

1939.
NEW ZEALAND

COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE.

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNTRY LIBRARY SERVICE, FOR THE YEAR
ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 1938.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave.

The Hon. the MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

Wellington, 18th July, 1939.

SIR, —

The Country Library Service, formally inaugurated on 30th May, 1938, has provided a means whereby public libraries, groups of readers, and individuals in the country districts of New Zealand have been provided with regular loans of books from a central source. In addition, public libraries that have participated in the service have received practical help in library management.

METHOD AND TYPES OF SERVICE.

Instead of the direct allocation of money subsidies to libraries (the method of assistance in in operation until 1930), the purchase of books and other library material has been carried out by the Country Library Service with a staff of librarians who have also undertaken the task of arranging for the regular loan supply of these books to libraries. This has been done mainly by means of two specially designed book-vans, which carry and display over eleven hundred books each.

A book-van has visited each library participating in the Country Library Service at least once in every four months, when books left there previously have been exchanged for fresh ones from the van.

Postal and transport facilities have also been used as required for the service, which has aimed generally at placing books and library material where these are needed.

Service is not yet organized to its full capacity, but when this has been done it will be possible for each person living in a country district, however remote, to be as well served with library facilities as a city dweller.

It must be emphasized that the Country Library Service has not aimed to give a complete library service from a central source. For the successful working of the scheme a great deal has depended on the measure of interest that has been aroused and maintained in each community, since the provision of a necessary part of library service has been required from the community itself.

Service has been given, beginning in June, 1938, under the conditions specified in each case, to the following : —

(a) *Public Libraries* under the control of Borough Councils or Town Boards where the population of the borough or town district did not exceed two thousand five hundred at the date of the 1936 census, and which are situated not less than ten miles by the shortest route from the public library of any one of the four cities of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin.

To these libraries the Country Library Service has undertaken to supply a free loan stock of fifteen (15) books per hundred of the population of the borough or town district and to change this initial stock at least once every four months thereafter, provided that the Borough Council or Town Board in each case has agreed to do the following things :

- (i) To make the public library free to residents of the borough or town district. This has been understood to mean that each resident may borrow at least one free book for home reading, with a maximum issue of two free adult readers' tickets to each family.
- (ii) To maintain a reasonable standard of library service. It has been found that a local expenditure of 2s. 6d. per head of population per annum has allowed this to be done, always provided that help has been given by free loans of books from the Service.
- (iii) To establish and maintain a satisfactory free service for junior and intermediate borrowers, as opportunity permits, and in co-operation with the Country Library Service.