

1904.

NEW ZEALAND.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY:

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LIBRARIAN FOR THE YEAR 1903-4, AND SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT.

Laid on the Table by Leave.

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

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st July, 1904.

I have the honour to submit to you the following report for the year 1903-4 :—

CHIEF LIBRARIAN'S TRIP TO ENGLAND.

Having been granted six months' leave of absence by the Government, such leave being confirmed by the Library Committee, I left Wellington for London (*via* Sydney and Vancouver) on the 21st November, 1903, and, having visited Canada, the United States, England, and Australia, returned to the colony on the 25th May, 1904, resuming duty the following day. During my trip I visited some of the leading libraries in the countries through which I journeyed, and gained much information of an interesting and, I trust, a valuable character. A detailed account of my travels will be found in a separate report, which I have the honour to submit herewith. Before leaving New Zealand I made such arrangements as seemed desirable in the interests of the Library, the work being so distributed as to insure efficiency without necessitating any expense for extra assistance during the recess. Under the heading, "Library Staff," I refer to the work done during my absence by the staff under the superintendence of the Acting-Librarian, Mr. H. James.

RECESS LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

This Committee held five meetings during the recess. At its first meeting a new set of rules for the control of the Library during the recess was passed. The rules in question have worked well, and will, I hope, be confirmed and again enforced next recess. A sub-committee of selection also sat and considered lists of suggestions made by the Acting-Librarian and by members.

RECESS PRIVILEGES.

The number of persons admitted to Library privileges during the recess (independent of those connected with Parliament, heads of departments, &c.) was 269.

BOXES TO MEMBERS.

The usual number of boxes of books and magazines was despatched to members. New arrangements were made by the Committee with the postal authorities. Wicker baskets, which meet the requirements of the Post Office, have been provided, and the slight delay which arose at the beginning of the recess in the despatch of books to members will not again occur. Such delay as did occur was in no way the fault of the Acting-Librarian or his staff, but was owing to the boxes being stopped at the post-office on the ground of overweight.

ADDITIONS TO LIBRARY.

During the period commencing the 15th May, 1903, and ending 15th June, 1904, 1,940 volumes were added to the Library, 1,100 by purchase and 840 as exchanges or donations. In addition to the above volumes the usual number of bound volumes of newspapers was added to the stock in the basement. During the year 1902-3 the number of additions to the Library was 3,080. It must be remembered, however, that this year's total does not include the Smithsonian publications and the State publications of the United States Government. These publications the staff has not yet had time to classify and catalogue. They will swell next year's list. Large consignments of books have arrived from London since the compilation of the accession list shortly to be issued in the usual printed form. These books will be at the disposition of members early in the present session. Messrs. Sotheran and Co., London, have executed the various Library orders with care and promptitude, and the same remark applies to the orders for English and foreign periodicals which have as usual been entrusted to Messrs. Street and Sons. I have to thank the Agent-General and his staff for the expedition and care shown in the transmission of the Library orders to our London agents, and the lively interest shown by them at all times in all matters upon which we communicate with them in connection with the Library. The system under which a certain number of new books is purchased locally each month has again been adopted and has worked well, a number of interesting and useful works in all branches of literature having been secured by the Acting-Librarian, under the authorisation of the Chairman.

“ THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY ACT, 1903.”

The Act passed last session is now in active operation. During the recess we have received some forty publications in accordance with the provisions of this Act. The number of books received will, I think, be greatly increased as the provisions of the Act become more widely known. I write to every publisher who neglects to forward publications when such omission comes under my notice.

NEWSPAPER EXCHANGES.

During the recess some difficulty was experienced with regard to the “ exchange files ” of a southern newspaper which is bound regularly by the Library. It was pointed out to the proprietor of the journal in question that unless he sends copies of his paper to this Library with regularity, the supply (gratis) of *Hansards*, Bills, Acts, and all Government publications would be stopped. I refer to this matter in order to give extended publicity to the fact that the proprietors of newspapers receive these Government publications on the distinct understanding that copies of their journals are forwarded regularly to this Library.

REFERENCE WORKS.

