

non-residential population, were receiving on loan 7,915 books free of charge from the Service. These figures can be compared with those for 31st March, 1940, when 21 free libraries had joined, serving 28,250 residents and receiving free regular loans of 4,325 books. It is expected that the number of free libraries will increase substantially during the current year.

During the past year some of the larger boroughs—Rotorua, Feilding, and Levin—abolished the subscription plan for lending and have been linked with this Service. Any borough with a population of not more than 10,000 may now participate, provided that its library is free to residents and a reasonable standard of efficiency is achieved and maintained in its administration. The decision of the Mackenzie County Council to establish a free library service in its area has been a significant one. The county now receives a free permanent loan stock of 650 books from the Service, the stock being changed at intervals of four months when the book-van visits Fairlie, the county centre. Fairlie has always been notable for the comparative excellence of its library, which has been maintained by the County Council, a full-time Librarian being employed. Under the subscription plan the library was tending to lose ground, the number of subscribers being approximately 150. At 31st March, 1941, after nine months of free service, the number of registered county borrowers reached 1,020 in a population of 3,158. Allowing for the fact that under the "subscriber" system one subscription may often cover two readers, the increase is a satisfactory one. When to this increase is added the fact that hundreds of books, especially non-fiction books, not able to be purchased under the previous system now circulate through the county area, the advantages of the change are clearly seen. The Raglan County Council has taken the progressive step of providing the cost of loans of books from the Country Library Service to all public libraries in its area, but a free library service throughout the county has not yet been put into operation.

All free libraries participating in the Service have reported encouraging results. It is hoped that comparative statistics will be furnished in the future when all local librarians have completed the initial steps involved in the change of systems and can give time to the keeping and issuing of necessary records.

One free borough public library, at Morrinsville, reports issues of 10,800 in 1938-39, 23,183 in 1939-40, and 31,373 in 1940-41. Membership of this library now stands at 863, as against 105 before the system was changed. In his last annual report the Town Clerk states: "Another service given by the Country Library Service is the supplying of non-fiction works 'on request.' This request service is of inestimable value to readers who are unable to purchase technical and general books to pursue their studies. Some 31 volumes were supplied during the year, and the subjects ranged from aerodynamics, radio, folk songs, modern and ancient history, to the care of dogs, water purification, and poetry."

Results of Three Years' Co-operation with Local Authorities.

There are two points which emerge from the experience of the first three years' work of the Service in trying to develop library facilities in co-operation with local authorities. One is that at the present rate of progress at least seven years will pass before all libraries in boroughs of 10,000 population or less have abolished subscriptions and participated in this Service, and, even if other counties follow the example of Mackenzie County quite soon, a still longer period may elapse before all local authorities are involved in giving a library service. This period may be cut down as the success of the free plan is demonstrated, but many people will be deprived of access to reasonably good library facilities in the meantime. The other point is that there are very great differences in the standard of the local service even when the local authority has made the minimum changes required in order that the library may be linked with this Service.

SMALL INDEPENDENT SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARIES: "B" SERVICE.

The number of these libraries which received loans of books rose to 302 during the year, compared with 265 during 1939-40 and 179 in 1938-39. Eight libraries withdrew from the Service, because of declining membership or lack of local support. The number withdrawing is 4 less than the previous year. The growing number of libraries which have contracted for an increased supply of books from the vans is reflected in the total number of volumes on issue to "B" libraries, 22,226 compared with 17,711 in the previous year. Apart from the difficulties arising out of war conditions which libraries have experienced in purchasing their own stocks, the economical nature of the arrangement whereby additional bulk loans of books can be furnished to small libraries through this service is becoming more widely appreciated.

Exchanges of Libraries' Own Stocks: "E" Service.

Many small country libraries possess surprisingly large collections of stagnant book stock for which they have no further use. Attempts have been made in the past by some libraries to exchange books, with success in some cases, but the great difficulty has been that libraries have been working without knowledge of each other's stock and without an intermediate agent. The regular visits of the book-vans of the Country Library Service now provide a useful means whereby such exchanges can be made. A pool of extra books is carried on each van, on which libraries may draw and to which they contribute. Extra stock is exchanged after the routines for the return and issue of the Country Library Service books have been carried out.