

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

OTHER WAYS IN WHICH SERVICE HAS BEEN GIVEN.

Hamper, or "C" Service.—In places where no library exists and where it is not possible for one to be formed, the service to properly established groups by means of travelling hampers has been continued. During the year 54 groups received this service, compared with 47 for the previous year. Many of the unit collections which were formed during the first year of the service were recalled during the year and fresh collections substituted.

Postal, or "D" Service.—During the year 168 persons used this facility, compared with 116 in 1940–41. In exceptional circumstances two books were allowed to a borrower, to offset inevitable delays where mail-transit times are lengthy. Lists of material available in certain subjects have been issued from time to time for the convenience of borrowers, but as yet no attempt has been made to produce printed lists of books. This very necessary step will be taken as soon as circumstances allow it.

Request Service.—Each of the 400-odd libraries participating in the Service display Country Library Service posters inviting their borrowers to request books of non-fiction, even although such books are not in the stock of the library concerned or are not at the time on loan from the Service. During the year 1,598 requests were received at Wellington for such books, the range of subjects covered being extremely wide. Eighty-five, or approximately 5 per cent., of these requests were not filled, either because the required book was unobtainable or because it was judged to be not within the scope of the service—i.e., it was fiction or ephemeral non-fiction.

Borrowings from other libraries throughout New Zealand under the interloan service of the New Zealand Library Association were of great assistance; 522 volumes were borrowed, compared with 301 for the previous year, the bulk of these books, 423, being lent by the General Assembly Library. Loans from the Country Library Service to large libraries under the interloan scheme were 33, compared with 12 in 1940–41.

Periodical Service.—To enable users of free borough libraries to have access to a considerably wider range of periodicals than such libraries can afford to buy regularly, some 120 periodicals have been sent to 27 free public libraries participating in the Service. Each library received up to 30 periodicals chosen from the list, in lots of some six to eight, sending its initial lot to another library by post after one month and receiving another in the same way. The effect of this service is that many country people now have access to a range of periodical literature hitherto available only in city libraries.

BOOK STOCK.

In spite of the war, and thanks to the efforts of the Navy and merchant service and to the work of those responsible for the despatch of publications from Great Britain, no serious shortage of books has been felt. It is inevitable that some losses should have occurred, but these have been slight. During the year the Service received and added to stock 18,093 volumes. The total stock now stands at 63,155 volumes, of which 35,312 are non-fiction and 27,843 fiction. The percentages of various types of books in stock at 31st March are as follows: General works, 0·84; philosophy and psychology, 1·79; religion, 1·34; social sciences, 7·86; philology and language, 0·33; natural and pure sciences, 2·73; applied science and useful arts, 5·26; fine arts and recreations, 5·40; literature, excluding fiction, 4·38; history, travel, and biography, 23·52; fiction, 46·55. During the year binding of the books requiring treatment in the South Island was arranged for at Christchurch with a commercial firm, the North Island binding being done at Wellington.

WAR LIBRARY SERVICE.

The increased scale of mobilization in New Zealand has brought difficult problems in the supply of books and the organization of library service in camps. Up to December, 1941, the main lines of organization of the library service to the armed forces had been fairly satisfactorily laid down and the service was working smoothly. Each large camp had been provided with a first-class library building—during 1941 the Burnham Military Camp library was built and put in commission, while Trentham's library was remodelled to give it space more in proportion with the work being done. During the year ended 31st March, 1942, 48,687 books and 57,332 periodicals were distributed to military camps, Air Force stations, vessels of the merchant service, troopships, mine-sweepers, New Zealand No. 1 hospital ship, military hospitals, guards of vital points, and other points. The total distribution since September, 1939, from all libraries acting with this Service as distributing agents had reached 146,090 books and 157,002 periodicals by 31st March, 1942.

The Service has also continued to act as a means of co-ordinating the efforts of all libraries in New Zealand in the work of collection of material from the public, and of acting generally for the National Patriotic Fund Board in library matters.