In accordance with the approval given last year by the Joint Library Committee, the work of marking a certain number of volumes as “ reference ” books has been carried out. This was a long and tedious task, but now that it has been accomplished I trust there will be none of the inconvenience caused in previous sessions by members of the Library staff having it cast upon them to decide which were and which were not to be considered “ reference ” books—that is to say, books which can be consulted in the Library, but which are not available for circulation. The books were marked in accordance with the list prepared last session and approved, after amendment, by the Joint Library Committee.

THE LIBRARY STAFF.

During the absence of the Chief Librarian Mr. James performed the duties of Acting-Librarian. He informs me that the various members of the staff worked well throughout. Mr. James himself attended to the duties usually performed by me, prepared lists of “ suggestions ” for the Selection Committee, superintended the marking of the “ reference ” section, and did the main entries for the catalogue. Mr. Thomson had charge of the minor catalogue cards and the Accession Register, and prepared the “ copy ” for the printed accession list, shortly to be circulated. The other members of the staff did good work, Mr. Costall having charge of all legislative publications and magazine and review files, and Mr. Sampson, in addition to his usual newspaper-filing, rearranged the large stock of bound newspapers in the basement. Mr. McColl fulfilled his duties as junior assistant satisfactorily.

VISITORS.

The Library visitors’ book was signed during the recess by over two thousand persons, and as many visitors do not sign, it is safe to say that close upon two thousand five hundred persons were shown round the Library.

LIBRARY ACCOUNTS.

In an appendix will be found the Library balance-sheet for the year ending March. The accuracy of the balance-sheet has been vouched for by an officer of the Audit Department. As will be seen, there is a substantial balance to credit at the close of the financial year. This balance will, however, be almost entirely exhausted by the time the next annual grant is due from the Treasury.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES WILSON,
Chief Librarian.

The Hon. J. Rigg, M.L.C., Chairman of the Library Committee.

APPENDIX.

BALANCE-SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH, 1904.

1903.	<i>Receipts.</i>	£ s. d.	1903-4.	<i>Expenditure.</i>	£ s. d.
31 March.	Balance in hand	346 12 6	"	Freights and insurances ..	12 10 2
12 Nov.	Cash, Fines, <i>New Zealand Times</i>	40 0 0	"	Periodicals from America ..	24 10 9
5 Dec.	Treasury annual grant	600 0 0	"	Books and periodicals (England)	360 8 10
15 "	Cash proceeds of private Bills..	50 0 0	"	Books and periodicals (locally)	65 2 3
1904.			"	Newspapers, colonial, for session, &c.	14 5 0
2 Feb.	Stamp imprest refund	15 0 0	"	Photograph of Sir M. O’Rorke..	6 6 0
			"	Fire insurance	20 0 0
			"	Stamp imprest	15 0 0
			"	Sundry advertising and small accounts	9 13 2
			"	Balance in bank, 31st March, 1904	523 16 4
		£1,051 12 6			£1,051 12 6

CHIEF LIBRARIAN'S SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit a report of visits paid to and inspections of various libraries during my recent trip to England.

I left Wellington for Vancouver on the 21st November, 1903.

Having three days to spare in Sydney, I inspected the Public Free Library and the Legislative Library in that city.

On my way to Vancouver the vessel called at Brisbane (Queensland) and Victoria (British Columbia). At Brisbane I visited the Legislative Library. The Legislative Library at Victoria (British Columbia) is housed in a superb building, and is in every way admirably equipped and methodically arranged. American methods of classification and cataloguing, very similar to our own, are employed. I noticed both at Brisbane and at Victoria a novel and useful way of arranging maps for ready reference. To this I shall allude in detail at the close of this report. At Vancouver I visited what should, as the city grows in importance, develop into a very fine public library.

Proceeding east by the Canadian Pacific Railway I arrived in due course at Toronto, having spent a few hours *en route* at Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba, where I visited the Legislative and the Public Libraries. American methods were here again noticeable. At Toronto, where I spent two days, I visited three very fine libraries. The Legislative Library of the Province of Ontario, housed, like that at Victoria, in a noble pile of buildings, is an exceedingly fine collection. I also visited the Public and the University Libraries, seeing much that was of interest and picking up some very useful information.

