

XXIII. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY

GENERAL REMARKS

The year has been a busy one in service to the public, and particularly so for the staff, which suffered several losses which have not yet been made good. Additions have been maintained in the same fields and in much the same quantity as before, but it was possible to make a number of important acquisitions in the realm of English literature and ancient and modern fine printing.

It is very satisfactory to report the inestimable service done by Professor James Shelley in cleaning and, in some instances, repairing a number of oil-paintings of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries in the Library. Information disclosed in this process was sometimes most important, and added usefully to our knowledge of the pictures concerned. One of these, for example, was Webber's painting of the death of Captain Cook, upon which Cleveley's well-known aquatint engraving was based. In this and in other respects, Professor Shelley proved himself a good friend of the Library, and our indebtedness to him is here acknowledged.

The photograph collection has shown greatest development in the year. It is realized that photographs are an adjunct, hitherto insufficiently appreciated, to the printed and written word. At the same time, it has been a growing conviction that material of this kind has been lost or destroyed. It was decided to make a vigorous effort to collect and save the more important groups of negatives that could be discovered. Gratifying success attended this programme, as the notes under that heading will show.

Accommodation for both books and staff has become a still greater problem, and temporary and emergency shelving practices have had to be adopted to cope with the position, which will need further and more effective attention in the coming year.

Through a research grant from the Carnegie Corporation, the Librarian was enabled to visit Australia in June-September, 1948, to work on a forthcoming bibliography of Pacific ethnology, and to study library methods and processes in the greater libraries of Australia. Those of Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, and Sydney were visited, and useful contacts made and information gathered.

CATALOGUING

During the year, 2,400 volumes were catalogued, bringing the total up to 79,000. It is estimated that about 20,000 volumes yet remain to be catalogued in formal fashion. About 80 per cent. of this year's cataloguing were new, the remainder being books recatalogued. In this key branch of the Library's work is felt most acutely the loss of two cataloguers, whose place has had to be taken by the MS. specialist and the English literature specialist.

REFERENCE WORK

The increased use of the Library is felt most in the reference work involved. University, training college, and library school students, as well as the ordinary reader, frequently tax reading-room space, so that people have to be placed in the stacks. For this reason, stack privileges are more frequently accorded than before. Among the subjects covered by research students are the following: Akaroa, Wellington city and suburbs, Asiatics in New Zealand, labour legislation in New Zealand, Fiji banks, whaling in Marlborough, Barnett Burns and John Rutherford, Australia-New Zealand relations, Chatham Islands, development of transport and communication in Hawkes Bay, James Busby, flags of the Pacific, Otaki history, Waikanae, St. Stephen's College, Sir Roger L'estrang, English Augustin literary criticism, John Milton, Antarctica.

Apart from such protracted studies, however, there are hosts of mere questions, and in particular requests for genealogical information, that involve together more time than the present staff can well afford. It is the more unsatisfactory in that searching by the staff is not infrequently without avail, in that the ancestors in question are simply not recorded.