# 1929.

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# GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LIBRARIAN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1929.

## Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

To the Chairman of the Joint Library Committee.

Sir,—

I have the honour to report on the operations of the General Assembly Library for the year 1928-29.

During the year 2,153 books were added to the collection from all sources, as compared with 2,270 last year, 2,162 in 1926-27, and 1,501 in the preceding year. The number of volumes accessioned to the end of the financial year was 117,296. The book-buying vote having been increased by Parliament last year from £700 to £900, the addition enabled us to do much better during the year both in the purchase of current books and in completing sets which had been allowed to fall into arrears. At the end of the year there was a balance in the bank of £418, but orders already placed and books on the way would absorb a good deal of this, leaving enough to meet accounts coming due until the current year's vote becomes available.

#### STOCKTAKING.

In spite of the interrupted recess, we were able to complete the stocktaking in the classes of Fiction and Literature, in which it was known that there were many hundreds of books missing. Stock was taken in these classes in 1913, and certain volumes were shown to be missing then, but they remained on the stock and in the catalogues, and were a constant source of trouble and inefficiency. In spite of the short session intervening in December, the staff, by arduous and willing work, was able to complete this intricate and irksome operation and thus to remedy a very unsatisfactory feature of the Library. The stocktaking showed that in Literature 318 volumes which had been accessioned are no longer in the Library, and in Fiction 4,314 are similarly missing. These numbers include not only the books which were missing in 1913 (in Fiction alone 964), but many hundreds which were put on troopships during the war for the benefit of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and were not expected to be returned. Then, again, the life of a book of fiction in a circulating library is necessarily short, and thus many of those now being written off have been long since legitimately worn out or given away to institutions. I have made it a practice when books are definitely lost, worn out, or discarded from the Library to have them written off the stock and eliminated from the card catalogues, since it is impossible for the staff to work with any efficiency when there are thousands of cards which do not really represent anything. The only card that is now retained is the main card, which indicates what has happened to the book and saves any further trouble about it. As a result of the stocktaking just concluded these 4,632 volumes have been definitely written off and no longer purport to be in the Library. Some idea of the work entailed in this operation, which follows the stocktaking, may be obtained from the fact that the entry of each book must be stamped "Withdrawn" in the accession register, removed from the stock-sheets, and weeded from the card catalogues. The final stage alone meant searching out and removing not less than ten thousand cards.

#### BINDING.

The vote for binding, amounting last year to £400, has been satisfactorily expended. The small balance shown as unexpended was due to work which was almost completed by the Government Printing Office but not brought to charge within the financial year. Good progress has been made in overhauling the stock of old newspapers and rebinding where required.

#### SHELVING ACCOMMODATION.

In spite of the shifts that have been made in recent years with a view to providing shelving for the book stock, the stack-rooms and the main reading-room are again becoming inconveniently congested, and I cannot see how we are to accommodate the additional two thousand books each year without a substantial addition to our shelving. I hope that an improvement in financial conditions may make it possible in the near future to extend the shelving and provide more accommodation adjacent to the reading-room.

#### Reference and Information.

In the last few years there has been a very marked increase in the use made of the Library for research and information purposes. Inquiries by Government Departments, business firms, students, and others for information of an economic, historical, statistical, or biographical nature are received every day, and members of Parliament are constantly calling on the staff for inquiries which entail a good deal of research. This is a side of the Library's work which is of great value to members. Professor H. J. Laski, of London University, in a recent paper on "The Present Evolution of the Parliamentary System," says, "It is important in every legislature to establish a small but highly skilled research department for the use of members. They should be able to obtain there—(i) Necessary books; (ii) assistance in drafting questions or private Bills; (iii) material for debate upon topics before the legislature; (iv) information of which they are in need. . . . The need for it is more urgent as legislative problems become more complex; and most Assemblies contain libraries which imagination could easily transform into the kind of research bureau here outlined."

