

1944
NEW ZEALAND

COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE FOR THE YEAR
ENDED 31st MARCH, 1944

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by leave

The Hon. the MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

Wellington, 18th July, 1944.

SIR,—

This Service has continued to grow in scope and, it is hoped, in usefulness during the year. In addition to many hundreds of isolated individuals, 510 towns and small centres have participated in the Service. The School Library Service has shown a solid increase, and up to 31st March, 650 schools, with 38,782 children, were served, the books on issue to the schools being 40,698 (the respective figures for the previous year were 502 schools, 28,001 children, and 29,906 books).

The Service has continued to act as the main source of supply to the Army Education and Welfare Service library under terms of War Cabinet's decision, by which the machinery of the Country Library Service, suitably extended to meet wartime needs, is to be the chief means of carrying out library service for the Armed Forces.

A full description of the methods by which books, periodicals, and information are made available to country people has been given in previous annual reports. Summarized, these methods consist of (a) free loans of books on a population basis 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 books free of charge to isolated readers. All libraries served under (a) and (b) receive regular visits from one of the specially-equipped book-vans of this Service, at least two 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 requested books by post from the headquarters of the Service. Service to children is given through schools on a circulating basis.

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES: "A" SERVICE

Shortage of supplies of books from overseas, and shortage of staff, are again reflected in the very small growth in the number of local authorities which have taken the step of co-operating with this Service. The total number of county, borough, and town district libraries co-operating with this Service at 31st March, 1944, was 45. These libraries served a local population of 114,469, as well as a considerable population in their vicinity, and 15,100 books were on loan to them.

SMALL INDEPENDENT SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARIES: "B" SERVICE

Three hundred and ninety-one of these libraries were linked with the Service during the year, compared with the previous year's figure of 368; 203 of the libraries are in the North Island, 188 in the South Island; 28,110 books were on loan to these "B" libraries, an average of just over 71 books per library. The need for conserving oil fuel and tires again made it necessary to keep the number of exchanges effected by means of the book-vans to two per year. In certain cases the libraries were encouraged to exchange their own stock and books borrowed from this Service with corresponding stock of nearby libraries. In some cases, where local libraries were enthusiastic and enterprising, such exchanges were carried out and were mutually beneficial. The shortage of books in New Zealand book stores and the tendency for a greater amount of purchasing-power to be available caused the smaller libraries to make more demands on this Service than could be fulfilled. Many libraries which two years ago were receiving loans of fifty books have increased these loans, or have wished to do so.

OTHER WAYS IN WHICH SERVICE HAS BEEN GIVEN

Hamper or "C" 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 74 groups received this service, compared with 70 for the previous year. Many additional collections were made up during the year and despatched for the first time to groups, while those which had been sufficiently long in circulation were withdrawn.

Postal or "D" Service.—During the year 468 persons were registered with this Service, as compared with 250 in 1942-43. The regulations governing the use of this service have been altered to allow an additional book for general reading to be included in the selection sent. Up to three books may thus be borrowed at a time, of which not more than one may be the lighter sort—*i.e.*, fiction, popular biography, current affairs, travel, &c. Although the number of persons using this service is growing, it must be noted that there still remains a large number of people living in fairly remote localities untouched by any form of library service. It is, however, doubtful if a postal service from Wellington is the best means of dealing with this need. Obviously some measure of decentralization or more direct service will be needed in the future if the library needs of such people are to be met. During the year 5,741 volumes were issued to postal borrowers. A feature of the year's work in this section has been the planning of a service to lighthouses. All lighthouses under the control of the Marine Department are now to receive regular consignments of books forwarded in special canvas containers.

Request Service.—Each of the 500-odd libraries participating in the Service displays Country Library Service posters inviting its borrowers to request books of non-fiction, even though such books are not in the stock of the library concerned or are not at the time on loan from the Service. The high value of such a service must be stressed, for it brings the resources of printed material of all the libraries of the country, especially the technical and information resources, within the reach of a very large number of people hitherto cut off from such resources. The use made of this facility depends largely on the energy and initiative of the local librarian, and, while many libraries make good use of the service, many have still to realize its value. During the year 9,657 requests were received at the headquarters of this Service, the range of subjects covered being very wide, and 9,154 (95 per cent.) of these requests were filled, while 503 (5 per cent.) of them were not filled either because the requested book was unobtainable or because the request was not within the scope of the service—*i.e.*, it was fiction or non-fiction of an ephemeral kind.

