be secure and that the school would make class visits to the library if it was within walking distance. He pointed out that compared with other areas of Manukau City, the area around Dawson Road did not have community resources such as libraries, swimming pools, recreation centres etc., so his school didn't make use of those types of community resources. As a result, a library in this area of the city would provide a much needed resource for the schools and its students.

¹ The data for the consultation with school principals and trustees is from: Minutes of Consultation --Meeting with school principals and chairpersons of boards of trustees held at Clover Park Community House on 19 May 2000 at 3:15. Unpublished report

Consultation with Community Groups

Various community groups were consulted along the way through formal vehicles such as the City Council Committees and through informal structures such as discussions between library staff and community gatekeepers like the Minister of the Samoan Church located next door to the library site. Several examples of formal consultation processes with community groups are discussed here.

Consultation in Community Group Workshop, July 2000

After funding for the project had been secured in the Manukau City Council Annual Plan for 2000/2001, the project picked up momentum. In July 2000, the Service Planner in the Leisure Facilities Development unit and the Contracts Manager for the Council provided a report to the Community and Economic Development Committee to update the Committee on progress, to obtain approval to proceed with the design and construction of the facility and to start seeking expressions of interest in the design and construction. A tight timeline had been established for the project, so an *integrated design with construction process* was selected. This type of process enabled construction to commence prior to completion of the final design. Although not the traditional method for library building projects, it allowed for multiple processes to occur simultaneously rather than in a purely sequential order. The report also outlined what the proposed library was and was not:

The proposed new library is not a traditional branch library. This will be a youth-focused facility with a high IT content and a study/homework ethos. One of the main objectives for this library will be to attract young people who would not use a traditional branch library. As such, this library will be unique.²

Community and Economic Development Committee: Value Management Sessions

Following on from the decision to adopt an *integrated design with construction process*, the Community and Economic Development Committee held several “Value Management Sessions” to obtain input from a variety of stakeholders. The first such session was held on 15 August 2000 and involved 27 community members including among others: 5 key library staff members; 4 staff members from the Manukau City Council; 2 members of a local non-profit group aimed at helping people get skills for entering the workforce; 1 Maori person representing a local marae (i.e. the cultural centre for the local Maori tribe) (I should also point out that at least two of the representatives at the meeting from the library were Maori); 3 Samoan people with 2 of them from the church next to the site of the proposed library; and members from various architecture firms interested in the project. Among the outcomes of the first session were the listing of a number of key issues relating to the new facility, which included: people focussed; full consultation and participation of youth; access to a full range of multimedia technology for youth and adults; keep the focus on youth; have young people input into the concept and design; future proof the building design by creating ‘mana’ (cultural respect) for it; have effective and good communication with the whole community; and cater for different cultures. The people at the session also began identifying success factors for the new building, including that it must set a “new standard for youth library service - others will benchmark against it.” To get buy-in from youth, the workshop

² Manukau City Council Community Development Committee. 2000. Unpublished agenda of Community Development Committee Meeting, 12 July 2000. Agenda item 6: Clover Park Youth Library [Report].

recommended that youth must be approached in their own environment, both formally and informally.

Consultations with Youth

At several different points along the way, Library staff and others noted the importance of involving youth in the planning process. This involvement would help bring in fresh ideas to make sure the library did not end up representing something from previous generations, and it would help with “buy-in” from youth and increase the likelihood of success. There were two general kinds of consultations with youth: (1) with students; and (2) with a local gang.

Consultations with Students

Members of the Library’s development staff held several rounds of consultations with different levels of local students. In April of 2000, children from the local high school and the local middle school (years 6 through 8) were asked what they wanted in a new public library. Much of what they suggested was in line with some of the existing ideas that had already been raised within the ethnic communities for the new library. These included: a food area; a hang-out area to meet with friends; listening posts to play music; study booths; a computer room; a separate area for adults that would be quiet; computers and games and touch screen TVs in a separate ‘entertainment area’; Internet access and lessons; library research skills programme; a quiet place to study; Playstations for hire and play; CD collections for hire; open late at night; recent exam papers; near a bus route and with parking; a colourful and multicultural building; comfortable furniture; and books for all ages. When asked what they did not want the library to be, these students said things like: too quiet; only with boring books; not just books; plain (i.e. no colour); with too many rules; or unsafe.

