

1941.

NEW ZEALAND.

COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1941.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave.

The Hon. the MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

Wellington, 9th July, 1941.

STR,—

During the year the Service has increased its activities still further. Libraries and library groups which participated, excluding 9 military camp and Air Force Station libraries, numbered 387, as against 323 in March, 1940. One hundred and sixteen persons used the postal service, an increase of 56 from 1939-40, while the number of books available through all divisions of the Service rose to 45,679 (31,066 at 31st March, 1940). The machinery of the Service was used in other ways, notably the War Library Service and the Central Bureau for Library Book Imports, which are dealt with below.

A full description of the methods by which books, periodicals, and information are made available to country people has been given in the first two annual reports. Summarized briefly, these methods consist of (a) free loans of books on a liberal scale to libraries controlled by local authorities, which in turn agree to make their libraries free and maintain reasonable standards of library service; (b) loans of books to independent subscription public libraries at a small annual charge per one hundred books lent; (c) loans of books through travelling hamper collections to isolated groups of readers at a small annual charge; and (d) loans through the post of non-fiction books free of charge to readers requiring information. All libraries served under (a) and (b) received regular visits from one of the specially equipped book-vans of the Service, at least three visits being paid to each library during a full year. Further, all persons, whether served by the free public library or through the isolated group, may obtain loans of reference books by post from the headquarters of the Service. An extra method which was introduced experimentally with some success during the year is the "E" service, by which the stocks of the smaller libraries have been exchanged, using the vans of the Service as the means. Many libraries have co-operated in this way. A fuller description of the "E" service is given later in this report, since it has important implications for future policy and the development of country library facilities.

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES: "A" SERVICE.

Libraries which took the important step of making their lending services free to local residents during the year numbered 7, bringing the total number of free libraries co-operating with this Service to 28. These libraries, serving a local residential population of 46,379, as well as a considerable

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 aeronaotics, 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.

The Future of the Small Subscription Library.

When the Service began it was expected that after a preliminary period of two years, which was needed for organization purposes, many of the small subscription libraries would be able, if they wished, to offer a free service with the aid of their local county. The plans for county services have been largely modified by the outbreak of war, with the consequent need for restriction of motor transport and conservation of fuel, since additional book-vans will be required when it is decided to offer each locality a library service irrespective of whether it already has a small library and its nearness to the route of a book-van. The postponement of the developments referred to may have good results, since much has been learned of the problems which will have to be faced. Although some counties have already shown deep interest in library matters it is probable that others will need fuller demonstration of the benefits to be gained before co-operating with this Service. Also the location of the small library is often far from suitable as a distributing-point for a centre, the local store, school, or post-office being in many cases much more convenient. The possibility of the State having to assume more responsibility for adequate library service in country districts, as distinct from country boroughs, should therefore be faced.

Geographical Distribution of Small Libraries participating.

The following table shows the geographical distribution of the small libraries participating in the Service at 31st March, 1941, compared with the numbers for the two preceding years:—

District.	1940-41.	1939-40.	1938-39.
North Auckland	40	38	28
South Auckland and Waikato	41	36	24
Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, and Gisborne	21	16	9
Taranaki	8	8	5
Main Trunk and centre North Island	16	11	10
Wellington and Hawke's Bay	25	19	8
Total, North Island	151	128	84
Nelson and Marlborough	28	25	15
West Coast	13	12	11
Canterbury	59	53	41
Otago	31	28	12
Southland	20	19	16
Total, South Island	151	137	95
Grand total	302	265	179

OTHER WAYS IN WHICH SERVICE HAS BEEN GIVEN.

Hamper, or "O" Service.

In places where no library exists and where it is not possible for one to be formed, the service to properly established groups by means of travelling hampers has been continued. During the year 47 groups received this service, compared with 37 for the previous year. Of the groups, 29 were in the North Island and 18 in the South. Many of the unit collections which were formed during the first year of the service were recalled during 1940-41 and fresh collections substituted.

Postal, or "D" Service.

During the year 116 persons used this facility, compared with 63 in 1939-40. In exceptional circumstances two books were allowed to a borrower, to offset inevitable delays where mail-transit times are lengthy. Lists of material available in certain subjects have been issued from time to time for the convenience of borrowers.

Request Service.

The issue of posters calling attention to the facilities offered has caused a very sharp rise in the number of requests received from libraries. Altogether 1,432 separate requests for works of non-fiction were received, of which a small number, 28, could not be satisfied. Borrowings from other libraries, notably the General Assembly Library, gave great assistance, 301 volumes being lent to the Service, which in its turn lent 12 volumes.

