

1928.
NEW ZEALAND.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LIBRARIAN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1928.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

To the Chairman of the Joint Library Committee.

SIR,—

I have the honour to report on the operations of the General Assembly Library for the year 1927-28.

During the year 2,270 books were added to the collection from all sources, as compared with 2,162 in the previous year and 1,501 in the year before that. The number of volumes on the register at the 31st March was 115,150, and there has been a considerable addition since then. In connection with the purchase of books, I would respectfully point out that it will not be possible to maintain the proper accessions for a library of this size and character within the limits of the annual vote for book-buying purposes and the revenue from private Bills. The vote was fixed at £600 some sixty years ago, when the Library was a very small one and the output of books inconsiderable. In recent years the annual publication of books on serious subjects has very much increased, and there has also been a considerable increase in the cost of such books. It is obvious, therefore, that if £600 was considered a reasonable sum for books sixty years ago it is not possible to do anything like justice to a much larger library at the present day on £700 a year. The purchases of the past two years have only been possible by reason of the existence of a credit balance of over £600 at the beginning of the period. Although we are now purchasing on very favourable terms, our expenditure on books last year (including a fixed sum of about £200 for newspapers and periodicals) amounted to £1,088, and the credit balance at the end of the year was only £279. At least four of the public libraries in New Zealand are spending more than the General Assembly Library on the purchase of books, a position which is hardly compatible with the character of this Library as a national institution.

INTERNAL ECONOMY.

Owing to the very short recess and the fact that the staff was short-handed practically all the time, we were not able to carry out the programme of stocktaking which I had proposed for the recess in the two important classes of Sociology and Fiction (with Literature). The latter division I am very anxious to have overhauled, as we are aware that very many books have been discarded through disrepair or for other reasons, and the catalogue does not, in the circumstances, form a very reliable guide to the contents of the Library. We have, however, overhauled the stock in the newspaper stack-room—a very valuable section of the Library—and have rearranged the volumes to make them more readily accessible and to provide space for the additions during the next ten years or so. That is the longest period for which the present space is likely to be sufficient; but estimates of that sort are liable to prove too sanguine.

THE STACK-ROOMS.

With regard to the book stack-rooms, we have not yet been able, owing to the lack of shelving, to make use of the new space recently vacated by the Health Department. When this is available it will make the finest and best-lighted stack-room in the Library, the only drawback being its remoteness from the administrative portion of the building. I hope that it will soon be possible to have this room furnished, as the measures which had to be taken to relieve overcrowding elsewhere are rather injurious to the bindings of good books. The Library has considerably outgrown the accommodation which was provided when it was erected thirty years ago, and it is only by making the best use of this new space and by increasing the shelving in some of the other rooms that we can carry on efficiently in the future without the books suffering undue deterioration.

The shelving on the first floor urgently requires extending to accommodate the History, Travel, Biography, and Literature, which are very much in demand. The best way to achieve this seems to