

The Library Situation in New Zealand.

A report on "New Zealand Libraries in 1940" was made to the Council of the New Zealand Library Association in September of last year following visits to 160 libraries of all types. As the general condition and tendencies of libraries throughout New Zealand is so important to the work of the Country Library Service the following brief summary of the report is given here:

"In the areas of different library authorities there are wide differences both in the amount of money spent on the library and policy as to the way in which it shall be spent. The competition of commercial book clubs, the spectacular success of some of the libraries which have gone free within the last two or three years, the spirit of co-operation fostered by the New Zealand Library Association and the general work and influence of that body, have combined to make at least some library authorities more tolerant to proposals for change than in the past.

"The few really good library buildings in New Zealand are outnumbered many times over by those which suffer from bad planning, overcrowding or, worst of all, an inferior site. A general appearance of shabby institutionalism is far too common, though a few libraries have proved that old buildings need not be dull. Except in the largest cities the possibility of abandoning altogether the usual public-building type of design is worth consideration in planning a new building.

"The growth of the pay collection idea is likely to hasten the abolition of subscriptions, to clarify ideas as to the purposes for which it is legitimate to spend public money, and to provide an efficient means of satisfying the public appetite for fiction. The total reference resources of New Zealand are, in relation to its population, good. The inter-loan facilities organized by the New Zealand Library Association are an important beginning in making these resources available, but we cannot claim yet that any reader anywhere in New Zealand can get access to any book he wants for a serious purpose. The compilation of a union catalogue and the setting-up of a central clearing-house for requests are essential steps to the proper development of reference service in New Zealand. Service to children is very uneven quantitatively and qualitatively."

Library Service to Schools.

A survey of the schemes for the supply of books to schools operating in Canterbury and Otago has been made for the Education Department.

Work of the New Zealand Library Association.

Work carried out by the Association during the year which has direct bearing on the future development of libraries included that on a general course of training in librarianship, a course of training for children's libraries, plans for the compilation of a union catalogue, a guide to authors of fiction, specifications for library binding. Most of these projects are still in their early stages, but the course of training for children's librarians has actually begun.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

I wish to acknowledge the great help given by the staff of the Service during an exceptionally busy year, also the co-operation received from many librarians and library authorities throughout New Zealand.

I have, &c.,
G. T. ALLEY, Director.

Approximate Cost of Paper:—Preparation, not given; printing (695 copies), £10 16s.

By Authority: E. V. PAUL, Government Printer, Wellington.—1941.

Price 6d.]