

WORK WITH CHILDREN

At the 31st March, 1944, service was being given as shown in the table given below. At that date 131 schools had applied for and were awaiting service, as books became available. The book stock at 31st March, 1944, was 68,197 (fiction 48,099, non-fiction 20,098).

The Taranaki and Otago Education Boards still maintain their own schemes, and during the past two years grants of 1,000 books have been made to each of these Boards to assist in the extension of the service to Standards I, II, and III.

Books ordered from overseas have not all come to hand, and as a result the number of schools on the waiting-list is considerable.

The duplication system has been maintained so that schools have not received titles which they have had previously.

Further decentralization has taken place; this has been most marked in the Auckland, Wanganui, and Palmerston North districts, where large numbers of schools have joined the scheme. In addition to our offices in Auckland and Christchurch, offices have been set up in Whangarei and Palmerston North to cope with the exchanges made to the schools in these districts. The East Coast exchanges, formerly done from the district high school, Te Araroa, are now done by the Palmerston North office of this Service. Wanganui, Timaru, and Greymouth Public Libraries continue to act as efficient exchange centres for their districts. No payment is made to the libraries for the work involved, but from time to time loans of books are made for use in these libraries' own children's departments. These loans are in addition to the pool stock held at the libraries for exchange purposes.

Service made free to Schools which qualify.—On and after 1st April, 1944, any school which shall have paid the correct amount of its levy to the Country Library Service for two complete and consecutive years, and which has carried out satisfactorily all other conditions of the school library service which apply to it, will receive loans of books from the Country Library Service without further payment by way of annual levy. This means that on 1st April, 1944, 221 schools qualified for free service.

Education Boards.	Schools served.	Children served.	Books issued.
Auckland	202	17,415	17,572
Canterbury	149	5,156	5,826
Hawke's Bay	59	4,066	4,244
Nelson	31	1,978	2,056
Southland	28	1,402	1,438
Wanganui	132	5,939	6,519
Wellington	49	2,826	3,041
Totals	650	38,782	40,696

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICE

Progress made by the free public libraries participating in the Service during the past year is admittedly uneven, the local attitude to library service and willingness to expend a reasonable annual sum on the library being the determining factor. This unevenness need not necessarily be disturbing because it can be held that some local responsibility for a part of library finance provides a healthy test of the appreciation and value of a service and is a democratic safeguard. Local authorities, like Tauranga Borough Council, which are spending locally per head of population on library service more than is spent by any city, and are, in addition, getting all that the Country Library Service has to offer, are reaping the fullest reward of the policy of this Service, which has always conceived of financial responsibility for library service as a partnership between the local and general governments.

At the earliest favourable time it is proposed to develop the Service on a regional basis. Instead of separate services for city and country it is proposed, with the co-operation of the city library authorities, to combine the services of town and country in one regional service. A strong national library service is essential to co-ordinate the work of such regions. The small independent library unit has special difficulty in a country like New Zealand, where a relatively large land area has a small population—approximately that of any one of a number of overseas cities. As the modern system of agriculture stands to the medieval strip system of cultivation so, in relation to the small unassisted library unit, must we consider a library system planned to keep abreast of the scientific advances of the times.

I have, &c.,
G. T. ALLEY, Director.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (558 copies), £6.