

1942.

NEW ZEALAND.

COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1942.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave.

The Hon. the MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

Wellington, 21st July, 1942.

SIR,—

The Service has been maintained and has in fact increased the scope of its work during the year. Libraries and library groups which participated, excluding 11 military camp and Air Force station libraries, numbered 446, as against 387 in March, 1941. One hundred and sixty-eight persons used the postal service, an increase of 52 from 1940-41, while the number of books available through all divisions of the adult library service rose to 63,155 (45,679 at 31st March, 1941). Most significant event of the year has been the establishment of a School Library Service, details of which are given later in this report. The machinery of the Service has continued to be used for the War Library Service, and for the administration of the Central Bureau for Library Book Imports.

A full description of the methods by which books, periodicals, and information are made available to country people has been given in the previous annual reports. Summarized briefly, these methods consist of (a) free loans of books on a liberal scale to libraries controlled by local authorities, which in turn agree to make their libraries free and maintain reasonable standards of library service; (b) loans of books to independent subscription public libraries at a small annual charge per one hundred books lent; (c) loans of books through travelling hamper collections to isolated groups of readers at a small annual charge; and (d) loans through the post of non-fiction books free of charge to readers requiring information. All libraries served under (a) and (b) received regular visits from one of the specially equipped book-vans of the Service, at least two visits being paid to each library during a full year. Further, all persons, whether served by the free public library or through the isolated group, may obtain loans of reference books by post from the headquarters of the Service.

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES: "A" SERVICE.

Fourteen local authorities took the progressive and important step of making their library lending services free to local residents during the year, bringing the total number of free libraries co-operating with this Service to 42. These libraries serve a local residential population of 110,980, as well as a considerable population in their vicinity, and they were receiving on loan 13,764 books at 31st March, 1942. At 31st March, 1941, 28 libraries estimated to be serving 46,379 people were receiving 7,915 books from this Service.

SMALL INDEPENDENT SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARIES: "B" SERVICE.

Three hundred and forty-eight of these libraries were linked with the Service during the year, compared with the previous year's figure of 302; 24,213 books were on loan to "B" libraries, an average of almost exactly 70 books per library. The need for conserving oil fuel and tires has made it essential to reduce the number of exchanges effected by means of the book-vans from three to two per year. It is possible that exchanges may yet have to be effected entirely without the use of book-vans. This will not present insuperable difficulties, but difficult problems will be to avoid undue duplication—that is, the sending of a book or books to a library that has already received a copy on loan—and the need for a much larger pool of books than is at present available at headquarters and from which collections for exchanges can be made up. The Sydney Street premises to which the Service was moved in November, 1941, will not provide the necessary shelving space because of the needs of the School Library Service, but, when necessary, the steps required to maintain this very useful part of the whole library service will be taken.

Geographical Distribution of Small Libraries participating.—The following table shows the geographical distribution of the small libraries participating in the Service at 31st March, 1942, compared with the numbers for the three preceding years:—

District.	1938-39.	1939-40.	1940-41.	1941-42.
North Auckland	28	38	40	47
South Auckland and Waikato ..	24	36	41	47
Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, and Gisborne	9	16	21	25
Taranaki	5	8	8	6
Main Trunk and centre North Island..	10	11	16	25
Wellington and Hawke's Bay ..	8	19	25	20
Total, North Island ..	84	128	151	170
Nelson and Marlborough	15	25	28	39
West Coast	11	12	13	19
Canterbury	41	53	59	58
Otago	12	28	31	37
Southland	16	19	20	25
Total, South Island ..	95	137	151	178
Grand total	179	265	302	348