

1902.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY:

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LIBRARIAN FOR THE YEAR 1901-2.

*Laid on the Table by Leave.*

The CHIEF LIBRARIAN to the Hon. the CHAIRMAN of the LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

SIR,—

Chief Librarian's Office, Wellington, 10th July, 1902.

I have the honour to submit to you the following report for the year 1901-2:—

## STOCKTAKING.

In accordance with the proposal made in my report last year, and indorsed by the Joint Library Committee, a careful and exhaustive stocktaking has been carried out during the recess. The Library was closed to the public for a month, during which period the actual taking of stock—or entering on stock-sheets the title of every book on the Library shelves—took place. Owing, doubtless, to the lengthy period—many years—which had elapsed since anything like a systematic and complete stocktaking was carried out, and the absence of all records or documents relating to such operation, the recent effort to obtain reliable information as to the exact number of books on the shelves, the number of those which were once on the shelves, but which for some reason or other had disappeared therefrom, and many other particulars of interest and value, proved a much more tedious and onerous task than I had anticipated. No pains have been spared to secure accuracy in the data arrived at, and the information gained has been tabulated and brought up to the opening of the session. Not only has the work of stocktaking proved valuable from a statistical point of view, but much has been learnt as to the weaknesses of the Library in different sections, a guide being thus afforded to the directions in which the Library should be strengthened.

But the indirect usefulness of the work does not end here. The officers of the Library engaged in this work have had an opportunity of getting what should be at once a minute and comprehensive knowledge of the books, and have necessarily made themselves more intimately conversant with the useful but somewhat complicated Dewey system upon which the majority of the books are classified. The increased knowledge gained by the experience of the last few months must prove invaluable in the future working of the Library.

The number of books in the Library when stock was taken, or satisfactorily accounted for, or which have been added to the Library since the stocktaking period, up to the 26th May, is 52,000. This number includes some 2,500 volumes of American official publications, which in future will be stored in the No. 2 Stack-room, and will be specially catalogued and indexed; also newspapers and official publications, which are stored in the basement; works at present uncatalogued; and new books recently added.

The table given below shows the number of works missing in each class, but the total number of books set down as missing must not be considered final. I think it is more than probable that a certain proportion of the missing volumes may yet be found.

Class.	Description.	Number of Volumes missing.
000	General works, bibliography, library economy, cyclopædias, general essays, periodicals, newspapers, and book rarities	7
100	Philosophy, metaphysics, logic, ethics	6
200	Religion and mythology, theology, Bible, &c.	15
300	Sociology, statistics, political economy, education, law, commerce, &c.	157
400	Philology	14
500	Natural science, mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, botany, zoology	21
600	Useful arts, medicine, engineering, agriculture, manufactures, trades, building, &c.	36
700	Fine arts, gardening, architecture, music, painting, amusements	15
800	Literature of various countries	77
900	History of various countries	35
900	Biography and autobiography	24
900	Voyages and travels	44
	Fiction	259
	Total	710

I have not thought it necessary to have the detailed list printed, preferring to avoid the expense until we have exhausted every possible means at the disposition of the staff for the discovery of the missing books. Later on it may be deemed necessary and desirable that the list should be printed. The question of replacing the missing books is one for the consideration of the Committee.

Of the missing books over 33 per cent. belong to fiction. "Fiction" is a class which always suffers most, and occasional losses in the course of years mount up to a considerable total. "Sociology" accounts for over 22 per cent. of the total losses, but it must be remembered that this section is one of the largest in the Library, and includes a variety of subjects of special interest to members.

