

To 31st December, 1938, 179 libraries had applied for service, completed formalities, and received their stock of books. Many of the libraries—those that joined the scheme during the winter months—had been visited twice by the field librarians in charge of the book-vans.

Table showing Monthly Growth of Number of Small Libraries receiving Service.

Month.						Number of Libraries Added to Service.
June	..	..	..	..	..	62
July	..	..	..	..	..	37
August	..	..	..	..	..	17
September	..	..	..	..	..	29
October	..	..	..	..	..	19
November	..	..	..	..	..	9
December	..	..	..	..	..	6
Total, 31st December						179

In the period under review £497 was paid by these libraries for service to be given until 31st March, 1939.

NUMBER OF BOOKS ON ISSUE TO INDEPENDENT SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARIES.

The total number of books on issue to the smaller libraries at 31st December was 9,467. Most of the loans have been of fifty books, but there is an increasing tendency, which will be allowed for in planning future developments, for libraries to ask for loans of one hundred or more books at a time. It would be desirable to have the loans so increased, since a stock of fifty does not give borrowers a reasonable choice at all times.

ESTIMATE OF POPULATION SERVED THROUGH SMALL LIBRARIES.

It is estimated that a total rural population of 67,200 has been able to have access to the books of the Service by means of the small subscription libraries. It is difficult to state accurately the effective range of a small library, since modern transport has made travel easier and more speedy. Country people may visit regularly centres many miles from their homes. The estimate given is based on the population figures (1936 census) of the centres receiving service.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

The following table shows the geographical distribution of the small libraries that have participated in the service :—

District.						
North Auckland	..	..	..	..	..	28
South Auckland and Waikato	..	..	..	..	..	24
Coromandel, Bay of Plenty, and Gisborne	..	..	..	..	..	9
Taranaki	..	..	..	..	..	5
Main Trunk and centre North Island	..	..	..	..	..	10
Wellington and Hawke's Bay	..	..	..	..	..	8
Total, North Island	..	..	..	..	..	84
Nelson and Marlborough	..	..	..	..	..	15
West Coast	..	..	..	..	..	11
Canterbury	..	..	..	..	..	41
Otago	..	..	..	..	..	12
Southland	..	..	..	..	..	16
Total, South Island	..	..	..	..	..	95
Grand total	..	..	..	..	..	179

FREE SERVICE TO FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

To 31st December, 1938, sixteen local authorities—eleven in the North Island, and five in the South—had decided to take the step in participating in the service. Substantial progress has also been made in other local areas towards the establishment of the free service during 1939. Many residents and local authorities are now realizing the weakness of the subscription method of financing public libraries, and are satisfied—

- (i) That there is a type of library which performs a service necessary to the advancement of a people.
- (ii) That it is right to spend public money on such a service.
- (iii) That the service should be made free to all residents of the district which provides the money.

As an institution, the free public library, when well supported by its local authority and supplied with a changing stream of books from a central source, is clearly one of the finest things that a country borough or town district can possess. The contrast between some of the best of the free