

Professor Jack Richards' classroom texts have helped millions of people worldwide learn English. The success of his books, one series of which has sold over 40 million copies, has helped fuel Gisborne's creative core from the mid-1990s through contributions totaling over a million dollars – to Tairāwhiti Polytechnic's Toi Houkura Māori Arts Programme, Tairāwhiti Museum, Gisborne International Music Competition, artists, musicians, students and the restoration of Manutuke's historic Toko Toru Tapu Church.

Nationally, he has commissioned works from New Zealand composers including John Psathas, Lyell Creswell, Gao Ping, Jenny McLeod and Gareth Farr; sponsored a composer in residence scheme at University of Victoria with Creative New Zealand from 2004; and from 2011 assisted young opera singers through his patronage of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation.

Born in Hamilton, Jack Croft Richards (1943 -) came to Gisborne in about 1950 with father James, a Dalgety's accountant, and mother Kathleen, whose father, Auckland organ builder George Croft, built many of the organs in New Zealand's churches including those in Gisborne's Holy Trinity and St Andrew's churches.¹

He attended Kaiti Primary and Gisborne Boys' High, where his interest was piqued in drama, music and the arts. With his mother's encouragement, he and his three siblings learned the piano, an instrument that has remained his favourite.

After high school, he worked as a trainee broadcasting cadet in Wellington before studying fulltime at the University of Victoria. The teaching of English as a second language (TESL) became his prime focus after gaining part-time work in an English language centre for international students at Victoria University.

He completed his MA with first class honours in 1966, gained a TESL diploma and learned French. In 1968, he left New Zealand on a scholarship to Laval University, Quebec where he graduated with a PhD in Applied Linguistics in 1972. He wrote his first textbook in 1969 going on to produce more than 60 books on second language teaching for teachers and students.

In the mid-1970s, after a year teaching in Indonesia, he was appointed applied linguistics specialist at Singapore's Regional Language Centre. He spent 30 years lecturing in universities in Hong Kong, Hawaii and Auckland before retiring from fulltime work in 1999.

Based in Sydney, he has returned each summer to Tiromoana, his home and sculpture-studded garden overlooking Wainui. This 2ha garden, created from the early 1990s out of bare land and adjoining a matching property belonging to sister Gill and her husband Colin Armstrong, has provided a popular venue for fundraising concerts, notably for the International Gisborne Music Competition. (It can be seen on Youtube at Jack C Richards and Moon Won Gyu at Tiromoana). Richards' philanthropy had its roots in the 1970s, when he first helped pay students' fees in Indonesia, but developed in earnest after he attended an exhibition of works by Tairāwhiti Polytechnic Māori Arts and Design (Toi Houkura) students at Gisborne's museum. From 1995, he sponsored annual student scholarships and the Ruanuku Award for best Toi Houkura student, a piece of whose work was then gifted to the museum's permanent collection.²

Richards appreciated the sense of connection his sponsorship brought, often with sectors of the community he – as an overseas-based, Pakeha academic – would not normally have encountered. *"We all benefit when a community is more dynamic culturally and socially. It helps make you feel part of a community, that you are not an outsider."*

In 2012, he committed \$350,000 to a \$2m extension of Tairāwhiti Museum, which was completed in 2014. One of the three new galleries houses on a rotational basis, Richards' museum-quality

collections of textiles, artworks, Japanese lacquerware and a \$1m collection of 130 Rene Lalique art vases. (The gallery can be seen on Youtube at Jack C Richards Decorative Arts Gallery).

"I have had a very interesting and successful career. I have had a lot of lucky breaks and come up with the right product, at the right time and with the right publisher."

In 2011, University of Victoria conferred him with an honorary DLitt and University of Sydney has made him an honorary professor of its education faculty.

¹ Interview with Jack Richards, 1 Feb 2012; www.professorjackrichards.com

² GH, 8 December 2011