Popular Request Subjects.—A list of the most popular request subjects follows: Interior decorating; woodwork and cabinetmaking; modern furniture-making; wood-turning; carpentry and building; water-colour-painting technique; poultry-keeping, back-yard and commercial; beekeeping; dressmaking and tailoring; fashion designing and dress modelling; floral decoration and wreath making; puppetry; architecture; housing and town planning; crafts for children; refrigeration; dancing and games. This Service could use in all of the subjects mentioned hundreds of additional titles, especially in the more recently published and better-class books, and it is hoped that these more glaring quantitative gaps in our book stock will soon be filled.

Subject Loan Collections.—Twenty-seven loan collections, totalling 898 books, were sent out to libraries on two-monthly loans. Education, child study, gardening, and drama were the collections most frequently requested. Other collections included music, art appreciation, sociology, astronomy, aeronautics, and general science. Loan collections were issued to the free libraries co-operating with this Service, to the Gisborne and Napier Public Libraries, and to the Wellington Teachers' Training College.

Inter-library Loan.—A scheme of inter-library loan was begun by the New Zealand Library Association in 1937, superseding the arrangement among the university libraries and some informal lending among public libraries.

From time to time the procedure has been improved. Of recent years the Country Library Service has taken an increasing share in the work. First, it acted for many small libraries which it serves; next, it was asked to function as a clearing-house for all requests for which the location was not known; finally, on account of its strategic position and its administration of the Central Bureau for Library Book Imports, as well as being the headquarters of the Union Catalogue, it has become in fact the national bibliographical centre. At present, a considerable amount of the interloan business passes through this Service, and the proportion will probably increase.

If a check by the Country Library Service staff of the records available in Wellington does not reveal where any wanted item may be found, it is noted in *Book Resources*, which is a mimeographed sheet issued by the Country Library Service each week, listing items in detail and recording the name of the requesting library.

Book Resources is sent to some twenty libraries, each of which receives two copies. One is for the library's own file and one is checked against its catalogue and then returned to the Country Library Service by return mail. The checked sheets returned to this Service make it possible for interloan application cards to be redirected to the holding library which it is thought may satisfy the request most conveniently. Each issue of *Book Resources* records which items listed in the previous issue have been located.

The weekly issue of *Book Resources* was begun on 18th October, 1943, and from that date until 31st March, 1944, 410 interloan cards were received at the Country Library Service; 283 of these requested items were supplied by the Country Library Service and other libraries in Wellington (the General Assembly Library, the Alexander Turnbull Library, the Wellington Public Libraries, and others). Seven requests were rejected as being outside the scope of the scheme or for having supplied insufficient data about the requested item. The remaining 120 interloan application cards, plus 87 items requested by Country Library Service borrowers, were circulated through the medium of *Book Resources*, and a total of 104 wanted items were located and loans arranged.

Periodical Service.—To enable users of free public libraries to have access to a considerably wider range of periodicals than such libraries can afford to buy regularly, some 120 periodicals have been sent to 30 free public libraries participating in this Service. Each library received 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.

Special Groups.—1,555 books were also on loan to 16 groups and libraries in various types of institutions.

BOOK STOCK

During the year the adult section of this Service added to stock 19,652 volumes, 6,050 fiction and 13,602 non-fiction. Withdrawals were 2,534 volumes, 1,461 fiction and 1,073 non-fiction. Thus the net additions to stock were 17,118, and the total adult stock of this Service now stands at 90,080, made up of 36,503 fiction and 53,577 non-fiction. Stock of the children's section at 31st March, 1944, was 68,197, making a grand total of all stock of 158,277 volumes. The difficulties of importing books from abroad under the present conditions continue, and sincere acknowledgment is made to the High Commissioner for New Zealand in London and his staff for the assistance they have given in the purchasing and despatch of books. In addition to the book stock mentioned above, 25,628 volumes were purchased during the year and made available on extended loan to Army Education and Welfare Service Library. Since February, 1943, 33,826 books have been provided in this way.

EXPENDITURE, STAFF, PREMISES

Expenditure for the year was £18,482, under Subdivision XIV, "Country Library Service," vote "Department of Education." In addition, £5,197 was expended on the purchase of books for the School Library Service (Subdivision II of the same vote). £8,625 from War Expenses Account was expended on books and periodicals and other incidental services for Army Education and Welfare Service library. Books and equipment so provided remain the property of this Service and will be handed over when no longer needed by the Armed Forces, and the War Expenses Account re-imbursed accordingly.

The staff of the Country Library Service now numbers 30, including officers acting as wartime replacements for 8 officers—5 permanent, 3 temporary—who are on military leave or, in the case of one permanent officer, seconded to the civil branch of one of the Armed Services. Staffing increase to 37 has been authorized.

Much additional storage space and accommodation for housing of the rapidly increasing book stock and for the provision of proper working-conditions for the staff are needed at Wellington.