Besides Congress, about thirty of the American States have developed such information services in connection with their libraries. That of Wisconsin, established by the late Dr. C. McCarthy, is an outstanding example of usefulness. Many members of the New Zealand Parliament will recognize that three out of the four desiderata mentioned by Professor Laski are provided by the General Assembly Library, and the Law Drafting Department provides the fourth.

During the year a considerable amount of research into political, economic, and social questions has been carried out, and a large amount of valuable information on these subjects is now at the disposal of members in a form more conveniently available than hitherto. The Select List on Social Insurance, which was published recently, is an instance of what is being undertaken. In order to carry out this work it has been found necessary to relieve one member of the staff as far as possible from routine duties so that he can devote his full time to this work, which, I am confident, will be more appreciated each year. The co-operation of all members of the Staff in this part of the Library work is much appreciated; they have all shown themselves well qualified to supply information when it is asked for by members.

#### DONATIONS.

Amongst a number of gifts received during the year I would specially mention the volumes of the *Marlborough Express*, presented by Miss T. Johnson (Waipawa), various volumes by the Consul-General for Japan in Sydney, and a number of old New Zealand publications (chiefly official) from Sir George Hunter, M.P., which have enabled us to fill up gaps in these important sets. The National Committee for the Celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of Canadian Federation presented a commemoration medal struck at the Ottawa branch of the Royal Mint and a copy of a memorial volume, "The Evolution of Government in Canada" (William Smith).

#### RECESS PRIVILEGE.

Though the recess was broken by the holding of a short session in December, the number of persons who made use of the recess privilege was larger than ever before—946, as compared with 822 in the previous recess and 944 in 1926-27 (when the recess was extended to nearly nine months). The number of books taken out under the recess privilege this year was 12,212, as compared with 9,818 last year and 12,694 in 1926-27 (the long recess). These figures show strikingly the increased use that is being made of the Library. I am glad to say that losses of books by recess-privilege holders are very rare, and due to causes beyond their control.

#### LIBRARY COMMITTEES.

By the holding of the short session the Recess Committee lapsed, and, as no new Committee was appointed, there could be no meetings. The meetings held during the year were: Legislative Council Committee, 1; House of Representatives Committee, 1; Joint Committee, 1; Joint Selection Committee, 1.

I am glad to say there have been no changes in the staff during the year. All the members of the staff now understand the duties assigned to them, and by the willing manner in which they carried out the exceptional work involved in the stocktaking everything went smoothly. Members of Parliament have again assisted the staff towards efficiency by the regular manner in which they have entered any books taken from the Library and their promptitude in returning books which are in demand. I would also like to record my appreciation of the sympathetic consideration given by the Library Committee to all matters put before them.

The balance-sheet for the year, with the Auditor-General's certificate, is appended.

I have, &c.,

G. H. Scholefield,

Chief Librarian.

## LIBRARY FUND ACCOUNT.

#### STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1929.

	Receipt	8.		£	s.	d.	Expenditure.	£	s,	d.
To Balance, 1st April,	1928	••		-279	15	1	By Purchase of books and periodicals in—			
Annual grant	• •			- 900	- 0	-0	United Kingdom	622	-10	5
Private Bill fees	••		••	-100	- 0	- 0	• New Zealand	178	12	10
Sundry refunds		••	••	0	12	10	Australia	5	13	- 0
U							United States	22	19	4
							Insurance premiums	-30	16	9
							Petty expenses	1	5	10
							Balance £ s. d.			
							Bank of New Zealand 418 9 6			
							Petty cash 0 0 3			
							•	418	9	9
			£1	,280	7	11		£1,280	7	11

G. H. Scholefield,

Chief Librarian.

Examined and found correct.-G. F. C. CAMPBELL, Controller and Auditor-General.

Approximate Cost of Paper .-- Preparation, not given; printing (450 copies), £2 12s. 6d.

By Authority: W. A. G. SKINNER, Government Printer, Wellington .- 1929.