The greater needs brought into existence by the increased number of camps will make necessary a revised system of operation, if these needs are to be met.

CENTRAL BUREAU FOR LIBRARY BOOK IMPORTS.

From 1st April, 1941, to 31st March, 1942, 273 recommendations for special license to the value of £11,164 6s. (New Zealand currency) were made for 28 libraries. A small proportion of this amount represents orders for which fourth-period licenses had been recommended, but the books had not been received until the fifth licensing period, when new licenses had to be issued. The recommendations have covered non-fiction books and periodicals and junior fiction of recognized quality.

Union Catalogue.—The Union Catalogue which started in 1941 with a copy of the Country Library Service Author Catalogue as a basis has been receiving notification of accessions from all the University and major public libraries since 1st January, 1942. Since the last annual report 12,000 new entries have been filed into the catalogue, making an approximate total of 30,000 entries.

In addition to checking, copying, and filing entries received from other libraries, the Union Catalogue staff has also checked lists circulated by the Book Resources Committee. The function of a Union Catalogue as a clearing-house for inter-library loans is one which is hampered by lack of records of holdings of libraries, other than Country Library Service, prior to 1941; in spite of this, however, some service has been able to be given when the requests have been for material published since 1938.

NEW ZEALAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

The following account of the work done by the Book Resources Committee of the New Zealand Library Association has been supplied by Miss E. J. Carnell, Liaison Officer between the Service and the Association.

The New Zealand Book Resources Committee was set up by the Council of the New Zealand Library Association last July, following some correspondence with the Minister of Education, and consists of G. T. Alley (Convener), J. Barr, A. G. W. Dunningham, C. W. Collins, J. Harris, J. Norrie, G. H. Scholefield, and C. R. H. Taylor. The purpose of the Committee is to strengthen, co-ordinate, and exploit the book resources of the Dominion.

Union Catalogue.—A Union Catalogue of library holdings is an obvious essential to any serious attempt either to make the best use of what we have or to improve our resources. Carrying on the work begun by the Union Catalogue Committee, the Committee has decided that the best technique for assembling the initial records necessary will be to make a micro-film copy of the main entries in library catalogues. The libraries in the four main cities will be dealt with first, then the secondary cities will be tackled, and finally the smaller towns will be combed for holdings of any importance. This final stage is likely to be some years, perhaps a good many years, ahead.

The Carnegie Corporation of New York has most generously agreed to provide the special camera and other photographic equipment necessary for the micro-filming, also the typewriters and cards which will be required when editing and transfer of the filmed entries to cards begins. This equipment had been ordered and some of it delivered in America when stringent priority regulations were imposed which prevented the makers of the camera from fulfilling the order, while increasing difficulty in getting shipping space made remote the likelihood of transporting the typewriters and cards to New Zealand. Reluctantly the Secretary of the Carnegie Corporation decided that the project must be abandoned for the duration of the war, and such equipment as had been assembled was disposed of. We are assured, however, that when delivery of the camera and transportation of the equipment becomes possible, the financial help of the Carnegie Corporation will be made available again. It is necessary, of course, that the staffing of the project should be provided within New Zealand. The Minister of Education has shown keen interest in the Union Catalogue idea and has agreed that the Country Library Service should make available the staff necessary for the photographic crew and the compilation and maintenance of the catalogue itself.

The great advantage of the micro-film method is that it will enable a film record of the holdings of the main libraries to be assembled very quickly in Wellington. The rolls of film representing the catalogues of the main libraries will themselves be a useful temporary means of locating material, but, of course, they do not comprise a Union Catalogue. The entries need editing, and they need to be transferred to cards so that they can be arranged in a single sequence.