CENTRAL BUREAU FOR LIBRARY BOOK IMPORTS

From 1st April, 1943, to 31st March, 1944, 329 recommendations for special license to the value of £13,956 5s. (New Zealand currency) were made for 27 libraries. The recommendations have covered non-fiction books and periodicals and junior fiction of recognized quality.

Union Catalogue.—The Union Catalogue is proving increasingly useful in the locating of books. Libraries are continuing to notify their accessions, and some 8,000 new entries have been added to the Catalogue during the year.

New Zealand Book Resources Committee.—The Committee met once during the year; the main work has consisted of the ordering of titles from the lists checked the previous year (see annual report of this service for 1943) and the checking of the 1941 volume of the Cumulative Book Index against the Union Catalogue and the selection and ordering of such titles as were not held by any library and which were deemed essential. The New Zealand Library Association, Wellington Branch, undertook the checking of the Cumulative Book Index and the copying of entries not found in the Union Catalogue. 4,870 entries were copied on cards by the Wellington Branch; of these, 2,428 items had been rejected, 163 were found to be already on order, 448 had been referred to special libraries, and 1,831 were in the process of being ordered for book resources. During the year the total number of books ordered through Book Resources was 1,556, to the value of £711 17s. sterling. 2,846 volumes have been rejected because they have been out of print, not now of value, or covered by more recent publications. Whereas last year only 31 books had been received at the end of the financial year, to date 830 books have been received.

WORK WITH CHILDREN

At the 31st March, 1944, service was being given as shown in the table given below. At that date 131 schools had applied for and were awaiting service, as books became available. The book stock at 31st March, 1944, was 68,197 (fiction 48,099, non-fiction 20,098).

The Taranaki and Otago Education Boards still maintain their own schemes, and during the past two years grants of 1,000 books have been made to each of these Boards to assist in the extension of the service to Standards I, II, and III.

Books ordered from overseas have not all come to hand, and as a result the number of schools on the waiting-list is considerable.

The duplication system has been maintained so that schools have not received titles which they have had previously.

Further decentralization has taken place; this has been most marked in the Auckland, Wanganui, and Palmerston North districts, where large numbers of schools have joined the scheme. In addition to our offices in Auckland and Christchurch, offices have been set up in Whangarei and Palmerston North to cope with the exchanges made to the schools in these districts. The East Coast exchanges, formerly done from the district high school, Te Araroa, are now done by the Palmerston North office of this Service. Wanganui, Timaru, and Greymouth Public Libraries continue to act as efficient exchange centres for their districts. No payment is made to the libraries for the work involved, but from time to time loans of books are made for use in these libraries' own children's departments. These loans are in addition to the pool stock held at the libraries for exchange purposes.

Service made free to Schools which qualify.—On and after 1st April, 1944, any school which shall have paid the correct amount of its levy to the Country Library Service for two complete and consecutive years, and which has carried out satisfactorily all other conditions of the school library service which apply to it, will receive loans of books from the Country Library Service without further payment by way of annual levy. This means that on 1st April, 1944, 221 schools qualified for free service.

Education Boards.	Schools served.	Children served.	Books issued.
Auckland	202	17,415	17,572
Canterbury	149	5,156	5,826
Hawke's Bay	59	4,066	4,244
Nelson	31	1,978	2,056
Southland	28	1,402	1,438
Wanganui	132	5,939	6,519
Wellington	49	2,826	3,041
Totals	650	38,782	40,696

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICE

Progress made by the free public libraries participating in the Service during the past year is admittedly uneven, the local attitude to library service and willingness to expend a reasonable annual sum on the library being the determining factor. This unevenness need not necessarily be disturbing because it can be held that some local responsibility for a part of library finance provides a healthy test of the appreciation and value of a service and is a democratic safeguard. Local authorities, like Tauranga Borough Council, which are spending locally per head of population on library service more than is spent by any city, and are, in addition, getting all that the Country Library Service has to offer, are reaping the fullest reward of the policy of this Service, which has always conceived of financial responsibility for library service as a partnership between the local and general governments.

At the earliest favourable time it is proposed to develop the Service on a regional basis. Instead of separate services for city and country it is proposed, with the co-operation of the city library authorities, to combine the services of town and country in one regional service. A strong national library service is essential to co-ordinate the work of such regions. The small independent library unit has special difficulty in a country like New Zealand, where a relatively large land area has a small population—approximately that of any one of a number of overseas cities. As the modern system of agriculture stands to the medieval strip system of cultivation so, in relation to the small unassisted library unit, must we consider a library system planned to keep abreast of the scientific advances of the times.

I have, &c.,

G. T. ALLEY, Director.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (558 copies), £6.

By Authority: E. V. PAUL, Government Printer, Wellington.—1944.