Periodical Service.

To enable users of smaller libraries to have access to a considerably wider range of periodicals than such libraries can afford to buy regularly, some 92 periodicals have been lent to the free public libraries participating in the Service. Each library receives up to 30 periodicals chosen from the list, in lots of some six to eight, sending its initial lot to another library by post after one month and receiving another in the same way. The effect of this service is that many country people now have access to a range of periodical literature hitherto available only in city libraries.

Advice to Libraries.

The services of the field officers are available at all times to librarians of small libraries. Where time does not allow the field officer to do necessary work, the services of a trained librarian from headquarters are made available free of charge to the library. The Liaison Officer between this Service and the New Zealand Library Association has visited many libraries. Her activities are detailed in her report below.

Supply of Books to Dominion Museum, Wellington.

During March, 1941, arrangements were completed for the supply of up to 150 volumes to be included in the travelling exhibits of the Dominion Museum. These exhibits go to schools from Hawke's Bay and Wanganui to Marlborough and Nelson, each exhibit going to a fresh school every fortnight. It is thought that the books, which will supplement the exhibits, will be of great value to the museum service.

BOOK STOCK.

In spite of the war, and thanks to the efforts of the Navy and merchant service and to the work of those responsible for the despatch of publications from Great Britain, no serious shortage of books has been felt. It is inevitable that some losses should have occurred, but these have been slight. During the year the Service received and added to stock 14,563 volumes. The total stock now stands at 45,062 volumes, of which 23,572 are non-fiction and 22,037 fiction. The percentages of various types of books in stock at 31st March are as follows: General works, 0.72; philosophy and psychology, 1.90; religion, 1.24; social sciences, 7.23; philology and language, 0.23; natural or pure sciences, 2.66; applied science and useful arts, 5.01; fine arts and recreations, 5.89; literature, excluding fiction, 3.98; history, travel, and biography, 22.97; fiction, 48.17. During the year binding of the books requiring treatment in the South Island was arranged for at Christchurch with a commercial firm, the North Island binding being done at Wellington.

WAR LIBRARY SERVICE.

By lending its own stocks of books, particularly non-fiction books, to military camp, Air Force Station, and warship libraries where adequate library facilities have been provided, by recommending and planning these facilities in many cases in active co-operation with the New Zealand Library Association, and by organizing the national collection and distribution of gifts of books and periodicals to the fighting forces, the Service has continued to give useful help in the war effort. The method of organization described in the last annual report has been developed fully.

It is of interest to note the good results which have followed the application of the machinery of the National Patriotic Fund Board to the work of the War Library Service, which is a part of the Board's activities. Without that central machinery it is very doubtful if results would have been as good, and much duplication of effort and many serious omissions would have occurred.

The advantages of using a national library service for co-ordinating the efforts of libraries have also been very real, while the work of numerous librarians throughout the country has been an indispensable part of the scheme. As an example of this, the first New Zealand hospital ship was able to be equipped at short notice with a serviceable library of 1,000 volumes of fiction, 250 non-fiction, and 1,000 periodicals, together with a modern issue system and full instructions for the administration of the library.

Books and Periodicals supplied.

Up to 31st March, 1941, 97,403 books and 99,670 periodicals had been distributed to various points. A considerable quantity of this material was sent overseas on transports and will not be recoverable, although it has been impressed on Gifts Officers that, if possible, material should be taken off transports to base camps.

Libraries in Camps and Air Force Stations.

During the year the buildings which were specially planned for Papakura and Waiouru Camps were finished and put into use. These buildings have proved their usefulness and are comparable with any library buildings used by military forces elsewhere. At Trentham and Burnham the buildings provided have not been of the same standard, although the latter camp is to have a new library as soon as labour and material can be allocated. Trentham, where excellent work has been done by the Warrant Officer Librarian (a former Deputy Chief Librarian of the Wellington Public Libraries), is to have the library premises remodelled to allow a number of small rooms to be thrown into one. All these main-camp libraries have full-time librarians in charge (at Waiouru a Y.M.C.A. officer supervises the library, which is attached to the Y.M.C.A. building), ample stocks of books in first-class condition, and regular loans of books from the Country Library Service, as well as the use of the request service for technical material. Good use has been made of the latter, as well as of the technical and reference material supplied as permanent stock and purchased with funds of the National Patriotic Fund Board.

