

WRITERS' PAPERS

During a private five week tour of the United States last year, I visited five research libraries which, in one way or another, resemble the Turnbull. The purpose of the visits was, as much as anything, to meet Americans who might have similar interests to my own. Otherwise it was to glance at holdings relating to the American West and at the odd prize collection of writers' papers which might come my way. I write 'glance' because it was not my intention to compile a report or write an article. No notes were taken so I am now dependent upon available published materials, some of them souvenirs of my visits, and on my memory.

In September 1973 I had the pleasure of showing a little of the Turnbull to Dr Andrew Horn, then Dean of the School of Library Service of the University of California, Los Angeles, who had come to New Zealand to advise on library education. Before I left New Zealand I wrote to Dr Horn and he responded by offering to show me libraries in his city. This he did, kindly giving up two days of his time, and it was under his guidance that I visited the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, the Huntington Library, and the Department of Special Collections of the University of California Library, Los Angeles.

The William Andrews Clark Memorial Library is internationally known for its English literature collection, 1641-1750, with particular emphasis given to John Dryden and the final years of the seventeenth century. It also holds an unequalled collection of Oscar Wilde manuscripts and other materials. Amongst the other riches of the Clark are works of Eric Gill, many of his papers, books, and also some sculpture.

A visit to the Huntington, which occupied the remainder of the day, was enhanced by a sparkingly clear sky which enabled one to enjoy the two hundred acre world famous garden. I was also able to view the eighteenth century English paintings and drawings in the Huntington Art Gallery. The Huntington Library holdings include: ". . . 300,000 rare books; 200,000 reference books; 3,000,000 manuscripts (catalogued); microforms" in the fields of: "Incunabula; early English and American printed books; English and American literature; medieval English manuscripts; English history to 1837; American history to 1900; California history."

In one of the Huntington's exhibition areas I viewed manuscripts of Jack London, Emily Brontë, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Later, when taken to the Manuscript Section, I asked a librarian who was surrounded by a large number of archival boxes, whose papers he was working on. When he replied "Wallace Stevens" I nearly offered my assistance, gratis and for the next four weeks. Since then I have found the Huntington holds the papers of other twentieth century authors such as Robert Frost and Willa Cather.