

the isolated group, may obtain loans of requested books by post from the headquarters of this Service. Books loaned by the School Library Service are distributed on a circulating basis.

It is expected that during the next year the number of visits by book-van will have been restored to three per year.

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES: "A" SERVICE

During the year the following towns decided to make their libraries free and to participate in the Service: Dannevirke, Matamata, Papatoetoe, Raetihi, Waipawa, and Waipukurau in the North Island, and Ashburton, Blenheim, Lyttelton, Picton, and Port Chalmers in the South Island. There are now 64 borough and town district libraries and 1 County Council library co-operating with the Service, as against 54 on 31st March, 1945. These libraries serve a local population of 141,857, as well as a quite considerable population in their vicinity, and 20,764 books are on regular loan to them, in addition to many specially requested books and subject loan collections.

In view of the steady growth in the number of smaller free public libraries it is worth while to note the increase since 1938, the first year of the Country Library Service:—

Date of Annual Report (H.—32A).	Number of Free Public Libraries in Places under 15,000 Population.
31st March, 1939	16
31st March, 1940	21
31st March, 1941	28
31st March, 1942	42
31st March, 1943	43
31st March, 1944	45
31st March, 1945	54
31st March, 1946	65

It will be useful also to set out the scale of assistance which has been available to free libraries participating in this Service. From 1938 to 1940 the population limit for boroughs to be eligible for service was 2,500. Books were provided on a basis of 15 per 100 of population. Assistance in library management was also given where possible.

On 1st March, 1940, the population limit was raised to 10,000, and loans of books were made on a sliding scale, with a maximum loan of 750 books for boroughs between 9,000 and 10,000.

On 1st October, 1944, the population limit was raised to 15,000, boroughs in the population group 10,000–15,000 being offered a loan of 1,000 books of non-fiction in addition to the request service and subject loan collections. The minimum loan to smallest libraries was also raised to 200. Since 12th April, 1946, the population limit has been raised to include boroughs over 15,000, but not to include any of the four main cities. Libraries will not be entitled to receive regular supplies of books from the book-vans, but will, if free service is adopted locally, receive subject loan collections and the free request service. In addition, one trained reference assistant will be seconded from the Country Library Service if from January, 1947, a satisfactory standard of free service is maintained and the local authority desires this secondment to be made.

It is hoped that decentralization of the Service and the more generous distribution of books which peacetime transport facilities can provide will improve the standard of development, admittedly very uneven, which has been reached by the many libraries which have taken the first step of making their service free and co-operating with this Service. The influence of the Library School in providing trained personnel will be marked, while an immediate and practical step which will benefit smaller libraries is the decision to give a short course in January, 1947, at the Library School for librarians of smaller libraries.