At Air Force Stations some good work has been done, notably at Harewood, Wigram, Whenuapai, and Blenheim, but at the end of the year there were several stations without good facilities. It is expected that all these will be served shortly, if the co-operation of the Air Department is obtained. The Country Library Service has on permanent loan to five Air Force Station libraries 700 books from its regular stock, these books being changed regularly from the vans of the Service. Altogether some 30,000 books in first-class condition have been prepared for circulation and allocated to camp and Air Force Station libraries by the librarians and their staffs in New Zealand since the war began.

Supply of Books and Periodicals.

The collection and sorting of the great amount of material needed for all the needs of the War Library Service have taxed the time and energy of many, librarians, their staffs, volunteer helpers, organizations such as the New Zealand Boy Scouts' Association and the New Zealand Returned Soldiers' Association. Although much material received has been useless a very handsome proportion has been of great service. The generosity of the people of New Zealand in helping so liberally is gratefully acknowledged. The press has assisted very greatly in giving publicity to appeals, as have the radio broadcasting services.

Development.

Plans are in hand for further improvement of the library facilities in all camps and for the strengthening of the supply of books and periodicals to all units of the armed forces, particularly those which are overseas. Bigger stocks of modern worthwhile books are to be built up in the main-camp libraries, by purchase where necessary. These, added to the considerable loans of books from the Country Library Service and the provision of the adequate library buildings and staff already made, will ensure that those who are training to fight for this country will not lack opportunities for information, culture, and recreation through reading.

CENTRAL BUREAU FOR LIBRARY BOOK IMPORTS.

Since the inception of the Bureau in February, 1940, until 31st March, 1941, 210 recommendations for special license to the value of £6,686 (N.Z. currency) have been made for twenty libraries. The recommendations have covered non-fiction books and periodicals and children's fiction of recognized quality. This was included because of the importance of encouraging libraries to raise their standard of fiction in junior departments, and fiction of this type is rarely included in local booksellers' stock. The Bureau has refused to recommend for special license social, illustrated, and fiction periodicals and adult fiction.

In order to fulfil the functions of the Bureau—namely, to prevent unnecessary duplicate buying and to discover, with a view to eliminating, gaps in the stocks of the main libraries—an easily consultable record of the orders recommended had to be made. This was done by using standard-size library catalogue cards 7.5 by 12.5 cm., one card to a title, and stamping on the face of the card the location of the book. This record, however, covered only current buying by libraries for which special licenses were required. More information as to library holdings was necessary if the Bureau was to perform its functions efficiently.

Union Catalogue.

This led to the revival of the union catalogue project using the Central Bureau already in existence as a basis. The New Zealand Library Association asked libraries to co-operate by forwarding to the Central Bureau as from 1st January, 1941, copies of their main catalogue entries for all non-fiction accessions for inclusion in the union catalogue. Thus the Bureau would be able to record all current accessions by contributing libraries, and not only such titles as were ordered through special license. Even so, valuable as this information is proving, not until all non-fiction holdings of New Zealand libraries are incorporated in the union catalogue will the book stock of the Dominion be marshalled to provide an adequate basis for scientific as opposed to haphazard coverage of books published to ensure that at least one copy of all essential books should be available in New Zealand.

The second function of the union catalogue—that of acting as a clearing house for inter-library loans—suffers under the same handicap of insufficient records. In spite of this, however, the catalogue has already provided useful information as to which libraries possess certain books.

Since 1st January, 1941, twenty-three libraries have notified accessions, the total number of entries received being 4,144. The card-stock of the union catalogue now approximates 18,000 entries.

REPORT OF THE LIAISON OFFICER (MISS E. J. CARNELL).

Sixteen local libraries taking the free service were visited, and in nearly every case the committee or representatives of it interviewed and invited, in fact urged, to voice criticisms and suggestions. Many committees were unable to make any adverse comment at all, complete satisfaction with the Country Library Service was frequently expressed, and in no case was there, on balance, dissatisfaction.

Results of Participation.

Increases in the number of registered readers of from 90 to 320, from 30 to 146, from 75 to 260 are typical of those reported. These figures need to be treated with some reserve, for in a free library the discrepancy between the number of registered readers and the number of active readers is greater than in a subscription library, but it is indisputable that "going free" and participation in the Country Library Service has everywhere increased, and in many towns has multiplied the number of people using the library. Statistics of daily issues, where they are available, are satisfactory; in several cases they reach the high average of fifteen books per head of population per year. An average of ten per year can be considered good. The site of the library building has a direct bearing upon the extent to which it is used. The quality of the work done is dependent mainly upon the quality of the local librarian. Even in the least active of the free libraries the wide range of books available means that the quality of the book service offered readers compares favourably with that of any library of similar size outside the Service, and in the most active of the free libraries it is incomparably superior. There

is scope for development of the request service for informational books and material. More direct contact between the Country Library Service and the reader with specialized needs would assist in the exploitation of the informational resources of the Service. The local library should not be excluded from this contact, but it is not always the best sole medium for it.