I had intended to proceed to Ottawa from Toronto and thence to New York by way of Boston. The severity of the weather, however (it was 17° below zero at Winnipeg and 6½° at Toronto), caused a serious dislocation of the railway service in eastern Canada, and I decided, therefore, to proceed to New York by way of Buffalo.

At Buffalo, the Public Library is regarded, so I was informed by several American librarians, as a model institution of its kind, and I took note of several points in its arrangements which should prove useful.

From Buffalo to New York was the next stage of my journey. Unfortunately the train by which I travelled was "snowed up" for some eleven hours at night, and the heating-apparatus of the cars failing to work properly, I laid the foundations of what was to prove a rather serious illness in New York.

I arrived at New York to find the city in the throes of a "blizzard" ("the worst weather for some years"—*New York Herald*), but set to work at once to visit the principal libraries. I inspected the Lenox and Astor Reference Libraries, both splendid collections, and three of the largest lending branches of the New York Public Libraries. I also had an opportunity of seeing the fine library of the Mercantile Association (a subscription library) and two important club libraries. I went as thoroughly as the time at my disposal would allow into such questions as the Dewey decimal system of classification, map-arrangement, and other technicalities of library-management, and took advice from prominent librarians, to whom I presented an open letter of introduction given by the Right Hon. the Premier, on many points upon which I was seeking increased knowledge and useful guidance.

Further and more extended study of New York library methods was, however, suddenly and peremptorily stopped by an attack of pneumonia. A severe cold, caught no doubt *en route* from Buffalo to New York, had grown slowly but steadily worse, and after four days of most congenial and useful work I fell seriously ill, so ill indeed that as my malady (pneumonia) progressed a second doctor and a second nurse had to be called in. A most unpleasant and expensive experience was terminated by my departure from New York, where I had spent about three weeks, in an extremely weak condition. My projected trip to Philadelphia and Washington, in which latter place I wished to inspect the celebrated Library of Congress, had, of course, to be abandoned.

Arrived in England I was fortunate enough to speedily recover my health, and after a brief sojourn with my relations I set to work in London upon a systematic inspection of several important libraries, such spare time as I had at my disposal being devoted to interviewing our agents, Messrs. Sotheran and Co., and to visiting several second-hand book-shops. The libraries I visited in London were as follows: The House of Commons Library, the Guildhall Library, the British Museum, the London Library, two large club libraries, the Kensington, West Ham, and other municipal libraries.

After a second short sojourn with relatives I visited Leeds, Bradford, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and Oxford, in each city inspecting the libraries and calling upon second-hand booksellers, from some of whom I made several purchases.

Whilst in London I went into the question of book-supplies. From inquiries made and comparisons instituted I came to the conclusion that we have nothing to gain and might probably suffer some inconvenience by changing our agents. As to prices I consulted two or three English librarians and found (having taken with me duplicates of some of Messrs. Sotheran's invoices) that books had been invoiced to this Library at the same rates as, and in some cases actually at lower rates than, those charged to English libraries. I had an additional advantage in having a friend who is in the book trade, and who gave me information on "trade" and other discounts not usually accessible to an outsider. Messrs. Sotheran were most obliging, and are now giving a special discount off certain "net" books off which in England discount is rarely given, even to libraries. I checked the prices charged for periodicals by Messrs. Street and Sons with the prices quoted in the lists of other firms, and here again I advise no change of agents.

Messrs. Sotheran and Co. treated us very liberally with regard to books which I purchased from dealers in second-hand books at Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Reading, and other places. The firm collected these books for me, making no charge for commission, as is usually done, and defraying the carriage.

Out of the special list of "New Zealand items" which I took Home with me, and a copy of which I left with Messrs. Sotheran and Co., the firm has already shipped some thirty volumes. Others will follow from time to time as the items are picked by the firm or by their provincial

correspondents. Some of the rarer pamphlets are, I fear, absolutely unobtainable. The moral is that the greatest care must be exercised in future to prevent early New Zealand books and publications generally getting into the "missing" list.

I called on the Agent-General, whose personal interest in the Library is evidently as keen as ever, and both Mr. Reeves and the members of his staff were most attentive to my wants.

When in London and also in the provinces I purchased a number of works in various branches of literature. Many of these books have arrived, and will be placed on the tables this session. Some will require rebinding. In nearly every case the prices at which they were bought are very much lower than we should have had to give had they been purchased in the usual way.