Library of Congress Catalogue.—The Committee has been considering the possibility of obtaining for New Zealand a depository set of Library of Congress cards and using this depository set as the basis of the Union Catalogue—that is, marking library holdings on the appropriate Library of Congress card and typing cards only for those books not represented in the Library of Congress catalogue. It is generally recognized that if a set of Library of Congress cards can be obtained New Zealand will acquire an invaluable bibliographical tool, the work of editing the Union Catalogue will be greatly facilitated, and much laborious typing will be saved. The cost of a Library of Congress depository set is very considerable, mainly because of the labour involved in sorting and maintaining the set in order. While inquiries were still in progress as to the cost of withdrawing and transporting a set of cards, there came the news that, provided enough subscriptions are forthcoming, the Author Catalogue of the Library of Congress is to be reproduced in book form by the photo offset process. If this materializes, we shall be able to acquire this magnificent tool at a relatively trivial cost, for the price of the set in book form will be less than half the cost of withdrawing a set of cards, and the really big initial items of labour and storage practically disappear. It would be necessary, of course, to rely upon cards for additions after the photo offset reprinting was carried out.

Book "Coverage."—Union catalogues, inter-loan, and centralized cataloguing are widely accepted, though by no means universally practised, features of modern librarianship. By starting on them a little later than the more progressive spirits abroad, we have the benefit of their experience. But we ourselves are pioneers in the book-coverage part of the Committee's work. Here is something which is important not only because—if it materializes—our book resources will be immensely strengthened, but also because nothing quite like it has happened in library history before. The following motion, which was passed at its meeting on 22nd November, outlines what the Committee proposes should be done:—

"The New Zealand Book Resources Committee recommends—

"(1) That funds be made available to ensure that at least one copy of every book of value published in the English language from 1940 onwards should reach New Zealand, and, further, to obtain all publications prior to 1940 which still have value. It is realized that a period of years will be necessary to cover the whole field of knowledge as regards both current and back publications, and it recommends that pure science and applied science and industry should be the subjects covered first, and this should be done during the financial year 1942-43:

"(2) That the Country Library Service should be the medium for obtaining needed books of which there is no copy already in New Zealand:

"(3) That the distribution of the books should be so far as possible decentralized and the books should be made available as follows:—

"(a) Loans in bulk and for lengthy periods to the libraries of teaching institutions and to public libraries which make these books and the whole informational section of their own stocks available for issue to residents free;

"(b) Loans for short periods—e.g., one month—of books needed by any library eligible for membership of the New Zealand Library Association to satisfy a specific request:

"(4) That, having regard to the value of the holdings of the libraries of Government Departments and their important part in the specialized book resources of the Dominion, the Committee recommends that the heads of Government Departments should be requested—

"(a) To report to the Central Bureau all accessions, to contribute information on their serial publications to the Union List of Serials, and to make arrangements for a record of their stock to be incorporated in the Union Catalogue;

"(b) To make available on inter-loan so far as practicable books in the stock of the departmental libraries;

"(c) To make available the services of their officers for consultation regarding the bibliography of their respective subjects."

Librarians will not need to ponder long on this to realize how far-reaching are its implications. It would be premature at this stage to attempt to work out in detail how many and what sort of books any particular library could expect to get from the bulk loans, but the stipulation regarding "available

for issue—*i.e.*, for home reading—free” indicates that the degree of enlightenment of local library policy will be a determining factor.

Work began in December on checking library holdings in science and technology with *Aslib* Book Lists and other bibliographical tools. All entries for scientific and technical books in the Cumulative Book Index for 1941 onwards will be checked with the Union Catalogue of library accessions since January, 1941, which is in the possession of the Central Bureau. What we want is complete coverage of recent and new publications and coverage of all back publications which have not become out of date or been superseded. It should be noted that the phrase “every book of value” in the first paragraph of the motion does not mean what somebody conceives to be the best books on this and that subject, it means every non-fiction book published in the English language other than school text-books, poems by unknown writers published at their own expense, books of purely local interest, and a few other species which have no value for New Zealand libraries.

To date (30th June) 442 works have been ordered by the Country Library Service in connection with this book-coverage project. This is all pre-1941 material, as checking with the 1941 Cumulative Book Index has not yet begun.

NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICE.

This new development was not launched until April, 1942, but much of the preparatory work was carried out during the year under review.

Demand for better library service for children has grown during the last three or four years. The reasonably good provision made in a few places has emphasized the poverty of the book-supply available for children in most parts of the Dominion. Circulating-library services for country children have been established for several years in Canterbury, Otago, and Taranaki, but it has become more and more apparent that a Dominion basis is necessary if an effective and economical service is to be made available everywhere. A plan was presented to the Hon. the Minister of Education for the establishment of a School Library Service, financed by the Education Department and administered by the Country Library Service, which would provide, on a circulating basis, books for general reading to schools in towns with populations below 10,000. No doubt eventually this population limit will be raised, but it is felt that the most urgent need is in these country districts and small towns where the children's section at the public library is either non-existent or starved. The Hon. the Minister approved the plan, which provided for the absorption of the Travelling Library for Rural Schools of Canterbury, and the exclusion of the areas served by the Otago and Taranaki schemes, but it is hoped to be able to give these two schemes a grant of books. The details of the new New Zealand School Library Service were outlined briefly in the following Ministerial statement published in the *Education Gazette*, 1st November, 1941 :—

“The number of schools which can be admitted to the new service each year is limited by the number of books which it is possible to obtain at the present time. For this and other reasons it will be necessary to levy an annual charge upon schools which participate equivalent to the sum of 1s. per child served. It is hoped that it will not be necessary to make this charge upon the schools for more than the first two or three years that each school belongs to the service, but no definite promise regarding this can be made yet.

“The books supplied to each school will be equal in number to that of the children in the school from Standard I upwards. All the books will be exchanged once a year, and part exchanges may be made once or, in the case of the smallest schools, twice during the year. Thus a school with 200 pupils on the roll from Standard I to Form II inclusive would receive 200 books at a time and would pay £10 per annum. The secondary departments of district high schools are eligible to join the scheme. Payment must be made from School Committee, parents' association, or other funds. No part of the charge must be levied upon individual children. The payment made by the school is a small fraction of the actual cost of the books which schools will receive. The main cost of the scheme is being provided from education funds. The charge for transport one way will be borne by the school.”

Where practicable the work of exchanging books will be decentralized, suitable public libraries acting as district centres for the purpose. This tie-up with public libraries is significant. The clear recognition by the Education Department of its responsibility in providing books for children, together with the willingness of the Department not only to use an established Government library service for the administration of the scheme, but also to co-operate with any suitable public library able and willing to be of assistance, is an important feature of the scheme. The most important thing about the School Library Service, however, is not any detail of its organization and administration, but the type of book which it will circulate. Thousands of New Zealand children will be given access, for the first time, to the rich store of modern children's literature.

The sum of £10,000 on the estimates of the Education Department having been approved by Parliament in 1941, orders were despatched in September for some 41,000 children's books. As was anticipated would be the case, a proportion of the titles have been reported out of print, stocks having been destroyed in the big London fires of December, 1940. Naturally there has been delay in the delivery of the books which were obtainable, many of them are still on the way, but enough arrived early in the year to enable us to begin distribution to Canterbury schools in March, and elsewhere in April. Unfortunately the bulk of the invoices had not been received by the end of the financial year and so this year's grant will be absorbed by payments for last year's commitments.

Miss K. E. Harvey, one of the two women in New Zealand who has pursued a year's course of study in children's librarianship at a library school in the United States of America, was appointed Children's Librarian and started work in February, 1942.

The report on the actual operation of the School Library Service belongs to next year's report, but it may be of interest to state here that by the end of April, 1942, 12,713 books had been sent out to schools, and that preliminary reports on the reception given to the books both by children and teachers are very encouraging indeed.

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G. T. ALLEY, Director.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (533 copies), £6.

By Authority: E. V. PAUL, Government Printer, Wellington.—1942.