Of the remaining sections "Literature" and "Voyages and Travels" are affected the most, but in no case will the loss in any section amount to more than from 3 to 5 per cent. of the whole section. Books on New Zealand, especially those dealing with the earlier history of the colony, show, however, a rather serious loss. They are included in the "900" class. Certain educational works required for a university course show a tendency to be wanting when required. It must be remembered that the losses tabulated above are spread over a long period. It is now some eleven years since the compilation of the main catalogue was commenced; and, divided by eleven, the total does not show so alarming a yearly average, especially when it is remembered that many of the works are official publications, used continually in the House, and apt to be easily mislaid or forgotten. The old Library had several exits and entrances, the staff was smaller than it is now, and owing to these and other causes, which have now largely ceased to exist, the chances of books being lost are necessarily much less now than formerly. It is only fair to the Assistant Librarian, who had charge of the Library for so many years, to mention that he states he made repeated representations as to the loss of books. It is a specially cheering sign that the losses of books in the card catalogues—that is, among the books added since the Library was housed in the present commodious premises—are practically nil.

Library records in the Old Country and in America show that there is always a certain proportion of loss in what are called "open access" libraries, such as this, and it is better, I think, to put up with such loss, so long as it is not formidable, than harass members with irksome regulations. At the same time, I wish to point out that if the rules now in force are faithfully observed the probability of losing books should be very small. In the old Library there was often no officer in special charge of the ledgers, and books could not be marked off when they were returned. Books were returned, and not credited, and were taken out again, too often without being entered. When such books were mislaid by the persons taking them there was no means by which they could be traced by the Library staff; in fact, unless the books were asked for the loss would not be noticed until the stocktaking. Under the system I introduced last session, and which is now in force, there is always an officer of the Library in charge of the ledgers night and day, so long as the Library is open, and no books should now go out without being entered. Also, every book returned is marked off directly it is handed in. The responsibility for seeing that the books returned are marked off rests with the persons returning them.

It has been said that there was a possibility of loss occurring through the issue of books during the recess to privilege-holders; but I am in a position to state that the loss in this direction is practically nil. Out of 3,351 books lent during the recent recess I am pleased to say that only seven or eight volumes have not been returned, and six of these are retained by special permission. I do not consider it necessary to radically alter the present system of record under which the books are issued. I may, however, make a few minor changes next recess.

#### BOOKS ISSUED DURING THE RECESS.

Recess privileges (fiction being excluded) were granted to any respectable person who desired to use the Library for the purpose of study and research, the permission being granted upon the authorisation of the Chairman of the Committee, or upon the recommendation of a member of either branch of the Legislature. The number of persons to whom recess privileges were granted during the year was 219, the total number of volumes issued being, approximately, 3,351, thus giving an average of 15 volumes for each person privileged. During the recess 1,380 volumes were issued to members of Parliament, the gross total of books issued being thus 4,731. In addition to this many journalists, lawyers, and visitors to Wellington have been permitted to search the valuable files of newspapers and official publications. I have also received and answered a large number of letters from persons in various parts of the colony who sought for information, and several inquirers have written expressing themselves very grateful for the trouble taken in answering their queries. I may add that I have not found this addition to my duties unduly onerous.

During the last three months of the recess the Library has been thrown open on Saturday afternoons to holders of recess privileges. The attendance has been fair, and the innovation has caused no inconvenience to the staff; the assistants attending (in turn) on the Saturday being granted a Wednesday half-holiday.

As instructed by you, I supplied the Hon. Mr. Rolleston with recent accession lists, and forwarded to him from time to time the books he selected.

#### NEW BOOKS.

The number of new books added to the Library by purchase during the period commencing the 1st June, 1901, and ending the 1st July, 1902, was 1,770, which constitutes a record for the Library. In proof of the fact that the Library is kept well up to date in the supply of new books of importance, I may mention that a short time ago there were in one week's issues of the four

leading English literary weeklies thirty-seven reviews, of a column or over in length, of new works, and of these works twenty-four were actually on the Library tables when the papers in question arrived. The number of new books given above does not include the 184 volumes which came to hand recently by the s.s. "Delphic," and which are now being classified and placed on the Library tables. Another large shipment is due very shortly, and there will, I expect, be other cases to arrive during the present session. Official publications and exchanges are also excluded from the total given. These increase in number every year. At a rough estimate the yearly growth of the Library may be set down at from 2,000 to 2,500 volumes, which I think the Committee will consider highly satisfactory. The policy of avoiding expensive bindings is being persevered with, and judicious economy is being exercised in other directions, the result being that a much larger number of books is being added to the Library than was formerly the case.