Leaving England on the 28th March I arrived in Sydney on the 16th May, missing the regular New Zealand boat by one day. I arrived in Wellington on the 24th May and resumed my duties at the Library the next day, having unavoidably exceeded my leave by four days.

En route from Fremantle to Sydney I visited the Legislative Library and Public Library at Adelaide, the Legislative Library and Free Library at Melbourne, and similar institutions in Sydney.

I would now make a few general remarks as to some of my impressions, and as to certain hints which I picked up, and which may, I think, be of interest.

With regard to legislative libraries I must say that in no institution of this kind that I have visited do there exist more facilities and conveniences at the command of members than are possessed by members of the New Zealand Parliament. In more than one legislative library I found that the institution is conducted purely and simply as a reference library, no books being allowed to leave the building. In few of these libraries are novels bought, and it may be taken generally that this library is far in advance of other legislative libraries in the number of modern works in all branches of literature. In certain libraries I have found the newspaper or general reading-room apart from the reference library, and smoking in the rooms is not so generally allowed as it is here. The rules of this library with regard to the supply to members of books—both during the session and during the recess—are more liberally conceived than those of other libraries of a similar character.

With reference to the privileges afforded to the outside public, here again we are more liberal.

Mention has been made in the Press from time to time as to the advisableness of sending boxes of books to country libraries during the recess, and a system of travelling libraries, to be worked in connection with this library, has found supporters. I may say at once that in America and Canada, where travelling libraries were first established, the books are never taken from a legislative library for circulation through the country. Wherever I found the travelling-library system in force, the books were taken from a separate source altogether, and never from a legislative or reference library.

The Dewey system of classification in force in this Library has from time to time been the subject of adverse criticism. When in Canada and the United States I had an opportunity of seeing the Dewey system in force in several libraries. Everywhere I found it well spoken of, and its use is spreading all over America. In England, also, it is coming into more general use. Our modification of this system by placing fiction, biography, and poetry in alphabetical order was commended by several librarians. Similar modification is frequent in America.

In nearly every legislative library I visited I found the staff making complaint of laxness in the observance of rules and of consequent loss of books. Losses occur in all libraries, especially those arranged on the open-access system. The New York public libraries, for instance, lost last year no fewer than 5,400 volumes. And yet these libraries are held up as model institutions! I hope to improve the check system in force here: this will be done next recess. Meanwhile, if members would only observe the rules and refrain from taking out books without entering them, the losses would be so small as to be hardly worth mention.

A few remarks on the subject of catalogues and cataloguing. The time has not yet arrived for the issue of a new catalogue. When it does I feel that my trip and the information I have gathered will assist me very greatly in planning a compact and useful catalogue, the cost of which will be far below that of the catalogue at present in use. For the present the card-catalogue system works well, and the "accession lists" issued annually, being now arranged to show the books in each class, ought to be very useful to members in making selections. In many libraries I visited I found a card-catalogue only, but in a library such as this something more than this is required. The library is increasing at the rate of some 2,500 volumes a year, and in ten years we shall have 25,000 books more than the present 60,000. With 85,000 books in the Library the catalogue must necessarily be somewhat bulky, but my ambition is to devise a scheme by which a really handy catalogue may be issued at something like a reasonable cost.

I was very much interested in the question of how best to deal with the numerous maps which are stored in this Library and the stock of which is constantly increasing in bulk. The result of my inquiries is that I am prepared to draft a comprehensive scheme for dealing with maps, a scheme by which ready reference would be possible. We could not do anything in the matter until next recess.

There are a number of points of interest arising out of my trip with which I have not dealt. I feel, however, that I have already taxed the patience and attention of the Committee. If the Committee, or members individually, desire a report on any special point of library economy upon which I have not touched, I shall be very happy to give it, either verbally, or in writing.

In conclusion, I beg to thank the Government and the Committee for having granted me leave of absence. I travelled about and saw as much as I could of other libraries and library systems during the time and with the limited financial means at my disposal, and I feel convinced that the experience I have gained will in time prove of very practical value to the Library.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES WILSON.

Chief Librarian.

The Chairman, Joint Library Committee, Wellington.