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**MEDIATING INTERNATIONAL DISASTERS:
Earthquakes as News in the Modern Newspaper**

This project addresses the history of newspaper reporting of international disasters. It inquires into the constitutive narratives of the international disaster news story, the ways these have changed over more than a century of modern news reporting, and the implications of these narratives and the identities and subjectivities they produce for how news readers can apprehend and make sense of distant disasters. The research will examine the changing ways in which *The Los Angeles Times* reported devastating earthquakes that occurred largely outside the USA. It will reveal how the newspaper's editors and journalists changed their narrative and their news gathering. Such an inquiry bears upon the issue of changing ideas about relationships with distant others in a globalising world. How are disasters in other parts of the world shared and understood? To what extent were historical disasters 'global' or even international events? What roles did scientists, professionals and politicians have in these stories of reactions to disaster? To what extent did newspaper editors provide investigative reporting after the tragic events in distant lands? Answers to these issues are significant because they reveal the extent to which natural disasters have been rescaled from local, unpredictable events to patterned, global phenomenon. This research asks 'at what points and in what ways has *The Los Angeles Times*' international earthquake disaster story and its associated imaginaries changed and why?' The project thus steps beyond conventional analyses of the news to identify how the news of foreign disasters constructs imagined places, communities, identities and natural phenomena in the context of catastrophic events.

Research begun at the University of Auckland will serve as the core of this project. With its nearly 130 years of publishing and only two changes in ownership, *The Los Angeles Times* offers some continuity in reporting. A database of *Los Angeles Times* reports of earthquake disasters has been compiled from microfilm archives at the University of California Los Angeles. These were decisive, unpredicted and catastrophic events, which governments struggled to respond to. In each case the disaster revealed problems with mitigation and preparedness, relief provision and security. These events should have had special meaning for the residents of Los Angeles since they live in a particularly disaster-prone region of the USA and share the risks of earthquake hazards with the residents of other Pacific Rim cities. Los Angeles is also the most frequent setting for Hollywood's disaster movies, and has become a global city and so its residents have developed ties to the regions devastated by these disasters. In particular *The Los Angeles Times* has repeatedly mediated these events through fund-raising campaigns, and reports of Los Angeles residents in the disaster zone or with relatives there. In these ways, and because of Los Angeles' position in relation to distant disasters, *The Los Angeles Times* offers a particular window onto the history of international disaster reporting.