The system under which I am authorised, subject to the approval of the Chairman of Committee, to purchase up to ten pounds' worth of books locally each month, has continued to work well, and now that all books are ordered from this end there is no fear of duplication, whilst many new books are added much more promptly than could be the case under the old system. I recommend that this system be continued.

#### ACCESSION LISTS.

A collection of accession lists was issued at the commencement of the session, and will, I hope, be found useful. The last list brings this supplementary catalogue up to the 15th June, 1902. In it the various works were all classified under subject-headings. These headings will be still further amplified in future lists, thus rendering reference much simpler.

#### FURNISHINGS.

Some small alterations and improvements have been made during the year. The tables in the main reading-room have been covered with cloth, and are now in great demand as writing-tables. In the sociology room the large table has been fitted with drawers. Complaints having been made as to the overheating of the rooms, the Public Works Department has supplied the Library with thermometers, which are placed in the rooms, the staff being instructed to see that the temperature does not exceed a moderate degree. The electroliers in the lobby and in the sociology and newspaper rooms have been lowered, and a light has been placed outside the side door on the Hill Street frontage. Screens are being placed over the windows in the sociology room, allowing of better ventilation without draught. Heating-apparatus is to be erected in the basement during the next recess, and will remove all possibility of damp. The strong-rooms, however, in the basement are still very damp, and cannot be used for storage purposes. The drying of these rooms is a matter of urgency. It will be remembered that last session a sub-committee was set up to select a carpet for the main reading-room. Later on, however, I was informed by the Public Works Department that the carpeting of this room was to be left over for the present. Iron shelving for the two unfurnished stack-rooms is on order in America and should arrive shortly, but some delay has been caused by the makers not having in stock shelving of the special sizes ordered. Two valuable artist's-proof etchings of Her late Majesty's Jubilee and of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations have been presented to the Library by the Government through the Hon. Sir Joseph Ward, and I would suggest that these pictures be framed and hung in the main reading-room or in some other suitable position. A copy of the Navy League's map of the Empire has been presented to the Library by Captain Marciel, of Christchurch, through Mr. W. W. Collins, M.H.R., and has been hung in the lobby.

#### THE BINDERY.

Mr. Roberts, the binder permanently attached to the Library, has again done excellent work. It gives me great pleasure to bear testimony to the industry and good taste displayed by this officer in the discharge of his duties. Last year I asked for £150 less on the vote for work done at the Government Printing Office. This economy has been effected by adopting a cheaper style of binding for the official publications of other colonies. Further saving in this direction can, I believe, be made. I would suggest that application be made for the supply of a stamping-press for Mr. Roberts. At present there is much unnecessary loss of time in sending new books purchased locally, or which come as exchanges, down to the Printing Office to be stamped.

#### LIBRARY STAFF.

I have to acknowledge the industrious and always ready assistance which I have received from the various members of the staff, and would specially refer to the zeal displayed by Mr. Thomson in connection with the stocktaking. Three extra assistants were employed during the recess. This was rendered necessary by the stocktaking. I do not anticipate that I shall require any extra assistance next recess, the regular staff being ample now that the stocktaking and other extra work is out of the way. I have relieved Mr. James of the work of classifying and cataloguing new books, undertaking this work myself. The subsidiary cards are being written by Messrs. Thomson and Browne. Mr. James is now engaged in the work of compiling a manuscript dictionary-index to the American official publications of which we possess some three thousand volumes. These are in future to be kept together in No. 2 Stack-room. They contain a vast mass of most important and valuable papers, hitherto, owing to the lack of an index, practically inaccessible to members. When this work is completed I shall undertake the task of indexing the pamphlets up to date. This work is several years in arrears.