From 24 August 2000 until 30 August 2000, library staff held a more detailed set of consultations with 198 students from 9 different classes and 4 different schools. These meetings stemmed from the workshop held with community leaders, which I discussed earlier. Out of this workshop came the idea that children should be consulted in their own territory, hence the consultations took place in the schools themselves. Five of the classes were of year 6 students (around 10 years old) from 3 different primary schools in the region. The other 4 classes were from years 10, 11 and 12 (around 14-18 years old) at a local secondary school. Each class was spoken to separately and slightly different approaches were taken with the younger group than with the older group.

The focus of the younger students was geared more toward recreational activities and resources such as Playstations, clubs and games. The students in the older group, especially those in years 11 and 12, were interested in the concept of a study centre and having tutors available, particularly before final exams. All students expressed a concern for safety - both for the building which they didn’t want broken into or vandalised, and for themselves in the sense that they didn’t want any bullying taking place. The most common request for the library was for “study space, lots of computers, space to relax, information for school assignments and comfortable.”³

³ Manukau City Libraries. 2000. Consultation with local students for the Clover Park Library. [Unpublished report.]

Consultation with Local Gang

Just after consent had been received to build the new library in the park next to the Samoan church, it became clear to the Library Planners that they needed to consult the local gang of young males. To build a library on the selected site would mean that the basketball court in the park would have to be removed. This court was used heavily by the local gang - both for playing basketball and for 'hanging around'. It was their 'turf' and its removal would have certainly caused the boys to have ill feelings against the new library. The Library Planning Team decided to hold a meeting with the boys to consult about the site for the new library and to get their approval to move the court to the other side of the park. The big park is not big, so the basketball court would only be moved around 100 metres. The boys agreed to this and a new court was built for them just prior to the start of construction of the new library. The Planning Team arranged for an official opening of the new basketball court with live rock entertainment, refreshments and a basketball game between the boys from the park and the Auckland professional basketball team -- a team made up of many players who are the idols of these boys.

Thus, a situation that could have turned the local boys against the new library instead became a way of involving the boys and giving them a positive impression of what was going on.

Promoting New Growth --Tupu's Innovative Resources and Services

Based on these consultations and on the budget approved for the library, and using the knowledge of the library staff, Tupu developed and implemented a range of innovative resources and services for the youth of Clover Park. These include:

- Music listening posts
- Homework/study centre
- IT centre with
 - Personal computers
 - Internet access
 - Personal productivity software
 - Colour printers/photocopiers
 - Scanners
- Reference resources
 - Online and print
- Books and magazines with a focus on Polynesian culture
- Picture books for pre-school children
- Story time for pre-school and school-aged children
- Summer reading club for youth

The key innovation of Tupu is not what we would traditionally consider to be a resource or a service. The key innovation is that Tupu both looks and feels Polynesian. Its atmosphere exudes Polynesia, from the shape of the building, to the patterns on the carpet, the books on the shelves and the staff who work there. Even the issue desk has a Polynesian flavour - a specially designed tapa cloth has been incorporated into the top of the issue desk. Tapa cloth is traditional fabric made from the bark of trees and has traditional Samoan ornamental motifs infused in it. The outside of the library building has a graffiti wall near the entrance, painted by a local graffiti artist. Tupu was designed to allow Polynesian people, especially the local Polynesian youth, to feel welcome. The Polynesian design of this new library provides a

welcoming place in which the innovative resources, services and staff of Tupu all contribute to creating a socially inclusive youth library and to promoting 'new growth' in Clover Park.

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