

Libraries outside the four main cities serving a local population of over 15,000 may, if free service is in operation, receive subject loan collections and the request service. In addition, one trained reference assistant will be seconded from the National Library Service if a satisfactory standard of service is maintained and if the local authority desires this secondment to be made.

To all the libraries affiliated with this Service, advice and assistance is available. The National Library Service has no power of control over the libraries in New Zealand; indeed, it is desirable that in every case local autonomy should be preserved. Good library service can only be attained if the local authorities and local people realize its full and potential value.

In the extension of library work in small towns the part played by the librarian is of the greatest importance; the librarian will demonstrate the effectiveness of the library service by watching for every opportunity for it to be used. For example, a good librarian will see that societies, groups, and industries, however small, use the library in connection with their activities, by providing speakers with books for their talks and by having books actually at their meetings and issued to people there.

It is regrettable that in many cases the librarian is overburdened with routine duties which absorb much time, and with little benefit to the work as a whole. It should be noted that repair work done in the library, no matter how well, can frequently be done more effectively and more economically by skilled tradesmen. At the same time, it is desirable that the smaller libraries should employ on an hourly basis casual labour for the routine work involved in issuing and discharging books, putting books away, &c., in order to free the librarian for the more important work to be done in attending to readers' requests and library extension.

The standard of service in the smaller free libraries is very uneven. Where the local authority has been reluctant to make adequate financial provision for library services, the cause in many cases lies in the failure of the librarian, through preoccupation with the routines mentioned above, to make the necessary outside contacts and to exploit the stock sufficiently. In some cases local authorities have not conformed to the conditions of participation in this Service, in that they have failed to make adequate funds available for maintaining a satisfactory standard of service. It was never intended that help from this Service should be a substitute for local enterprise; it has always been emphasized that the books lent by this Service should act as a subsidy on local effort. The aim is to supply books which it would be uneconomical for local libraries to buy, those which are better provided on a co-operative basis. In many cases they act as a guide for the library's own buying.

While it is not desirable for libraries to attempt to build a large reference collection, it should be possible for every library to maintain a small collection for quick reference purposes, and to preserve the material published locally and about the district. The libraries serving a population over 1,500 are expected to spend money, apart from fiction buying, on informational books for their free collection which are sufficiently in demand for them to be held permanently by the library. It is thought that these libraries should now be in a position to buy for their own use books which are of practical interest to people—*e.g.*, books on hobbies and crafts, gardening, child care, dress-making, &c.