

1943
NEW ZEALAND

COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1943

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave

The Hon. the MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

Wellington, 6th July, 1943.

SIR,—

The year for which this report is submitted marks the end of five years' operation of this Service. Four of these, 1939–40, 1940–41, 1941–42, 1942–43, have been war years, so that nearly all the growth of the Service has taken place in the abnormality of war conditions. Although a great deal needs to be done before New Zealand has an adequate library system it is a hopeful sign that it has been possible to do so much in the circumstances. Two significant developments of the year under review were the first full year's operation of the School Library Service, involving some 28,000 children in 500 schools, with an issue of nearly 30,000 books, and the establishment of a library service division of the Army Education and Welfare Service, replacing the War Library Service begun in September, 1939. The Country Library Service is acting as the chief source of supply for the new service.

A full description of the methods by which books, periodicals, and information are made available to country people has been given in previous annual reports. Summarized, 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 books free of charge to isolated readers. All libraries served under (a) and (b) received regular visits from one of the specially-equipped book-vans of this 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. Service to children is given through schools on a circulating basis.

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES: "A" SERVICE

Curtailment of supplies of books from overseas and shortage of staff are reflected in the smallest growth for any one year in the number of local authorities which took the step of co-operating with this Service in making their libraries free. The total number of county, borough, or town district libraries co-operating with this Service at 31st March, 1943, was 43. These libraries serve a local residential population of 111,176, as well as a considerable population in their vicinity, and 14,072 books were on loan to them at 31st March, 1943. Although the number of local authorities that have made this desirable change in their library policy remains nearly the same, some of these libraries have made very good progress under the new plan. This is seen by the table below, which gives a list of all "A" libraries co-operating with this Service, with some relevant statistics. It is, of course, a common-place that the number of borrowers will be greater under a free system than under a subscription one, but the *use* made of the library in many places has been trebled, or even quadrupled, while the local authority has become much more closely identified with the library service and concerned in its progress.