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### **Contextualising Historic Correspondence Networks**

Beginning with a dataset of the digitised letters of 19th century printer, missionary, explorer, and naturalist, William Colenso (1811-1899), we explore and attempt to visualise aspects of 19th century New Zealand society revealed by the application of networks as research methods in historiography. The contexts of these networks are introduced, both through additional data sources such as the correspondence of key people Colenso corresponded with, and Colenso’s journals and autobiography, as well as via historical interpretation utilising ‘reading against the grain’. These contexts –people, places, things included or left out – provide opportunities to examine the usefulness of networks in historical research, where we must ask the question “What would we expect extant sources to record, and represent, and what are they most likely to omit or distort?” (Allen, 1986)

Allen, Judith. 1986. “Evidence and Silence: Feminism and the Limits of History.” In *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, edited by Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross, 173-189. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.