Book Stock in Small Libraries.

Differences in the amount spent locally on books, ranging from under £10 to £180, are far greater than can be accounted for by difference in size. Some of the books bought could be supplied more effectively and economically on a circulating basis if expansion of the circulating book-supply could be brought about.

Need for a larger supply of books from the Country Library Service is felt most now in the smaller of the free libraries. The extra fifty books allotted to all libraries during the year will have eased the situation for them somewhat, but it is probable that in the case of towns with a population of up to 1,500 a better service would result if the Country Library Service assumed a more complete responsibility for the book service and offered to provide, not necessarily upon an entirely free basis, sufficient books to keep the library going. In any small unit of population (and this applies to populations above the 1,500 mark) a static book stock tends to become little used after a few years, even though the books in it are good. There are two ways, other than the supply of a larger proportion of stock from the Country Library Service, of mitigating that appearance of "sameness" on the shelves which readers find depressing. The "E" service has potentialities as a means of freshening the stock of some "A" as well as "B" libraries, though the wear-and-tear factor limits the extent to which it can be used. Another method would be for some central agency such as the Country Library Service to take from local libraries, either for a small cash payment or on an exchange basis, books which need repair, bind them, and use for distribution elsewhere. This would not only freshen the shelves, it would save the time which conscientious local librarians now spend on rebacking books.

Administration.

This last point is not so trivial as it may sound. A substantial amount of the time of the staff in many libraries is spent on repair work which, however carefully done, is inferior to a competent tradesman's job. It is this repair work which is partly responsible for the discrepancy which exists between the use made of a library and the time spent by the librarian in it. This discrepancy is due to the fact that although the number of readers in small libraries could be dealt with in a very few hours a week the inconvenience to the public of very limited hours of opening is so great that committees decide to open the library for much longer hours than the use made of it justifies. The only economical way out of the difficulty is to combine the library with some other activity, so that its supervision during quiet periods can be carried on concurrently with other work. A start in this direction has been made in several "A" libraries by staffing the library from the Town Clerk's Office. It is possible that there are other local institutions with which the library might be even more profitably and conveniently connected. Another factor in the hours for which a librarian is employed is the practice, probably justified in small libraries, of adding cleaning to the librarian's duties. In view of the scarcity value of labour for cleaning it is odd that labour-saving devices such as vacuum cleaners are almost unknown.

The book-card method of recording issues which has been installed in all participating libraries works satisfactorily. Time and care devoted to cataloguing and classification are erratic, often non-existent, but in the circumstances in which many small libraries function these tasks are, perhaps, less important than the professional librarian is wont to suppose. Far more important is the skill and energy local librarians exhibit in making use of the opportunities for service provided by their contact with the public. Some local libraries possess librarians who are themselves keen readers, who are observant of their readers' interests and quick to connect these interests with books in the library stock or offered to them by the Country Library Service; but the idea that part of the librarian's duty is to take active steps to exploit the books in his or her charge has not yet penetrated everywhere.

Non-participating Libraries.

Fifty libraries serving populations of under 10,000 but not participating in the Service were visited during the year. Thirteen of these—*i.e.*, 26 per cent. of the total—have since decided to fulfil the conditions of participation, and are now receiving, or about to receive, books from the Country Library Service. Although here and there objections on principle to going free are still found, the main obstacle to the participation of more local libraries is that in most cases the minimum standard of efficiency demanded, together with the loss of subscriptions, would involve the local authority in some additional expenditure.

In this vital matter of the amount of local expenditure necessary to maintain a library at a reasonable standard of efficiency the development of pay collections—by which part of the library's stock is rented, as in a commercial book club—is important. A complete year's figures from such libraries as Levin, Feilding, and Hawera will give more data than is available at present as to the relationship between receipts in an active subscription library and total receipts in the same library if it "goes free" and establishes a pay collection for light, popular fiction. This relationship affects the amount of the subsidy necessary from local funds—the factor upon which the decision regarding participation usually hinges. Not all local Councils judge proposals for the improvement of the local library solely in terms of the amount of expenditure involved. Some are interested in the relation between money spent and value obtained.

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.

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